Margot Asquith, an Autobiography - Two Volumes in One eBook

Margot Asquith, an Autobiography - Two Volumes in One by Margot Asquith

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MARGOT ASQUITH

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BOOK ONE

"Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid wooed by incapacity."—Blake.

CHAPTER I

THE TENNANT FAMILY—MARGOT, ONE OF TWELVE CHILDREN—HOME LIFE IN GLEN, SCOTLAND—FATHER A SELF-CENTRED BUSINESS-MAN; HIS VANITIES; HIS PRIDE IN HIS CHILDREN—NEWS OF HIS DEATH—HANDSOME LORD RIBBLESDALE VISITS GLEN—MOTHER DELICATE; HER LOVE OF ECONOMY; CONFIDENCES—TENNANT GIRLS' LOVE AFFAIRS

I was born in the country of Hogg and Scott between the Yarrow and the Tweed, in the year 1864.

I am one of twelve children, but I only knew eight, as the others died when I was young. My eldest sister Pauline—or Posie, as we called her—was born in 1855 and married on my tenth birthday one of the best of men, Thomas Gordon Duff. [Footnote: Thomas Gordon Duff, of Drummuir Castle, Keith.] She died of tuberculosis, the cruel disease by

which my family have all been pursued. We were too different in age and temperament to be really intimate, but her goodness, patience and pluck made a deep impression on me.

My second sister, Charlotte, was born in 1858 and married, when I was thirteen, the present Lord Ribblesdale, in 1877. She was the only member of the family—except my brother Edward Glenconner— who was tall. My mother attributed this—and her good looks—to her wet-nurse, Janet Mercer, a mill-girl at Innerleithen, noted for her height and beauty. Charty—as we called her—was in some ways the most capable of us all, but she had not Laura's genius, Lucy's talents, nor my understanding. She had wonderful grace and less vanity than any one that ever lived; and her social courage was a perpetual joy. I heard her say to the late Lord Rothschild, one night at a dinner party:

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“And do you still believe the Messiah is coming, Lord Natty?”

Once when her husband went to make a political speech in the country, she telegraphed to him:

“Mind you hit below the belt!”

She was full of nature and impulse, free, enterprising and unconcerned. She rode as well as I did, but was not so quick to hounds nor so conscious of what was going on all round her.

One day when the Rifle Brigade was quartered at Winchester, Ribblesdale—who was a captain—sent Charty out hunting with old Tubb, the famous dealer, from whom he had hired her mount. As he could not accompany her himself, he was anxious to know how her ladyship had got on; the old rascal-wanting to sell his horse— raised his eyes to heaven and gasped:

“Hornamental palings! My lord!!”

It was difficult to find a better-looking couple than Charty and Ribblesdale; I have often observed people following them in picture-galleries; and their photographs appeared in many of the London shop-windows.

My next sister, Lucy, [Footnote: Mrs. Graham Smith, of Easton Grey, Malmesbury.] was the most talented and the best educated of the family. She fell between two stools in her youth, because Charty and Posie were of an age to be companions and Laura and I; consequently she did not enjoy the happy childhood that we did and was mishandled by the authorities both in the nursery and the schoolroom. When I was thirteen she made a foolish engagement, so that our real intimacy only began after her marriage. She was my mother’s favourite child—which none of us resented—and, although like my father in hospitality, courage and generous giving, she had my mother’s stubborn modesty and delicacy of mind. Her fear of hurting the feelings of others was so great that she did not tell people what she was thinking; she was truthful but not candid. Her drawings—both in pastel and water-colour—her portraits, landscapes and interiors were further removed from amateur work than Laura’s piano-playing or my dancing; and, had she put her wares into the market, as we all wanted her to do years ago, she would have been a rich woman, but like all saints she was uninfluenceable. I owe her too much to write about her: tormented by pain and crippled by arthritis, she has shown a heroism and gaiety which command the love and respect of all who meet her.

Of my other sister, Laura, I will write later.

The boys of the family were different from the girls, though they all had charm and an excellent sense of humour. My mother said the difference between her boys and girls

came from circulation, and would add, “The Winsloes always had cold feet”; but I think it lay in temper and temperament. They would have been less apprehensive and more serene if they had been brought up to some settled profession; and they were quite clever enough to do most things well.

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My brother Jack [Footnote: The Right Hon. H. J. Tennant] was petted and mismanaged in his youth. He had a good figure, but his height was arrested by his being allowed, when he was a little fellow, to walk twelve to fifteen miles a day with the shooters; and, however tired he would be, he was taken out of bed to play billiards after dinner. Leather footstools were placed one on the top of the other by a proud papa and the company made to watch this lovely little boy score big breaks; excited and exhausted, he would go to bed long after midnight, with praises singing in his ears.

“You are more like lions than sisters!” he said one day in the nursery when we snubbed him.

In making him his Parliamentary Secretary, my husband gave him his first chance; and in spite of his early training and teasing he turned his life to good account.

In the terrible years 1914, 1915 and 1916, he was Under-Secretary for War to the late Lord Kitchener and was finally made Secretary for Scotland, with a seat in the Cabinet. Like every Tennant, he had tenderness and powers of emotion and showed much affection and generosity to his family. He was a fine sportsman with an exceptionally good eye for games.

My brother Frank [Footnote: Francis Tennant, of Innes.] was the artist among the boys. He had a perfect ear for music and eye for colour and could distinguish what was beautiful in everything he saw. He had the sweetest temper of any of us and the most humility.

In his youth he had a horrible tutor who showed him a great deal of cruelty; and this retarded his development. One day at Glen, I saw this man knock Frank down. Furious and indignant, I said, “You brute!” and hit him over the head with both my fists. After he had boxed my ears, Laura protested, saying she would tell my father, whereupon he toppled her over on the floor and left the room.

When I think of our violent teachers—both tutors and governesses —and what the brothers learnt at Eton, I am surprised that we knew as much as we did and my parents’ helplessness bewilders me.

My eldest brother, Eddy, [Footnote: Lord Glenconner, of Glen, Innerleithen.] though very different from me in temperament and outlook, was the one with whom I got on best. We were both devoured by impatience and punctuality and loved being alone in the country. He hated visiting, I enjoyed it; he detested society and I delighted in it. My mother was not strong enough to take me to balls; and as she was sixty-three the year I came out, Eddy was by way of chaperoning me, but I can never remember him bringing me back from a single party. We each had our latch-keys and I went home either by myself or with a partner.

We shared a secret and passionate love for our home, Glen, and knew every clump of heather and every birch and burn in the place. Herbert Gladstone told me that, one day in India, when he and Eddy after a long day's shooting were resting in silence on the ground, he said to him:

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“What are you thinking about, Eddy?”

To which he answered:

“Oh, always the same ... Glen! ...”

In all the nine years during which he and I lived there together, in spite of our mutual irascibility of temper and uneven spirits, we never had a quarrel. Whether we joined each other on the moor at the far shepherd’s cottage or waited for grouse upon the hill; whether we lunched on the Quair or fished on the Tweed, we have a thousand common memories to keep our hearts together.

My father [Footnote: Sir Charles Tennant, 1823-1906.] was a man whose vitality, irritability, energy and impressionability amounted to genius.

When he died, June 2nd, 1906, I wrote this in my diary:

“I was sitting in Elizabeth’s [Footnote: My daughter, Elizabeth Bibesco.] schoolroom at Littlestone yesterday—Whit-Monday—after hearing her recite Tartuffe at 7 p.m., when James gave me a telegram; it was from my stepmother:

“‘Your father passed away peacefully at five this afternoon.’

“I covered my face with my hands and went to find my husband. My father had been ill for some time, but, having had a letter from him that morning, the news gave me a shock.

“Poor little Elizabeth was terribly upset at my unhappiness; and I was moved to the heart by her saying with tear-filled eyes and a white face:

“’Darling mother, he had a *very* happy life and is very happy now ... he will *always* be happy.’

“This was true. ... He had been and always will be happy, because my father’s nature turned out no waste product: he had none of that useless stuff in him that lies in heaps near factories. He took his own happiness with him, and was self-centred and self-sufficing: for a sociable being, the most self-sufficing I have ever known; I can think of no one of such vitality who was so independent of other people; he could golf alone, play billiards alone, walk alone, shoot alone, fish alone, do everything alone; and yet he was dependent on both my mother and my stepmother and on all occasions loved simple playfellows. ... Some one to carry his clubs, or to wander round the garden with, would make him perfectly happy. It was at these times, I think, that my father was at his sweetest. Calm as a sky after showers, he would discuss every topic with tenderness and interest and appeared to be unupsettable; he had eternal youth, and was unaffected by a financial world which had been spinning round him all day.

“The striking thing about him was his freedom from suspicion. Thrown from his earliest days among common, shrewd men of singularly unspiritual ideals—most of them not only on the make but I might almost say on the pounce—he advanced on his own lines rapidly and courageously, not at all secretively—almost confidingly—yet he was rarely taken in.

“He knew his fellow-creatures better in the East-end than in the West-end of London and had a talent for making men love him; he swept them along on the impulse of his own decided intentions. He was never too busy nor too prosperous to help the struggling and was shocked by meanness or sharp practice, however successful.

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“There were some people whom my father never understood, good, generous and high-minded as he was: the fanatic with eyes turned to no known order of things filled him with electric impatience; he did not care for priests, poets or philosophers; anything like indecision, change of plans, want of order, method or punctuality, forgetfulness or carelessness—even hesitation of voice and manner—drove him mad; his temperament was like a fuse which a touch will explode, but the bomb did not kill, it hurt the uninitiated but it consumed its own sparks. My papa had no self-control, no possibility of learning it: it was an unknown science, like geometry or algebra, to him; and he had very little imagination. It was this combination—want of self-control and want of imagination—which prevented him from being a thinker.

“He had great character, minute observation, a fine memory and all his instincts were charged with almost superhuman vitality, but no one could argue with him. Had the foundation of his character been as unreasonable and unreliable as his temperament, he would have made neither friends nor money; but he was fundamentally sound, ultimately serene and high-minded in the truest sense of the word. He was a man of intellect, but not an intellectual man; he did not really know anything about the great writers or thinkers, although he had read odds and ends. He was essentially a man of action and a man of will; this is why I call him a man of intellect. He made up his mind in a flash, partly from instinct and partly from will.

“He had the courage for life and the enterprise to spend his fortune on it. He was kind and impulsively generous, but too hasty for disease to accost or death to delay. For him they were interruptions, not abiding sorrows.

“He knew nothing of rancour, remorse, regret; they conveyed much the same to him as if he had been told to walk backwards and received neither sympathy nor courtesy from him.

“He was an artist with the gift of admiration. He had a good eye and could not buy an ugly or even moderately beautiful thing; but he was no discoverer in art. Here I will add to make myself clear that I am thinking of men like Frances Horner’s father, old Mr. Graham, [Footnote: Lady Horner, of Mells, Frome.] who discovered and promoted Burne-Jones and Frederick Walker; or Lord Battersea, who was the first to patronise Cecil Lawson; or my sister, Lucy Graham Smith, who was a fine judge of every picture and recognised and appreciated all schools of painting. My father’s judgment was warped by constantly comparing his own things with other people’s.

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“The pride of possession and proprietorship is a common and a human one, but the real artist makes everything he admires his own: no one can rob him of this; he sees value in unsigned pictures and promise in unfinished ones; he not only discovers and interprets, but almost creates beauty by the fire of his criticisms and the inwardness of his preception. Papa was too self-centred for this; a large side of art was hidden from him; anything mysterious, suggestive, archaic, whether Italian, Spanish or Dutch, frankly bored him. His feet were planted firmly on a very healthy earth; he liked art to be a copy of nature, not of art. The modern Burne-Jones and Morris school, with what he considered its artificiality and affectations, he could not endure. He did not realise that it originated in a reaction from early-Victorianism and mid-Victorianism. He lost sight of much that is beautiful in colour and fancy and all the drawing and refinement of this school, by his violent prejudices. His opinions were obsessions. Where he was original was not so much in his pictures but in the mezzotints, silver, china and objets d’art which he had collected for many years.

“Whatever he chose, whether it was a little owl, a dog, a nigger, a bust, a Cupid in gold, bronze, china or enamel, it had to have some human meaning, some recognisable expression which made it lovable and familiar to him. He did not care for the fantastic, the tortured or the ecclesiastical; saints, virgins, draperies and crucifixes left him cold; but an old English chest, a stout little chair or a healthy oriental bottle would appeal to him at once.

“No one enjoyed his own possessions more naively and enthusiastically than my father; he would often take a candle and walk round the pictures in his dressing-gown on his way to bed, loitering over them with tenderness—I might almost say emotion.

“When I was alone with him, tucked up reading on a sofa, he would send me upstairs to look at the Sir Joshuas: Lady Gertrude Fitz-Patrick, Lady Crosbie or Miss Ridge.

“‘She is quite beautiful to-night,’ he would say. ’Just run up to the drawing-room, Margot, and have a look at her.’

“It was not only his collections that he was proud of, but he was proud of his children; we could all do things better than any one else! Posie could sing, Lucy could draw, Laura could play, I could ride, *etc*.; our praises were stuffed down newcomers’ throats till every one felt uncomfortable. I have no want of love to add to my grief at his death, but I much regret my impatience and lack of grace with him.

“He sometimes introduced me with emotional pride to the same man or woman two or three times in one evening:

“’This is my little girl—very clever, *etc*., *etc*. Colonel Kingscote says she goes harder across country than any one, *etc*., *etc*.’

“This exasperated me. Turning to my mother in the thick of the guests that had gathered in our house one evening to hear a professional singer, he said at the top of his voice while the lady was being conducted to the piano:

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"'Don't bother, my dear, I think every one would prefer to hear Posie sing.'

"I well remember Laura and myself being admonished by him on our returning from a party at the Cyril Flowers' in the year 1883, where we had been considerably run by dear Papa and twice introduced to Lord Granville. We showed such irritability going home in the brougham that my father said:

"'It's no pleasure taking you girls out.'

"This was the only time I ever heard him cross with me.

"He always told us not to frown and to speak clearly, just as my mother scolded us for not holding ourselves up. I can never remember seeing him indifferent, slack or idle in his life. He was as violent when he was dying as when he was living and quite without self-pity.

"He hated presents, but he liked praise and was easily flattered; he was too busy even for *much* of that, but he could stand more than most of us. If it is a little simple, it is also rather generous to believe in the nicest things people can say to you; and I think I would rather accept too much than repudiate and refuse: it is warmer and more enriching.

"My father had not the smallest conceit or smugness, but he had a little child-like vanity. You could not spoil him nor improve him; he remained egotistical, sound, sunny and unreasonable; violently impatient, not at all self-indulgent—despising the very idea of a valet or a secretary—but absolutely self-willed; what he intended to do, say or buy, he would do, say or buy *at once*.

"He was fond of a few people—Mark Napier, [Footnote: The Hon. Mark Napier, of Ettrick.] Ribblesdale, Lord Haldane, Mr. Heseltine, Lord Rosebery and Arthur Balfour—-and felt friendly to everybody, but he did not *love* many people. When we were girls he told us we ought to make worldly marriages, but in the end he let us choose the men we loved and gave us the material help in money which enabled us to marry them. I find exactly the opposite plan adopted by most parents: they sacrifice their children to loveless marriages as long as they know there is enough money for no demand ever to be made upon themselves.

"I think I understood my father better than the others did. I guessed his mood in a moment and in consequence could push further and say more to him when he was in a good humour. I lived with him, my mother and Eddy alone for nine years (after my sister Laura married) and had a closer personal experience of him. He liked my adventurous nature. Ribblesdale's [Footnote: Lord Ribblesdale, of Gisburne.] courtesy and sweetness delighted him and they were genuinely fond of each other. He said once to me of him:

“’Tommy is one of the few people in the world that have shown me gratitude.’”

I cannot pass my brother-in-law’s name here in my diary without some reference to the effect which he produced on us when he first came to Glen.

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He was the finest-looking man that I ever saw, except old Lord Wemyss, [Footnote: The Earl of Wemyss and March, father of the present Earl.] the late Lord Pembroke, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt and Lord D'Abernon. He had been introduced to my sister Charty at a ball in London, when he was twenty-one and she eighteen. A brother-officer of his in the Rifle Brigade, seeing them waltzing together, asked him if she was his sister, to which he answered:

"No, thank God!"

I was twelve when he first came to Glen as Thomas Lister: his fine manners, perfect sense of humour and picturesque appearance captivated every one; and, whether you agreed with him or not, he had a perfectly original point of view and was always interested and suggestive. He never misunderstood but thoroughly appreciated my father. ...

Continuing from my diary:

"My papa was a character-part; and some people never understood character-parts.

"None of his children are really like him; yet there are resemblances which are interesting and worth noting.

"Charty on the whole resembles him most. She has his transparent simplicity, candour, courage laid want of self-control; but she is the least selfish woman I know and the least self-centred. She is also more intolerant and merciless in her criticisms of other people, and has a finer sense of humour. Papa loved things of good report and never believed evil of any one. He had a rooted objection to talking lightly of other people's lives; he was not exactly reverent, but a feeling of kindly decent citizenship prevented him from thinking or speaking slightingly of other people.

"Lucy has Papa's artistic and generous side, but none of his self-confidence or decisiveness; all his physical courage, but none of his ambition.

"Eddy has his figure and deportment, his sense of justice and emotional tenderness, but none of his vitality, impulse or hope. Jack has his ambition and push, keenness and self-confidence; but he is not so good-humoured in a losing game. Frank has more of his straight tongue and appreciation of beautiful things, but none of his brains.

"I think I had more of Papa's moral indignation and daring than the others; and physically there were great resemblances between us: otherwise I do not think I am like him. I have his carriage, balance and activity—being able to dance, skip and walk on a rope—and I have inherited his hair and sleeplessness, nerves and impatience; but intellectually we look at things from an entirely different point of view. I am more passionate, more spiritually perplexed and less self-satisfied. I have none of his powers

of throwing things off. I should like to think I have a little of his generosity, humanity and kindly toleration, some of his fundamental uprightness and integrity, but when everything has been said he will remain a unique man in people's memory."

Writing now, fourteen years later, I do not think that I can add much to this.

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Although he was a business man, he had a wide understanding and considerable elasticity.

In connection with business men, the staggering figures published in the official White Book of November last year showed that the result of including them in the Government has been so remarkable that my memoir would be incomplete if I did not allude to them. My father and grandfather were brought up among City people and I am proud of it; but it is folly to suppose that starting and developing a great business is the same as initiating and conducting a great policy, or running a big Government Department.

It has been and will remain a puzzle over which intellectual men are perpetually if not permanently groping:

“How comes it that Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown made such a vast fortune?”

The answer is not easy. Making money requires *Flair*, instinct, insight or whatever you like to call it, but the qualities that go to make a business man are grotesquely unlike those which make a statesman; and, when you have pretensions to both, the result is the present comedy and confusion.

I write as the daughter of a business man and the wife of a politician and I know what I am talking about, but, in case Mr. Bonar Law—a pathetic believer in the “business man”—should honour me by reading these pages and still cling to his illusions on the subject, I refer him to the figures published in the Government White Book of 1919.

Intellectual men seldom make fortunes and business men are seldom intellectual.

My father was educated in Liverpool and worked in a night school; he was a good linguist, which he would never have been had he had the misfortune to be educated in any of our great public schools.

I remember some one telling me how my grandfather had said that he could not understand any man of sense bringing his son up as a gentleman. In those days as in these, gentlemen were found and not made, but the expression “bringing a man up as a gentleman” meant bringing him up to be idle.

When my father gambled in the City, he took risks with his own rather than other people’s money. I heard him say to a South African millionaire:

“You did not make your money out of mines, but out of mugs like me, my dear fellow!”

A whole chapter might be devoted to stories about his adventures in speculation, but I will give only one. As a young man he was put by my grandfather into a firm in Liverpool and made L30,000 on the French Bourse before he was twenty-four. On hearing of this, his father wrote and apologised to the head of the firm, saying he was

willing to withdraw his son Charles if he had in any way shocked them by risking a loss which he could never have paid. The answer was a request that the said “son Charles” should become a partner in the firm.

Born a little quicker, more punctual and more alive than other people, he suffered fools not at all. He could not modify himself in any way; he was the same man in his nursery, his school and his office, the same man in church, club, city or suburbs.

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[Footnote: My mother, Emma Winsloe, came of quite a different class from my father. His ancestor of earliest memory was factor to Lord Bute, whose ploughman was Robert Burns, the poet. His grandson was my grandfather Tennant of St. Rollox. My mother's family were of gentle blood. Richard Winsloe (b. 1770, d. 1842) was rector of Minster Forrabury in Cornwall and of Ruishton, near Taunton. He married Catherine Walter, daughter of the founder of the Times. Their son, Richard Winsloe, was sent to Oxford to study for the Church. He ran away with Charlotte Monkton, aged 17. They were caught at Evesham and brought back to be married next day at Taunton, where Admiral Monkton was living. They had two children: Emma, our mother, and Richard, my uncle.]

My mother was more unlike my father than can easily be imagined. She was as timid, as he was bold, as controlled as he was spontaneous and as refined, courteous and unassuming as he was vibrant, sheer and adventurous.

Fond as we were of each other and intimate over all my love-affairs, my mother never really understood me; my vitality, independent happiness and physical energies filled her with fatigue. She never enjoyed her prosperity and suffered from all the apprehension, fussiness and love of economy that should by rights belong to the poor, but by a curious perversion almost always blight the rich.

Her preachings on economy were a constant source of amusement to my father. I made up my mind at an early age, after listening to his chaff, that money was the most overrated of all anxieties; and not only has nothing occurred in my long experience to make me alter this opinion but everything has tended to reinforce it.

In discussing matrimony my father would say:

"I'm sure I hope, girls, you'll not marry penniless men; men should not marry at all unless they can keep their wives,' *etc*.

To this my mother would retort:

"Do not listen to your father, children! Marrying for money has never yet made any one happy; it is not blessed."

Mamma had no illusions about her children nor about anything else; her mild criticisms of the family balanced my father's obsessions. When Charty's looks were praised, she would answer with a fine smile:

"Tant soit peu mouton!"

She thought us all very plain, how plain I only discovered by overhearing the following conversation.

I was seventeen and, a few days after my return from Dresden, I was writing behind the drawing room screen in London, when an elderly Scotch lady came to see my mother; she was shown into the room by the footman and after shaking hands said:

“What a handsome house this is. ...”

My mother (*irrelevantly*): “I always think your place is so nice. Did your garden do well this year?”

Elderly lady: “Oh, I’m not a gardener and we spend very little time at Auchnagarroch; I took Alison to the Hydro at Crieff for a change. She’s just a growing girl, you know, and not at all clever like yours.”

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My mother: "My girls never grow! I am sure I wish they would!"

Elderly lady: "But they are so pretty! My Marion has a homely face!"

My mother: "How old is she?"

Elderly lady: "Sixteen."

My mother: "L'AGE INGRAT! I would not trouble myself, if I were you, about her looks; with young people one never can tell; Margot, for instance (with a resigned sigh), a few years ago promised to be so pretty; and just look at her now!"

When some one suggested that we should be painted it was almost more than my mother could bear. The poorness of the subject and the richness of the price shocked her profoundly. Luckily my father—who had begun to buy fine pictures—entirely agreed with her, though not for the same reasons:

"I am sure I don't know where I could hang the girls, even if I were fool enough to have them painted!" he would say.

I cannot ever remember kissing my mother without her tapping me on the back and saying, "Hold yourself up!" or kissing my father without his saying, "Don't frown!" And I shall never cease being grateful for this, as a l'heure qu'il est I have not a line in my forehead and my figure has not changed since my marriage.

My mother's indifference to—I might almost say suspicion of— other people always amused me:

"I am sure I don't know why they should come here! unless it is to see the garden!" Or, "I cannot help wondering what was at the back of her mind."

When I suggested that perhaps the lady she referred to had no mind, my mother would say, "I don't like people with ARRIERE— PENSEES"; and ended most of her criticisms by saying, "It looks to me as if she had a poor circulation."

My mother had an excellent sense of humour. Doll Liddell [Footnote: The late A.G.C. Lidell.] said: "Lucy has a touch of mild genius." And this is exactly what my mother had.

People thought her a calm, serene person, satisfied with pinching green flies off plants and incapable of deep feeling, but my mother's heart had been broken by the death of her first four children, and she dreaded emotion. Any attempt on my part to discuss old days or her own sensations was resolutely discouraged. There was a lot of fun and affection but a tepid intimacy between us, except about my flirtations; and over these we saw eye to eye.

My mother, who had been a great flirt herself, thoroughly enjoyed all love-affairs and was absolutely unshockable. Little words of wisdom would drop from her mouth:

My mother: “Men don’t like being run after ...”

Margot: “Oh, don’t you believe it, mamma!”

My mother: “You can do what you like in life if you can hold your tongue, but the world is relentless to people who are found out.”

She told my father that if he interfered with my love-affairs I should very likely marry a groom.

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She did me a good turn here, for, though I would not have married a groom, I might have married the wrong man and, in any case, interference would have been cramping to me.

I have copied out of my diary what I wrote about my mother when she died.

“January 21st, 1895.

“Mamma is dead. She died this morning and Glen isn’t my home any more: I feel as if I should be ‘received’ here in future, instead of finding my own darling, tender little mother, who wanted arranging for and caring for and to whom my gossipy trivialities were precious and all my love-stories a trust. How I *wish* I could say sincerely that I had understood her nature and sympathised with her and never felt hurt by anything she could say and had *eagerly* shown my love and sought hers. ... Lucky Lucy! She *can* say this, but I do not think that I can.

“Mamma’s life and death have taught me several things. Her sincerity and absence of vanity and worldliness were her really striking qualities. Her power of suffering passively, without letting any one into her secret, was carried to a fault. We who longed to share some part, however small, of the burden of her emotion were not allowed to do so. This reserve to the last hour of her life remained her inexorable rule and habit. It arose from a wish to spare other people and fear of herself and her own feelings. To spare others was her ideal. Another characteristic was her pity for the obscure, the dull and the poor. The postman in winter ought to have fur-lined gloves; and we must send our Christmas letters and parcels before or after the busy days. Lord Napier’s [Footnote: Lord Napier and Ettrick, father of Mark Napier.] coachman had never seen a comet; she would write and tell him what day it was prophesied. The lame girl at the lodge must be picked up in the brougham and taken for a drive, *etc*. ...

“She despised any one who was afraid of infection and was singularly ignorant on questions of health; she knew little or nothing of medicine and never believed in doctors; she made an exception of Sir James Simpson, who was her friend. She told me that he had said there was a great deal of nonsense talked about health and diet:

“’If the fire is low, it does not matter whether you stir it with the poker or the tongs.’

“She believed firmly in cold water and thought that most illnesses came from ‘checked perspiration.’

“She loved happy people—people with courage and go and what she called ’nature’—-and said many good things. Of Mark Napier: ’He had so much nature, I am sure he had a Neapolitan wet-nurse’ (here she was right). Of Charty: ‘She has so much social courage.’ Of Aunt Marion [Footnote: My father’s sister, Mrs. Wallace.]: ’She is unfortunately inferior.’ Of Lucy’s early friends: ’Lucy’s trumpery girls.’

“Mamma was not at all spiritual, nor had she much intellectual imagination, but she believed firmly in God and was profoundly sorry for those who did not. She was full of admiration for religious people. Laura’s prayer against high spirits she thought so wonderful that she kept it in a book near her bed.

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“She told me she had never had enough circulation to have good spirits herself and that her old nurse often said:

“‘No one should ever be surprised at anything they feel.’

“My mamma came of an unintellectual family and belonged to a generation in which it was not the fashion to read. She had lived in a small milieu most of her life, without the opportunity of meeting distinguished people. She had great powers of observation and a certain delicate acuteness of expression which identified all she said with herself. She was fine-mouche and full of tender humour, a woman of the world, but entirely bereft of worldliness.

“Her twelve children, who took up all her time, accounted for some of her a quoi bon attitude towards life, but she had little or no concentration and a feminine mind both in its purity and inconsequence.

“My mother hardly had one intimate friend and never allowed any one to feel necessary to her. Most people thought her gentle to docility and full of quiet composure. So much is this the general impression that, out of nearly a hundred letters which I received, there is not one that does not allude to her restful nature. As a matter of fact, Mamma was one of the most restless creatures that ever lived. She moved from room to room, table to table, and topic to topic, not, it is true, with haste or fretfulness, but with no concentration of either thought or purpose; and I never saw her put up her feet in my life.

“Her want of confidence in herself and of grip upon life prevented her from having the influence which her experience of the world and real insight might have given her; and her want of expansion prevented her own generation and discouraged ours from approaching her closely.

“Few women have speculative minds nor can they deliberate: they have instincts, quick apprehensions and powers of observation; but they are seldom imaginative and neither their logic nor their reason are their strong points. Mamma was in all these ways like the rest of her sex.

“She had much affection for, but hardly any pride in her children. Laura’s genius was a phrase to her; and any praise of Charty’s looks or Lucy’s successes she took as mere courtesy on the part of the speaker. I can never remember her praising me, except to say that I had social courage, nor did she ever encourage me to draw, write or play the piano.

“She marked in a French translation of “The Imitation of Christ” which Lucy gave her:

“’Certes au jour du jugement on ne nous demandera point ce que nous avons lu, mais ce que nous avons fait; ni si nous avons bien parle mais si nous avons bien vecu.’

“She was the least self-centred and self-scanned of human beings, unworldly and uncomplaining. As Doll Liddell says in his admirable letter to me, ‘She was often wise and always gracious.’”

CHAPTER II

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GLEN AMONG THE MOORS—MARGOT'S ADVENTURE WITH A TRAMP—THE SHEPHERD BOY—MEMORIES AND ESCAPADES—LAURA AND MARGOT; PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE—NEW MEN FRIENDS—LAURA ENGAGED; PROPOSAL IN THE DUSK—MARGOT'S ACCIDENT IN HUNTING FIELD—LAURA'S PREMONITION OF DEATH IN CHILD-BIRTH—LAURA'S WILL

My home, Glen, is on the border of Peeblesshire and Selkirkshire, sixteen miles from Abbotsford and thirty from Edinburgh. It was designed on the lines of Glamis and Castle Fraser, in what is called Scottish baronial style. I well remember the first shock I had when some one said: "I hate turrets and tin men on the top of them!" It unsettled me for days. I had never imagined that anything could be more beautiful than Glen. The classical style of Whittingehame—and other fine places of the sort—appeared to me better suited for municipal buildings; the beams and flint in Cheshire reminded me of Earl's Court; and such castles as I had seen looked like the pictures of the Rhine on my blotting-book. I was quite ignorant and "Scottish baronial" thrilled me.

What made Glen really unique was not its architecture but its situation. The road by which you approached it was a cul-de-sac and led to nothing but moors. This—and the fact of its being ten miles from a railway station—gave it security in its wildness. Great stretches of heather swept down to the garden walls; and, however many heights you climbed, moor upon moor rose in front of you.

Evan Charteris [Footnote: The Hon. Evan Charteris] said that my hair was biography: as it is my only claim to beauty, I would like to think that this is true, but the hills at Glen are my real biography.

Nature inoculates its lovers from its own culture; sea, downs and moors produce a different type of person. Shepherds, fishermen and poachers are a little like what they contemplate and, were it possible to ask the towns to tell us whom they find most untamable, I have not a doubt that they would say, those who are born on the moors.

I married late—at the age of thirty—and spent all my early life at Glen. I was a child of the heather and quite untamable. After my sister Laura Lyttelton died, my brother Eddy and I lived alone with my parents for nine years at Glen.

When he was abroad shooting big game, I spent long days out of doors, seldom coming in for lunch. Both my pony and my hack were saddled from 7 a.m., ready for me to ride, every day of my life. I wore the shortest of tweed skirts, knickerbockers of the same stuff, top-boots, a covert-coat and a coloured scarf round my head. I was equipped with a book, pencils, cigarettes and food. Every shepherd and poacher knew me; and I have often shared my "piece" with them, sitting in the heather near the red burns, or sheltered from rain in the cuts and quarries of the open road.

After my first great sorrow—the death of my sister Laura—I was suffocated in the house and felt I had to be out of doors from morning till night.

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One day I saw an old shepherd called Gowanlock coming up to me, holding my pony by the rein. I had never noticed that it had strayed away and, after thanking him, I observed him looking at me quietly—he knew something of the rage and anguish that Laura's death had brought into my heart—and putting his hand on my shoulder, he said:

"My child, there's no contending. ... Ay—ay"—shaking his beautiful old head—"*That is so*, there's no contending. ..."

Another day, when it came on to rain, I saw a tramp crouching under the dyke, holding an umbrella over his head and eating his lunch. I went and sat down beside him and we fell into desultory conversation. He had a grand, wild face and I felt some curiosity about him; but he was taciturn and all he told me was that he was walking to the Gordon Arms, on his way to St. Mary's Loch. I asked him every sort of question—as to where he had come from, where he was going to and what he wanted to do—but he refused to gratify my curiosity, so I gave him one of my cigarettes and a light and we sat peacefully smoking together in silence. When the rain cleared, I turned to him and said:

"You seem to walk all day and go nowhere; when you wake up in the morning, how do you shape your course?"

To which he answered:

"I always turn my back to the wind."

Border people are more intelligent than those born in the South; and the people of my birthplace are a hundred years in advance of the Southern English even now.

When I was fourteen, I met a shepherd-boy reading a French book. It was called "Le Secret de Delphine." I asked him how he came to know French and he told me it was the extra subject he had been allowed to choose for studying in his holidays; he walked eighteen miles a day to school—nine there and nine back—taking his chance of a lift from any passing vehicle. I begged him to read out loud to me, but he was shy of his accent and would not do it. The Lowland Scotch were a wonderful people in my day.

I remember nothing unhappy in my glorious youth except the violence of our family quarrels. Reckless waves of high and low spirits, added to quick tempers, obliged my mother to separate us for some time and forbid us to sleep in the same bedroom. We raged and ragged till the small hours of the morning, which kept us thin and the household awake.

My mother told me two stories of myself as a little child:

"When you were sent for to come downstairs, Margot, the nurse opened the door and you walked in—generally alone—saying, 'Here's me! ...'"

This rather sanguine opening does not seem to have been sufficiently checked. She went on to say:

“I was dreadfully afraid you would be upset and ill when I took you one day to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Glasgow, as you felt things with passionate intensity. Before starting I lifted you on to my knee and said, ’You know, darling, I am going to take you to see some poor people who cannot speak.’ At which you put your arms round my neck and said, with consoling emphasis, ’I will soon make them speak!’”

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The earliest event I can remember was the arrival of the new baby, my brother Jack, when I was two years old. Dr. Cox was spoiling my mother's good-night visit while I was being dried after my bath. My pink flannel dressing-gown, with white buttonhole stitching, was hanging over the fender; and he was discussing some earnest subject in a low tone. He got up and, pinching my chin said:

"She will be very angry, but we will give her a baby of her own," or words to that effect.

The next day a huge doll obliterated from my mind the new baby which had arrived that morning.

We were left very much alone in our nursery, as my mother travelled from pillar to post, hunting for health for her child Pauline. Our nurse, Mrs. Hills—called "Missuls" for short—left us on my tenth birthday to become my sister's lady's-maid, and this removed our first and last restriction.

We were wild children and, left to ourselves, had the time of our lives. I rode my pony up the front stairs and tried to teach my father's high-stepping barouche-horses to jump—crashing their knees into the hurdles in the field—and climbed our incredibly dangerous roof, sitting on the sweep's ladder by moonlight in my nightgown. I had scrambled up every tree, walked on every wall and knew every turret at Glen. I ran along the narrow ledges of the slates in rubber shoes at terrific heights. This alarmed other people so much that my father sent for me one day to see him in his "business room" and made me swear before God that I would give up walking on the roof; and give it up I did, with many tears.

Laura and I were fond of acting and dressing up. We played at being found in dangerous and adventurous circumstances in the garden. One day the boys were rabbit-shooting and we were acting with the doctor's daughter. I had spoilt the game by running round the kitchen-garden wall instead of being discovered—as I was meant to be—in a Turkish turban, smoking on the banks of the Bosphorus. Seeing that things were going badly and that the others had disappeared, I took a wild jump into the radishes. On landing I observed a strange gentleman coming up the path. He looked at my torn gingham frock, naked legs, tennis shoes and dishevelled curls under an orange turban; and I stood still and gazed at him.

"This is a wonderful place," he said; to which I replied:

"You like it?"

He: "I would like to see the house. I hear there are beautiful things in it."

Margot: "I think the drawing-rooms are all shut up."

He: “How do you know? Surely you could manage to get hold of a servant or some one who would take me round. Do you know any of them?”

I asked him if he meant the family or the servants.

“The family,” he said.

Margot: “I know them very well, but I don’t know you.”

“I am an artist,” said the stranger; “my name is Peter Graham. Who are you?”

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“I am an artist too!” I said. “My name is Margot Tennant. I suppose you thought I was the gardener’s daughter, did you?”

He gave a circulating smile, finishing on my turban, and said:

“To tell you the honest truth, I had no idea what you were!”

My earliest sorrow was when I was stealing peaches in the conservatory and my little dog was caught in a trap set for rats. He was badly hurt before I could squeeze under the glass slides to save him. I was betrayed by my screams for help and caught in the peach-house by the gardener. I was punished and put to bed, as the large peaches were to have been shown in Edinburgh and I had eaten five.

We had a dancing-class at the minister’s and an arithmetic-class in our schoolroom. I was as good at the Manse as I was bad at my sums; and poor Mr. Menzies, the Traquair schoolmaster, had eventually to beg my mother to withdraw me from the class, as I kept them all back. To my delight I was withdrawn; and from that day to this I have never added a single row of figures.

I showed a remarkable proficiency in dancing and could lift both my feet to the level of my eyebrows with disconcerting ease. Mrs. Wallace, the minister’s wife, was shocked and said:

“Look at Margot with her Frenchified airs!”

I pondered often and long over this, the first remark about myself that I can ever remember. Some one said to me:

“Does your hair curl naturally?”

To which I replied:

“I don’t know, but I will ask.”

I was unaware of myself and had not the slightest idea what “curling naturally” meant.

We had two best dresses: one made in London, which we only wore on great occasions; the other made by my nurse, in which we went down to dessert. These dresses gave me my first impression of civilised life. Just as the Speaker, before clearing the House, spies strangers, so, when I saw my black velvet skirt and pink Garibaldi put out on the bed, I knew that something was up! The nursery confection was of white alpaca, piped with pink, and did not inspire the same excitement and confidence.

We saw little of our mother in our youth and I asked Laura one day if she thought she said her prayers; I would not have remembered this had it not been that Laura was profoundly shocked. The question was quite uncalled for and had no ulterior motive, but I never remembered my mother or any one else talking to us about the Bible or hearing us our prayers. Nevertheless we were all deeply religious, by which no one need infer that we were good. There was one service a week, held on Sundays, in Traquair Kirk, which every one went to; and the shepherds' dogs kept close to their masters' plaids, hung over the high box-pews, all the way down the aisle. I have heard many fine sermons in Scotland, but our minister was not a good preacher; and we were often dissolved in laughter, sitting in the square family pew in the gallery. My father closed his eyes tightly all through the sermon, leaning his head on his hand.

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The Scottish Sabbath still held its own in my youth; and when I heard that Ribblesdale and Charty played lawn tennis on Sunday after they were married, I felt very unhappy. We had a few Sabbath amusements, but they were not as entertaining as those described in Miss Fowler's book, in which the men who were heathens went into one corner of the room and the women who were Christians into the other and, at the beating of a gong, conversion was accomplished by a close embrace. Our Scottish Sabbaths were very different, and I thought them more than dreary. Although I love church music and architecture and can listen to almost any sermon at any time and even read sermons to myself, going to church in the country remains a sacrifice to me. The painful custom in the Church of England of reading indistinctly and in an assumed voice has alienated simple people in every parish; and the average preaching is painful. In my country you can still hear a good sermon. When staying with Lord Haldane's mother—the most beautiful, humorous and saintly of old ladies—I heard an excellent sermon at Auchterarder on this very subject, the dullness of Sundays. The minister said that, however brightly the sun shone on stained glass windows, no one could guess what they were really like from the outside; it was from the inside only that you should judge of them.

Another time I heard a man end his sermon by saying:

"And now, my friends, do your duty and don't look upon the world with eyes jaundiced by religion."

My mother hardly ever mentioned religion to us and, when the subject was brought up by other people, she confined her remarks to saying in a weary voice and with a resigned sigh that God's ways were mysterious. She had suffered many sorrows and, in estimating her lack of temperament, I do not think I made enough allowance for them. No true woman ever gets over the loss of a child; and her three eldest had died before I was born.

I was the most vital of the family and what the nurses described as a "venturesome child." Our coachman's wife called me "a little Turk." Self-willed, excessively passionate, painfully truthful, bold as well as fearless and always against convention, I was, no doubt, extremely difficult to bring up.

My mother was not lucky with her governesses—we had two at a time, and of every nationality, French, German, Swiss, Italian and Greek—but, whether through my fault or our governesses', I never succeeded in making one of them really love me. Mary Morison, [Foot note: Miss Morison, a cousin of Mr. William Archer's.] who kept a high school for young ladies in Innerleithen, was the first person who influenced me and my sister Laura. She is alive now and a woman of rare intellect and character. She was fonder of Laura than of me, but so were most people.

Here I would like to say something about my sister and Alfred Lyttelton, whom she married in 1885.

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A great deal of nonsense has been written and talked about Laura. There are two printed accounts of her that are true: one has been written by the present Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, in generous and tender passages in the life of her husband, and the other by A. G. C. Liddell; but even these do not quite give the brilliant, witty Laura of my heart. I will quote what my dear friend, Doll Liddell, wrote of her in his Notes from the Life of an Ordinary Mortal:

My acquaintance with Miss Tennant, which led to a close intimacy with herself, and afterwards with her family, was an event of such importance in my life that I feel I ought to attempt some description of her. This is not an easy task, as a more indescribable person never existed, for no one could form a correct idea of what she was like who had not had opportunities of feeling her personal charm. Her looks were certainly not striking at first sight, though to most persons who had known her some weeks she would often seem almost beautiful. To describe her features would give no idea of the brightness and vivacity of her expression, or of that mixture of innocence and mischief, as of a half-child, half-Kelpie, which distinguished her. Her figure was very small but well made, and she was always prettily and daintily dressed. If the outward woman is difficult to describe, what can be said of her character?

To begin with her lighter side, she had reduced fascination to a fine art in a style entirely her own. I have never known her meet any man, and hardly any woman, whom she could not subjugate in a few days. It is as difficult to give any idea of her methods as to describe a dance when the music is unheard. Perhaps one may say that her special characteristic was the way in which she combined the gaiety of a child with the tact and aplomb of a grown woman. ... Her victims, after their period of enchantment, generally became her devoted friends.

This trifling was, however, only the ripple on the surface. In the deeper parts of her nature was a fund of earnestness and a sympathy which enabled her to throw herself into the lives of other people in a quite unusual way, and was one of the great secrets of the general affection she inspired. It was not, however, as is sometimes the case with such feelings, merely emotional, but impelled her to many kindnesses and to constant, though perhaps somewhat impulsive, efforts to help her fellows of all sorts and conditions.

On her mental side she certainly gave the impression, from the originality of her letters and sayings, and her appreciation of what was best in literature, that her gifts were of a high order. In addition, she had a subtle humour and readiness, which made her repartees often delightful and produced phrases and fancies of characteristic daintiness. But there was something more than all this, an extra dose of life, which caused a kind of electricity to flash about her wherever she went, lighting up all with whom she came in contact. I am aware that this description will seem exaggerated, and will be put down to the writer having dwelt in her “Aeaean isle” but I think that if it should

meet the eyes of any who knew her in her short life, they will understand what it attempts to convey.

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This is good, but his poem is even better; and there is a prophetic touch in the line, “Shadowed with something of the future years.”

A face upturned towards the midnight sky,
Pale in the glimmer of the pale starlight,
And all around the black and boundless night,
And voices of the winds which bode and cry.
A childish face, but grave with curves that lie
  Ready to breathe in laughter or in tears,
  Shadowed with something of the future years
That makes one sorrowful, I know not why.
O still, small face, like a white petal torn
  From a wild rose by autumn winds and flung
  On some dark stream the hurrying waves among:
By what strange fates and whither art thou borne?

Laura had many poems written to her from many lovers. My daughter Elizabeth Bibesco’s godfather, Godfrey Webb—a conspicuous member of the Souls, not long since dead—wrote this of her:

“*Half child*, *half woman*.”

Tennyson’s description of Laura in 1883:

“Half child, half woman”—wholly to be loved
By either name she found an easy way
Into my heart, whose sentinels all proved
Unfaithful to their trust, the luckless day
She entered there. “Prudence and reason both!
Did you not question her? How was it pray
She so persuaded you?” “Nor sleep nor sloth,”
They cried, “o’ercame us then, a *child* at play
Went smiling past us, and then turning round
Too late your heart to save, a woman’s face we found.”

Laura was not a plaster saint; she was a generous, clamative, combative little creature of genius, full of humour, imagination, temperament and impulse.

Some one reading this memoir will perhaps say:

“I wonder what Laura and Margot were really like, what the differences and what the resemblances between them were.”

The men who could answer this question best would be Lord Gladstone, Arthur Balfour, Lord Midleton, Sir Rennell Rodd, or Lord Curzon (of Kedleston). I can only say what I think the differences and resemblances were.

Strictly speaking, I was better-looking than Laura, but she had rarer and more beautiful eyes. Brains are such a small part of people that I cannot judge of them as between her and me; and, at the age of twenty-three, when she died, few of us are at the height of our powers, but Laura made and left a deeper impression on the world in her short life than any one that I have ever known. What she really had to a greater degree than other people was true spirituality, a feeling of intimacy with the other world and a sense of the love and wisdom of God and His plan of life. Her mind was informed by true religion; and her heart was fixed. This did not prevent her from being a very great flirt. The first time that a man came to Glen and liked me better than Laura, she was immensely surprised—not more so than I was—and had it not been for the passionate love which we cherished for each other, there must inevitably have been much jealousy between us.

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On several occasions the same man proposed to both of us, and we had to find out from each other what our intentions were.

I only remember being hurt by Laura on one occasion and it came about in this way. We were always dressed alike, and as we were the same size; “M” and “L” had to be written in our clothes as we grew older.

One day, about the time of which I am writing, I was thirteen; I took a letter out of the pocket of what I thought was my skirt and read it; it was from Laura to my eldest sister Posie and, though I do not remember it all, one sentence was burnt into me:

“Does it not seem extraordinary that Margot should be teaching a Sunday class?”

I wondered why any one should think it extraordinary! I went upstairs and cried in a small black cupboard, where I generally disappeared when life seemed too much for me.

The Sunday class I taught need have disturbed no one, for I regret to relate that, after a striking lesson on the birth of Christ, when I asked my pupils who the Virgin was, one of the most promising said:

“Queen Victoria!”

The idea had evidently gone abroad that I was a frivolous character; this hurt and surprised me. Naughtiness and frivolity are different, and I was always deeply in earnest.

Laura was more gentle than I was; and her goodness resolved itself into greater activity.

She and I belonged to a reading-class. I read more than she did and at greater speed, but we were all readers and profited by a climate which kept us indoors and a fine library. The class obliged us to read an hour a day, which could not be called excessive, but the real test was doing the same thing at the same time. I would have preferred three or four hours’ reading on wet days and none on fine, But not so our Edinburgh tutor.

Laura started the Girls’ Friendly Society in the village, which was at that time famous for its drunkenness and immorality. We drove ourselves to the meetings in a high two-wheeled dog-cart behind a fast trotter, coming back late in pitch darkness along icy roads. These drives to Innerleithen and our moonlight talks are among my most precious recollections.

At the meetings—after reading aloud to the girls while they sewed and knitted—Laura would address them. She gave a sort of lesson, moral, social and religious, and they all adored her. More remarkable at her age than speaking to mill-girls were her Sunday

classes at Glen, in the housekeeper's room. I do not know one girl now of any age—-Laura was only sixteen—who could talk on religious subjects with profit to the butler, housekeeper and maids, or to any grown-up people, on a Sunday afternoon.

Compared with what the young men have written and published during this war, Laura's literary promise was not great; both her prose and her poetry were less remarkable than her conversation.

She was not so good a judge of character as I was and took many a goose for a swan, but, in consequence of this, she made people of both sexes—and even all ages—twice as good, clever and delightful as they would otherwise have been.

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I have never succeeded in making any one the least different from what they are and, in my efforts to do so, have lost every female friend that I have ever had (with the exception of four). This was the true difference between us. I have never influenced anybody but my own two children, Elizabeth and Anthony, but Laura had such an amazing effect upon men and women that for years after she died they told me that she had both changed and made their lives. This is a tremendous saying. When I die, people may turn up and try to make the world believe that I have influenced them and women may come forward whom I adored and who have quarrelled with me and pretend that they always loved me, but I wish to put it on record that they did not, or, if they did, their love is not my kind of love and I have no use for it.

The fact is that I am not touchy or impenitent myself and forget that others may be and I tell people the truth about themselves, while Laura made them feel it. I do not think I should mind hearing from any one the naked truth about myself; and on the few occasions when it has happened to me, I have not been in the least offended. My chief complaint is that so few love one enough, as one grows older, to say what they really think; nevertheless I have often wished that I had been born with Laura's skill and tact in dealing with men and women. In her short life she influenced more people than I have done in over twice as many years. I have never influenced people even enough to make them change their stockings! And I have never succeeded in persuading any young persons under my charge—except my own two children—to say that they were wrong or sorry, nor at this time of life do I expect to do so.

There was another difference between Laura and me: she felt sad when she refused the men who proposed to her; I pitied no man who loved me. I told Laura that both her lovers and mine had a very good chance of getting over it, as they invariably declared themselves too soon. We were neither of us au fond very susceptible. It was the custom of the house that men should be in love with us, but I can truly say that we gave quite as much as we received.

I said to Rowley Leigh [Footnote: The Hon. Rowland Leigh, of Stoneleigh Abbey.]—a friend of my brother Eddy's and one of the first gentlemen that ever came to Glen—-when he begged me to go for a walk with him:

"Certainly, if you won't ask me to marry you."

To which he replied:

"I never thought of it!"

"That's all right!" said I, putting my arm confidingly and gratefully through his.

He told me afterwards that he had been making up his mind and changing it for days as to how he should propose.

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Sir David Tennant, a former Speaker at Cape Town and the most distant of cousins, came to stay at Glen with his son, a young man of twenty. After a few days, the young man took me into one of the conservatories and asked me to marry him. I pointed out that I hardly knew him by sight, and that “he was running hares.” He took it extremely well and, much elated, I returned to the house to tell Laura. I found her in tears; she told me Sir David Tennant had asked her to marry him and she had been obliged to refuse. I cheered her up by pointing out that it would have been awkward had we both accepted, for, while remaining my sister, she would have become my mother-in-law and my husband’s stepmother.

We were not popular in Peeblesshire, partly because we had no county connection, but chiefly because we were Liberals. My father had turned out the sitting Tory, Sir Graham Montgomery, of Stobo, and was member for the two counties Peeblesshire and Selkirkshire. As Sir Graham had represented the counties for thirty years, this was resented by the Montgomery family, who proceeded to cut us. Laura was much worried over this, but I was amused. I said the love of the Maxwell Stuarts, Maxwell Scotts, Wolfe Murrays and Sir Thomas—now Lord—Carmichael was quite enough for me and that if she liked she could twist Sir Graham Montgomery round her little finger; as a matter of fact, neither Sir Graham nor his sons disliked us. I met Basil Montgomery at Traquair House many years after my papa’s election, where we were entertained by Herbert Maxwell—the owner of one of the most romantic houses in Scotland, and our most courteous and affectionate neighbour. Not knowing who he was, I was indignant when he told me he thought Peeblesshire was dull; I said where we lived it was far from dull and asked him if he knew many people in the county. To which he answered:

“Chiefly the Stobo lot.”

At this I showed him the most lively sympathy and invited him to come to Glen. In consequence of this visit he told me years afterwards his fortune had been made. My father took a fancy to him and at my request employed him on the Stock Exchange.

Laura and I shared the night nursery together till she married; and, in spite of mixed proposals, we were devoted friends. We read late in bed, sometimes till three in the morning, and said our prayers out loud to each other every night. We were discussing imagination one night and were comparing Hawthorne, De Quincey, Poe and others, in consequence of a dispute arising out of one of our pencil-games; and we argued till the housemaid came in with the hot water at eight in the morning.

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I will digress here to explain our after-dinner games. There were several, but the best were what Laura and I invented: one was called “Styles,” another “Clumps”—better known as “Animal, Vegetable or Mineral”—a third, “Epigrams” and the most dangerous of all “Character Sketches.” We were given no time-limit, but sat feverishly silent in different corners of the room, writing as hard as we could. When it was agreed that we had all written enough, the manuscripts were given to our umpire, who read them out loud. Votes were then taken as to the authorship, which led to first-rate general conversation on books, people and manner of writing. We have many interesting umpires, beginning with Bret Harte and Laurence Oliphant and going on to Arthur Balfour, George Curzon, George Wyndham, Lionel Tennyson, [Footnote: Brother of the present Lord Tennyson.] Harry Cust and Doll Liddell: all good writers themselves.

Some of our guests preferred making caricatures to competing in the more ambitious line of literature. I made a drawing of the Dowager Countess of Aylesbury, better known as “Lady A.”; Colonel Saunderson—a famous Orangeman—did a sketch of Gladstone for me; while Alma Tadema gave me one of Queen Victoria, done in four lines.

These games were good for our tempers and a fine training; any loose vanity, jealousy, or over-competitiveness were certain to be shown up; and those who took the buttons off the foils in the duel of argument—of which I have seen a good deal in my life—were instantly found out. We played all our games with much greater precision and care than they are played now and from practice became extremely good at them. I never saw a playing-card at Glen till after I married, though—when we were obliged to dine downstairs to prevent the company being thirteen at dinner—I vaguely remember a back view of my grandpapa at the card-table playing whist.

Laura was a year and a half older than I was and came out in 1881, while I was in Dresden. The first party that she and I went to together was a political crush given by Sir William and Lady Harcourt. I was introduced to Spencer Lyttleton and shortly after this Laura met his brother Alfred.

One day, as she and I were leaving St. Paul’s Cathedral, she pointed out a young man to me and said:

“Go and ask Alfred Lyttelton to come to Glen any time this autumn,” which I promptly did.

The advent of Alfred into our family coincided with that of several new men, the Charterises, Balfours, George Curzon, George Wyndham, Harry Cust, the Crawleys, Jack Pease, “Harry” Paulton, Lord Houghton, Mark Napier, Doll Liddell and others. High hopes had been entertained by my father that some of these young men might marry us, but after the reception we gave to Lord Lymington —who, to do him justice, never proposed to any of us except in the paternal imagination—his nerve was shattered and we were left to ourselves.

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Some weeks before Alfred's arrival, Laura had been much disturbed by hearing that we were considered "fast"; she told me that receiving men at midnight in our bedroom shocked people and that we ought, perhaps, to give it up. I listened closely to what she had to say, and at the end remarked that it appeared to me to be quite absurd. Godfrey Webb agreed with me and said that people who were easily shocked were like women who sell stale pastry in cathedral towns; and he advised us to take no notice whatever of what any one said. We hardly knew the meaning of the word "fast" and, as my mother went to bed punctually at eleven, it was unthinkable that men and women friends should not be allowed to join us. Our bedroom had been converted by me out of the night-nursery into a sitting-room. The shutters were removed and book-shelves put in their place, an idea afterwards copied by my friends. The Morris carpet and chintzes I had discovered for myself and chosen in London; and my walls were ornamented with curious objects, varying from caricatures and crucifixes to prints of prize-fights, fox-hunts, Virgins and Wagner. In one of the turrets I hung my clothes; in the other I put an altar on which I kept my books of prayer and a skull which was given to me by the shepherd's son and which is on my bookshelf now; we wore charming dressing-jackets and sat up in bed with coloured cushions behind our backs, while the brothers and their friends sat on the floor or in comfortable chairs round the room. On these occasions the gas was turned low, a brilliant fire made up and either a guest or one of us would read by the light of a single candle, tell ghost-stories or discuss current affairs: politics, people and books. Not only the young, but the old men came to our gatherings. I remember Jowett reading out aloud to us Thomas Hill Green's lay sermons; and when he had finished I asked him how much he had loved Green, to which he replied:

"I did not love him at all."

That these midnight meetings should shock any one appeared fantastic; and as most people in the house agreed with me, they were continued.

It was not this alone that disturbed Laura; she wanted to marry a serious, manly fellow, but as she was a great flirt, other types of a more brilliant kind obscured this vision and she had become profoundly undecided over her own love-affairs; they had worked so much upon her nerves that when Mr. Lyttelton came to Glen she was in bed with acute neuralgia and unable to see him.

My father welcomed Alfred warmly, for, apart from his charming personality, he was Gladstone's nephew and had been brought up in the Liberal creed.

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On the evening of his arrival, we all went out after dinner. There had been a terrific gale which had destroyed half a wood on a hill in front of the library windows and we wanted to see the roots of the trees blown up by dynamite. It was a moonlight night, but the moon is always brighter in novels than in life and it was pitch dark. Alfred and I, walking arm in arm, talked gaily to each other as we stumbled over the broken brushwood by the side of the Quair burn. As we approached the wood a white birch lay across the water at a slanting angle and I could not resist leaving Alfred's side to walk across it. It was, however, too slippery for me and I fell. Alfred plunged into the burn and scrambled me out. I landed on my feet and, except for sopping stockings, no harm was done. Our party had scattered in the dark and, as it was past midnight, we walked back to the house alone. When we returned, we found everybody had gone to their rooms and Alfred suggested carrying me up to bed. As I weighed under eight stone, he lifted me up like a toy and deposited me on my bed. Kneeling down, he kissed my hand and said good night to me.

Two days after this my brother Eddy and I travelled North for the Highland meeting. Laura, who had been gradually recovering, was well enough to leave her room that day; and I need hardly say that this had the immediate effect of prolonging Alfred's visit.

On my return to Glen ten days later she told me she had made up her mind to marry Alfred Lyttleton.

After what Mrs. Lyttelton has written of her husband, there is little to add, but I must say one word of my brother-in-law as he appeared to me in those early days.

Alfred Lyttelton was a vital, splendid young man of fervent nature, even more spoilt than we were. He was as cool and as fundamentally unsusceptible as he was responsive and emotional. Every one adored him; he combined the prowess at games of a Greek athlete with moral right-mindedness of a high order. He was neither a gambler nor an artist. He respected discipline, but loathed asceticism.

What interested me most in him was not his mind—which lacked elasticity—but his religion, his unquestioning obedience to the will of God and his perfect freedom from cant. His mentality was brittle and he was as quick-tempered in argument as he was sunny and serene in games. There are people who thought Alfred was a man of strong physical passions, wrestling with temptation till he had achieved complete self-mastery, but nothing was farther from the truth. In him you found combined an ardent nature, a cool temperament and a peppery intellectual temper. Alfred would have been justified in taking out a patent in himself as an Englishman, warranted like a dye never to lose colour. To him most foreigners were frogs. In Edward Lyttelton's admirable monograph of his brother, you will read that one day, when Alfred was in the train, sucking an orange, "a

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small, grubby Italian, leaning on his walking-stick, smoking a cheroot at the station," was looked upon, not only by Alfred but by his biographer, as an "irresistible challenge to fling the juicy, but substantial, fragment full at the unsuspecting foreigner's cheek." At this we are told that "Alfred collapsed into noble convulsions of laughter." I quote this incident, as it illustrates the difference between the Tennant and the Lyttelton sense of humour. Their laughter was a tornado or convulsion to which they succumbed; and even the Hagley ragging, though, according to Edward Lyttelton's book, it was only done with napkins, sounds formidable enough. Laura and Alfred enjoyed many things together—books, music and going to church—but they did not laugh at the same things. I remember her once saying to me in a dejected voice:

"Wouldn't you have thought that, laughing as loud as the Lytteltons do, they would have loved Lear? Alfred says none of them think him a bit funny and was quite testy when I said his was the only family in the world that didn't."

It was his manliness, spirituality and freedom from pettiness that attracted Alfred to Laura; he also had infinite charm. It might have been said of him what the Dowager Lady Grey wrote of her husband to Henry when thanking him for his sympathy:

"He lit so many fires in cold rooms."

After Alfred's death, my husband said this of him in the House of Commons:

It would not, I think, be doing justice to the feelings which are uppermost in many of our hearts, if we passed to the business of the day without taking notice of the fresh gap which has been made in our ranks by the untimely death of Mr. Alfred Lyttelton. It is a loss of which I hardly trust myself to speak; for, apart from ties of relationship, there had subsisted between us for thirty-three years, a close friendship and affection which no political differences were ever allowed to loosen, or even to affect. Nor could I better describe it than by saying that he, perhaps, of all men of this generation, came nearest to the mould and ideal of manhood, which every English father would like to see his son aspire to, and, if possible, to attain. The bounty of nature, enriched and developed not only by early training, but by constant self-discipline through life, blended in him gifts and graces which, taken alone, are rare, and in such attractive union are rarer still. Body, mind and character, the schoolroom, the cricket field, the Bar, the House of Commons—each made its separate contribution to the faculty and the experience of a many-sided and harmonious whole. But what he was he gave—gave with such ease and exuberance that I think it may be said without exaggeration that wherever he moved he seemed to radiate vitality and charm. He was, as we here know, a strenuous fighter. He has left behind him no resentments and no enmity; nothing but a gracious memory of a manly and winning personality, the memory of one who

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served with an unstinted measure of devotion his generation and country. He has been snatched away in what we thought was the full tide of buoyant life, still full of promise and of hope. What more can we say? We can only bow once again before the decrees of the Supreme Wisdom. Those who loved him—and they are many, in all schools of opinion, in all ranks and walks of life—when they think of him, will say to themselves:

This is the happy warrior, this is he
Who every man in arms should wish to be.

On the occasion of Alfred Lyttelton's second visit to Glen, I will quote my diary:

"Laura came into my bedroom. She was in a peignoir and asked me what she should wear for dinner. I said:

"'Your white muslin, and hurry up. Mr. Lyttelton is strumming in the Doo'cot and you had better go and entertain him, poor fellow, as he is leaving for London tonight.'

"She tied a blue ribbon in her hair, hastily thrust her diamond brooch into her fichu and then, with her eyes very big and her hair low and straight upon her forehead, she went into our sitting-room (we called it the Doo'cot, because we all quarrelled there). Feeling rather small, but, half-shy, half-bold, she shut the door and, leaning against it, watched Alfred strumming. He turned and gazed at the little figure so near him, so delicate in her white dress.

"The silence was broken by Alfred asking her if any man ever left Glen without telling her that he loved her; but suddenly all talk stopped and she was in his arms, hiding her little face against his hard coat. There was no one to record what followed; only the night rising with passionate eyes:

'The hiding, receiving night that talks not.'

"They were married on the 10th of May, 1885. "In April of 1886, Laura's baby was expected any day; and my mother was anxious that I should not be near her when the event took place. The Lytteltons lived in Upper Brook Street; and, Grosvenor Square being near, it was thought that any suffering on her part might make a lasting and painful impression on me, so I was sent down to Easton Grey to stay with Lucy and hunt in the Badminton country. Before going away, I went round to say good-bye to Laura and found her in a strange humour.

"*Laura*: 'I am sure I shall die with my baby.'

"*Margot*: 'How can you talk such nonsense? Every one thinks that. Look at mamma! She had twelve children without a pang!'

"*Laura*: 'I know she did; but I am sure I shall die.'

"*Margot*: 'I am just as likely to be killed out hunting as you are to die, darling! It makes me miserable to hear you talk like this.'

"*Laura*: 'If I die, Margot, I want you to read my will to the relations and people that will be in my bedroom. It is in that drawer. Promise me you will not forget.'

"*Margot*: 'All right, darling, I will; but let us kneel down and pray that, whether it is me or you who die first, if it is God's will, one of us may come to the other down here and tell us the truth about the next world and console us as much as possible in this!'"

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We knelt and prayed and, though I was more removed from the world and in the humour both to see and to hear what was not material, in my grief over Laura's death, which took place ten days later, I have never heard from her or of her from that day to this.

Mrs. Lyttelton has told the story of her husband's first marriage with so much perfection that I hesitate to go over the same ground again, but, as my sister Laura's death had more effect on me than any event in my life, except my own marriage and the birth of my children, I must copy a short account of it written at that time:

'On Saturday, 17th April, 1886, I was riding down a green slope in Gloucestershire while the Beaufort hounds were scattered below vainly trying to pick up the scent; they were on a stale line and the result had been general confusion. It was a hot day and the woods were full of children and primroses.

"The air was humming with birds and insects, nature wore an expectant look and all the hedge-rows sparkled with the spangles of the spring. There was a prickly gap under a tree which divided me from my companions. I rode down to jump it, but, whether from breeding, laziness or temper, my horse turned round and refused to move. I took my foot out of the stirrup and gave him a slight kick. I remember nothing after that till I woke up in a cottage with a tremendous headache. They said that the branch was too low, or the horse jumped too big and a withered bough had caught me in the face. In consequence I had concussion of the brain; and my nose and upper lip were badly torn. I was picked up by my early fiance. He tied my lip to my hair—as it was reposing on my chin— and took me home in a cart. The doctor was sent for, but there was no time to give me chloroform. I sat very still from vanity while three stitches were put through the most sensitive part of my nose. When it was all over, I looked at myself in the looking-glass and burst into tears. I had never been very pretty ("worse than that," as the Marquis of Soveral [Footnote: The Late Portuguese Minister.] said) but I had a straight nose and a look of intelligence; and now my face would be marked for life like a German student's.

"The next day a telegram arrived saying: "'Laura confined—a boy— both doing well.'

"We sent back a message saying: "'Hurrah and blessing!'

On Sunday we received a letter from Charty saying Laura was very ill and another on Monday telling us to go to London. I was in a state of acute anxiety and said to the doctor I must go and see Laura immediately, but he would not hear of it:

"'Impossible! You'll get erysipelas and die. Most dangerous to move with a face like that,' he said.

“On the occasion of his next visit, I was dressed and walking up and down the room in a fume of nervous excitement, for go I *would*. Laura was dying (I did not really think she was, but I wanted to be near her). I insisted upon his taking the stitches out of my face and ultimately he had to give in. At 6 p.m. I was in the train for London, watching the telegraph-posts flying past me.

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“My mind was going over every possibility. I was sitting near her bed with the baby on my arm, chattering over plans, arranging peignoirs, laughing at the nurse’s anecdotes, talking and whispering over the thousand feminine things that I knew she would be longing to hear. ... Or perhaps she was dying... asking for me and wondering why I did not come... thinking I was hunting instead of being with her. Oh, how often the train stopped! Did any one really live at these stations? No one got out; they did not look like real places; why should the train stop? Should I tell them Laura was dying? ... We had prayed so often to die the same day. ... Surely she was not going to die... it could not be... her vitality was too splendid, her youth too great... God would not allow this thing. How stiff my face felt with its bandages; and if I cried they would all come off!

“At Swindon I had to change. I got out and sat in the vast eating-room, with its atmosphere of soup and gas. A crowd of people were talking of a hunting accident: this was mine. Then a woman came in and put her bag down. A clergyman shook hands with her; he said some one had died. I moved away.

“‘World! Trewth! The Globe! Paper, miss? Paper? ...’

“‘No, thank you.’

“‘London train!’ was shouted and I got in. I knew by the loud galloping sound that we were going between high houses and at each gallop the wheels seemed to say, ‘Too late—too late!’ After a succession of hoarse screams we dashed into Paddington.

“It was midnight. I saw a pale, grave face, and recognised Evan Charteris, who had come in Lady Wemyss’ brougham to meet me. I said:

‘"Is she dead?’ “To which he answered: “‘No, but very, very ill.’ “We drove in silence to 4 Upper Brook Street.

Papa, Jack and Godfrey Webb stood in the hall. They stopped me as I passed and said: ‘She is no worse’; but I could not listen. I saw Arthur Balfour and Spencer Lyttelton standing near the door of Alfred’s room. They said: “‘You look ill. Have you had a fall?’

“I explained the plaster on my swollen face and asked if I might go upstairs to see Laura; and they said they thought I might. When I got to the top landing, I stood in the open doorway of the boudoir. A man was sitting in an arm-chair by a table with a candle on it. It was Alfred and I passed on. I saw the silhouette of a woman through the open door of Laura’s room; this was Charty. We held each other close to our hearts... her face felt hot and her eyes were heavy.

“‘Don’t look at her to-night, sweet. She is unconscious,’ she said.

“I did not take this in and asked to be allowed to say one word to her. ... I said:

“’I know she’d like to see me, darling, if only just to nod to, and I promise I will go away quickly. Indeed, indeed I would not tire her! I want to tell her the train was late and the doctor would not let me come up yesterday. Only one second, *please*, Charty! ...’

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“’But, my darling heart, she’s unconscious. She has never been conscious all day. She would not know you!’

“I sank stunned upon the stair. Some one touched my shoulder:

“’You had better go to bed, it is past one. No, you can’t sleep here: there’s no bed. You must lie down; a sofa won’t do, you are too ill. Very well, then, you are not ill, but you will be to-morrow if you don’t go to bed.’

“I found myself in the street, Arthur Balfour holding one of my arms and Spencer Lyttelton the other. They took me to 40 Grosvenor Square. I went to bed and early next morning I went across to Upper Brook Street. The servant looked happy:

“‘She’s better, miss, and she’s conscious.’

“I flew upstairs, and Charty met me in her dressing-gown. She was calm and capable as always, but a new look, less questioning and more intense, had come into her face. She said:

“‘You can go in now.’

“I felt a rushing of my soul and an over-eagerness that half-stopped me as I opened the door and stood at the foot of the wooden bed and gazed at what was left of Laura.

“Her face had shrunk to the size of a child’s; her lashes lay a black wall on the whitest of cheeks; her hair was hanging dragged up from her square brow in heavy folds upon the pillow. Her mouth was tightly shut and a dark blood-stain marked her chin. After a long silence, she moved and muttered and opened her eyes. She fixed them on me, and my heart stopped. I stretched my hands out towards her, and said, ’Laura!’... But the sound died; she did not know me. I knew after that she could not live.

“People went away for the Easter Holidays: Papa to North Berwick, Arthur Balfour to Westward Ho! and every day Godfrey Webb rode a patient cob up to the front door, to hear that she was no better. I sat on the stairs listening to the roar of London and the clock in the library. The doctor—Matthews Duncan—patted my head whenever he passed me on the stair and said, in his gentle Scotch accent:

“‘Poor little girl! Poor, poor little girl!’

“I was glad he did not say that ’while there was life there was hope,’ or any of the medical platitudes, or I would have replied that he *lied*. There was no hope—none! ...

“One afternoon I went with Lucy to St. George’s, Hanover Square. The old man was sweeping out the church; and we knelt and prayed. Laura and I have often knelt side by

side at that altar and I never feel alone when I am in front of the mysterious Christ-picture, with its bars of violet and bunches of grapes.

“On my return I went upstairs and lay on the floor of Laura’s bedroom, watching Alfred kneeling by her side with his arms over his head. Charty sat with her hands clasped; a single candle behind her head transfigured her lovely hair into a halo. Suddenly Laura opened her eyes and, turning them slowly on Charty, said:

“‘You are *heavenly*! . . .’

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“A long pause, and then while we were all three drawing near her bed we heard her say:

“‘I think God has forgotten me.’

“The fire was weaving patterns on the ceiling; every shadow seemed to be looking with pity on the silence of that room, the long silence that has never been broken.

“I did not go home that night, but slept at Alfred’s house. Lucy had gone to the early Communion, but I had not accompanied her, as I was tired of praying. I must have fallen into a heavy sleep, when suddenly I felt some one touching my bed. I woke with a start and saw nurse standing beside me. She said in a calm voice:

“’My dear, you must come. Don’t look like that; you won’t be able to walk.’

“Able to walk! Of course I was! I was in my dressing-gown and downstairs in a flash and on to the bed. The room was full of people. I lay with my arm under Laura, as I did in the old Glen days, when after our quarrels we crept into each other’s beds to’make it up.’ Alfred was holding one of her hands against his forehead; and Charty was kneeling at her feet.

“She looked much the same, but a deeper shadow ran under her brow and her mouth seemed to be harder shut. I put my cheek against her shoulder and felt the sharpness of her spine. For a minute we lay close to each other, while the sun, fresh from the dawn, played upon the window-blinds. ... Then her breathing stopped; she gave a shiver and died. ... The silence was so great that I heard the flight of Death and the morning salute her soul.

“I went downstairs and took her will out of the drawer where she had put it and told Alfred what she had asked me to do. The room was dark with people; and a tall man, gaunt and fervid, was standing up saying a prayer. When he had finished I read the will through:

My Will [Footnote: The only part of the will I have left out is a few names with blank spaces which she intended to fill up.], made by me, Laura Mary Octavia Lyttelton, February, 1886.

“I have not much to leave behind me, should I die next month, having my treasure deep in my heart where no one can reach it, and where even Death cannot enter. But there are some things that have long lain at the gates of my Joy House that in some measure have the colour of my life in them, and would, by rights of love, belong to those who have entered there. I should like Alfred to give these things to my friends, not because my friends will care so much for them, but because they will love best being where I loved to be.

“I want, first of all, to tell Alfred that all I have in the world and all I am and ever shall be, belongs to him, and to him more than any one, so that if I leave away from him anything that speaks to him of a joy unknown to me, or that he holds dear for any reason wise or unwise, it is his, and my dear friends will forgive him and me.

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“So few women have been as happy as I have been every hour since I married—so few have had such a wonderful sky of love for their common atmosphere, that perhaps it will seem strange when I write down that the sadness of Death and Parting is greatly lessened to me by the fact of my consciousness of the eternal, indivisible oneness of Alfred and me. I feel as long as he is down here I must be here, silently, secretly sitting beside him as I do every evening now, however much my soul is the other side, and that if Alfred were to die, we would be as we were on earth, love as we did this year, only fuller, quicker, deeper than ever, with a purer passion and a wiser worship. Only in the meantime, whilst my body is hid from him and my eyes cannot see him, let my trivial toys be his till the morning comes when nothing will matter because all is spirit.

“If my baby lives I should like it to have my pearls. I do not love my diamond necklace, so I won’t leave it to any one.

“I would like Alfred to have my Bible. It has always rather worried him to hold because it is so full of things; but if I know I am dying, I will clean it out, because, I suppose, he won’t like to after. I think I am fonder of it—not, I mean, because it’s the Bible—but because it’s such a friend, and has been always with me, chiefly under my pillow, ever since I had it—than of anything I possess, and I used to read it a great deal when I was much better than I am now. I love it very much, so, Alfred, you must keep it for me.

“Then the prayer book Francie [Footnote: Lady Horner, of Mells.] gave me is what I love next, and I love it so much I feel I would like to take it with me. Margot wants a prayer book, so I leave it to her. It is so dirty outside, but perhaps it would be a pity to bind it. Margot is to have my darling little Daily Light, too.

“Then Charty is to have my paste necklace she likes, and any two prints she cares to have, and my little trefeuille diamond brooch —oh! and the Hope she painted for me. I love it very much, and my amethyst beads.

“Little Barbara is to have my blue watch, and Tommy my watch— there is no chain.

“Then Lucy is to have my Frances belt, because a long time ago the happiest days of my girlhood were when we first got to know Francie, and she wore that belt in the blue days at St. Moritz when we met her at church and I became her lover; and I want Lucy to have my two Blakes and the dear little Martin Schongaun Madonna and Baby—dear little potbellied baby, sucking his little sacred thumb in a garden with a beautiful wall and a little pigeon-house turret. I bought it myself, and do rather think it was clever of me—-all for a pound.

“And Posie is to have my little diamond wreaths, and she must leave them to Joan, [Footnote: My niece, Mrs. Jamie Lindsay.] and she is to have my garnets too, because she used to like them, and my Imitation and Marcus Aurelius.

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“I leave Eddy my little diamond necklace for his wife, and he must choose a book.

“And Frank is just going to be married, so I would like him to have some bit of my furniture, and his wife my little silver clock.

“I leave Jack the little turquoise ring Graham gave me. He must have it made into a stud.

“Then I want Lavinia [Footnote: Lavinia Talbot is wife of the present Bishop of Winchester] to have my bagful of silver dressing-things Papa gave me, and the little diamond and sapphire bangle I am so fond of; and tell her what a joy it has been to know her, and that the little open window has let in many sunrises on my married life. She will understand.

“Then I want old Lucy [Footnote: Lady Frederick Cavendish, whose husband was murdered in Ireland] to have my edition of the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” that dear old one, and my photograph in the silver frame of Alfred, if my baby dies too, otherwise it is to belong to him (or her). Lucy was Alfred’s little proxy-mother, and she deserves him. He sent the photograph to me the first week we were engaged, and I have carried it about ever since. I don’t think it very good. It always frightened me a little; it is so stern and just, and the ‘just man’ has never been a hero of mine. I love Alfred when he is what he is to me, and I don’t feel that is just, but generous.

“Then I want Edward [Footnote: The late Head Master of Eton] to have the “Days of Creation,” and Charles [Footnote: The present Lord Cobham, Alfred’s eldest brother] to have my first editions of Shelley, and Arthur [Footnote: The late Hon. Arthur Temple Lyttelton, Bishop of Southampton] my first edition of Beaumont and Fletcher; and Kathleen [Footnote: The Late Hon. Mrs. Arthur Lyttelton.] is to have my little silver crucifix that opens, and Alfred must put in a little bit of my hair, and Kathleen must keep it for my sake—I loved her from the first.

“I want Alfred to give my godchild, Cicely Horner,[Footnote: The present Hon. Mrs. George Lambton.], the bird-brooch Burne Jones designed, and the Sintram Arthur [Footnote: The Right Hon. Arthur Balfour.], gave me. I leave my best friend, Frances, my grey enamel and diamond bracelet, my first edition of Wilhelm Meister, with the music folded up in it, and my Burne Jones ‘’spression’ drawings. Tell her I leave a great deal of my life with her, and that I never can cease to be very near her.

“I leave Mary Elcho [Footnote: The present Countess of Wemyss.] my Chippendale cradle. She must not think it bad luck. I suppose some one else possessed it once, and, after all, it isn’t as if I died in it! She gave me the lovely hangings, and I think she will love it a little for my sake, because I always loved cradles and all cradled things; and I leave her my diamond and red enamel crescent Arthur gave me. She must wear it because two of her dear friends are in it, as it were. And I would like her to have oh!

such a blessed life, because I think her character is so full of blessed things and symbols. ...

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“I leave Arthur Balfour—Alfred’s and my dear, deeply loved friend, who has given me so many happy hours since I married, and whose sympathy, understanding, and companionship in the deep sense of the word has never been withheld from me when I have sought it, which has not been seldom this year of my blessed Vita Nuova—I leave him my Johnson. He taught me to love that wisest of men—and I have much to be grateful for in this. I leave him, too, my little ugly Shelley—much read, but not in any way beautiful; if he marries I should like him to give his wife my little red enamel harp—I shall never see her if I die now, but I have so often created her in the Islands of my imagination—and as a Queen has she reigned there, so that I feel in the spirit we are in some measure related by some mystic tie.”

Out of the many letters Alfred received, this is the one I liked best:

Hawarden Castle,

April 27th, 1886. *My dear Alfred*,

It is a daring and perhaps a selfish thing to speak to you at a moment when your mind and heart are a sanctuary in which God is speaking to you in tones even more than usually penetrating and solemn. Certainly it pertains to few to be chosen to receive such lessons as are being taught you. If the wonderful trials of Apostles, Saints and Martyrs have all meant a love in like proportion wonderful, then, at this early period of your life, your lot has something in common with theirs, and you will bear upon you life-long marks of a great and peculiar dispensation which may and should lift you very high. Certainly you two who are still one were the persons whom in all the vast circuit of London life those near you would have pointed to as exhibiting more than any others the promise and the profit of *both* worlds. The call upon you for thanksgiving seemed greater than on any one—you will not deem it lessened now. How eminently true it is of her that in living a short she fulfilled a long time. If Life is measured by intensity, hers was a very long life—and yet with that rich development of mental gifts, purity and singleness made her one of the little children of whom and of whose like is the Kingdom of Heaven. Bold would it indeed be to say such a being died prematurely. All through your life, however it be prolonged, what a precious possession to you she will be. But in giving her to your bodily eye and in taking her away the Almighty has specially set His seal upon you. To Peace and to God’s gracious mercy let us heartily, yes, cheerfully, commend her. Will you let Sir Charles and Lady Tennant and all her people know how we feel with and for them?

Ever your affec.

W. E. *Gladstone*.

Matthew Arnold sent me this poem because Jowett told him I said it might have been written for Laura:

REQUIESCAT

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
Ah, would that I did too!

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Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound,
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

CHAPTER III

SLUMMING IN LONDON; ADVENTURE IN WHITECHAPEL; BRAWL IN A SALOON; OUTINGS WITH WORKING GIRLS—MARGOT MEETS THE PRINCESS OF WALES — GOSSIP OVER FRIENDSHIP WITH PRINCE OF WALES—LADY RANDOLPH CHURCHILL'S BALL—MARGOT'S FIRST HUNT; ECCENTRIC DUKE OF BEAUFORT; FALLS IN LOVE AT SEVENTEEN; COMMANDEERS A HORSE

After Laura's death I spent most of my time in the East End of London. One day, when I was walking in the slums of Whitechapel, I saw a large factory and girls of all ages pouring in and out of it. Seeing the name "Cliffords" on the door, I walked in and asked a workman to show me his employer's private room. He indicated with his finger where it was and I knocked and went in. Mr. Cliffords, the owner of the factory, had a large red face and was sitting in a bare, squalid room, on a hard chair, in front of his writing-table. He glanced at me as I shut the door, but did not stop writing. I asked him if I might visit his factory once or twice a week and talk to the work-girls. At this he put his pen down and said:

"Now, miss, what good do you suppose you will do here with my girls?"

Margot: "It is not exactly *that*. I am not sure I can do any one any good, but do you think I could do your girls any harm?"

Cliffords: "Most certainly you could and, what is more, you *will*"

Margot: "How?"

Cliffords: "Why, bless my soul! You'll keep them all jawing and make them late for their work! As it is, they don't do overmuch. Do you think my girls are wicked and that you are going to make them good and happy and save them and all that kind of thing?"

Margot: "Not at all; I was not thinking of them, *I* am so very unhappy myself."

Cliffords (*rather moved and looking at me with curiosity*): "Oh, that's quite another matter! If you've come here to ask me a favour, I might consider it."

Margot (*humbly*): "That is just what I have come for. I swear I would only be with your girls in the dinner interval, but if by accident I arrive at the wrong time I will see that they do not stop their work. It is far more likely that they won't listen to me at all than that they will stop working to hear what I have to say."

Cliffords: "Maybe!"

So it was fixed up. He shook me by the hand, never asked my name and I visited his factory three days a week for eight years when I was in London (till I married, in 1894).

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The East End of London was not a new experience to me. Laura and I had started a creche at Wapping the year I came out; and in following up the cases of deserving beggars I had come across a variety of slums. I have derived as much interest and more benefit from visiting the poor than the rich and I get on better with them. What was new to me in Whitechapel was the head of the factory.

Mr. Cliffords was what the servants describe as “a man who keeps himself to himself,” gruff, harsh, straight and clever. He hated all his girls and no one would have supposed, had they seen us together, that he liked me; but, after I had observed him blocking the light in the doorway of the room when I was speaking, I knew that I should get on with him.

The first day I went into the barn of a place where the boxes were made, I was greeted by a smell of glue and perspiration and a roar of wheels on the cobblestones in the yard. Forty or fifty women, varying in age from sixteen to sixty, were measuring, cutting and glueing cardboard and paper together; not one of them looked up from her work as I came in.

I climbed upon a hoarding, and kneeling down, pinned a photograph of Laura on a space of the wall. This attracted the attention of an elderly woman who turned to her companions and said:

“Come and have a look at this, girls! why, it’s to the life!”

Seeing some of the girls leave their work and remembering my promise to Cliffords, I jumped up and told them that in ten minutes’ time they would be having their dinners and then I would like to speak to them, but that until then they must not stop their work. I was much relieved to see them obey me. Some of them kept sandwiches in dirty paper bags which they placed on the floor with their hats, but when the ten minutes were over I was disappointed to see nearly all of them disappear. I asked where they had gone to and was told that they either joined the men packers or went to the public-house round the corner.

The girls who brought sandwiches and stayed behind liked my visits and gradually became my friends. One of them—Phoebe Whitman by name—was beautiful and had more charm than the others for me; I asked her one day if she would take me with her to the public-house where she always lunched, as I had brought my food with me in a bag and did not suppose the public-house people would mind my eating it there with a glass of beer. This request of mine distressed the girls who were my friends. They thought it a terrible idea that I should go among drunkards, but I told them I had brought a book with me which they could look at and read out loud to each other while I was away—at which they nodded gravely —and I went off with my beautiful cockney.

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The “Peggy Bedford” was in the lowest quarter of Whitechapel and crowded daily with sullen and sad-looking people. It was hot, smelly and draughty. When we went in I observed that Phoebe was a favourite; she waved her hand gaily here and there and ordered herself a glass of bitter. The men who had been hanging about outside and in different corners of the room joined up to the counter on her arrival and I heard a lot of chaff going on while she tossed her pretty head and picked at potted shrimps. The room was too crowded for any one to notice me; and I sat quietly in a corner eating my sandwiches and smoking my cigarette. The frosted-glass double doors swung to and fro and the shrill voices of children asking for drinks and carrying them away in their mugs made me feel profoundly unhappy. I followed one little girl through the doors out into the street and saw her give the mug to a cabman and run off delighted with his tip. When I returned I was deafened by a babel of voices; there was a row going on: one of the men, drunk but good-tempered, was trying to take the flower out of Phoebe’s hat. Provoked by this, a young man began jostling him, at which all the others pressed forward; the barman shouted ineffectually to them to stop; they merely cursed him and said that they were backing Phoebe. A woman, more drunk than the others, swore at being disturbed and said that Phoebe was a blasted something that I could not understand. Suddenly I saw her hitting out like a prize-fighter; and the men formed a ring round them. I jumped up, seized an under-fed, blear-eyed being who was nearest to me and flung him out of my way. Rage and disgust inspired me with great physical strength; but I was prevented from breaking through the ring by a man seizing my arm and saying:

“Let be or her man will give you a damned thrashing!”

Not knowing which of the women he was alluding to, I dipped down and, dodging the crowd, broke through the ring and flung myself upon Phoebe; my one fear was that she would be too late for her work and that the promise I had made to Cliffords would be broken.

Women fight very awkwardly and I was battered about between the two. I turned and cursed the men standing round for laughing and doing nothing and, before I could separate the combatants, I had given and received heavy blows; but unexpected help came from a Cliffords packer who happened to look in. We extricated ourselves as well as we could and ran back to the factory. I made Phoebe apologise to the chief for being late and, feeling stiff all over, returned home to Grosvenor Square.

Cliffords, who was an expert boxer, invited me into his room on my next visit to tell him the whole story and my shares went up.

By the end of July all the girls—about fifty-two—stayed with me after their work and none of them went to the “Peggy Bedford.”

The Whitechapel murders took place close to the factory about that time, and the girls and I visited what the journalists call “the scene of the tragedy.” It was strange watching crowds of people collected daily to see nothing but an archway.

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I took my girls for an annual treat to the country every summer, starting at eight in the morning and getting back to London at midnight. We drove in three large wagonettes behind four horses, accompanied by a brass band. On one occasion I was asked if the day could be spent at Caterham, because there were barracks there. I thought it a dreary place and strayed away by myself, but Phoebe and her friends enjoyed glueing their noses to the rails and watching the soldiers drill. I do not know how the controversy arose, but when I joined them I heard Phoebe shout through the railings that some one was a "bloody fish!" I warned her that I should leave Cliffords for ever, if she went on provoking rows and using such violent language, and this threat upset her; for a short time she was on her best behaviour, but I confess I find the poor just as uninfluenceable and ungrateful as the rich, and I often wonder what became of Phoebe Whitman.

At the end of July I told the girls that I had to leave them, as I was going back to my home in Scotland.

Phoebe: "You don't know, lady, how much we all feels for you having to live in the country. Why, when you pointed out to us on the picnic-day that kind of a tower-place, with them walls and dark trees, and said it reminded you of your home, we just looked at each other! 'Well, I never!' sez I; and we all shuddered!"

None of the girls knew what my name was or where I lived till they read about me in the picture-papers, eight years later at the time of my marriage.

When I was not in the East-end of London, I wandered about looking at the shop-windows in the West. One day I was admiring a photograph of my sister Charty in the window of Macmichael's, when a footman touched his hat and asked me if I would speak to "her Grace" in the carriage. I turned round and saw the Duchess of Manchester [Footnote: Afterwards the late Dutchess of Devonshire]; as I had never spoken to her in my life, I wondered what she could possibly want me for. After shaking hands, she said:

"Jump in, dear child! I can't bear to see you look so sad. Jump in and I'll take you for a drive and you can come back to tea with me."

I got into the carriage and we drove round Hyde Park, after which I followed her upstairs to her boudoir in Great Stanhope Street. In the middle of tea Queen Alexandra—then Princess of Wales— came in to see the Duchess. She ran in unannounced and kissed her hostess.

My heart beat when I looked at her. She had more real beauty, both of line and expression, and more dignity than any one I had ever seen; and I can never forget that first meeting.

These were the days of the great beauties. London worshipped beauty like the Greeks. Photographs of the Princess of Wales, Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Cornwallis West, Mrs. Wheeler and Lady Dudley [Footnote: Georgiana, Countess of Dudley.] collected crowds in front of the shop windows. I have seen great and conventional ladies like old Lady Cadogan and others standing on iron chairs in the Park to see Mrs. Langtry walk past; and wherever Georgiana Lady Dudley drove there were crowds round her carriage when it pulled up, to see this vision of beauty, holding a large holland umbrella over the head of her lifeless husband.

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Groups of beauties like the Moncrieffes, Grahams, Conynghams, de Moleynses, Lady Mary Mills, Lady Randolph Churchill, Mrs. Arthur Sassoon, Lady Dalhousie, Lady March, Lady Londonderry and Lady de Grey were to be seen in the salons of the ’eighties. There is nothing at all like this in London to-day and I doubt if there is any one now with enough beauty or temperament to provoke a fight in Rotten Row between gentlemen in high society: an incident of my youth which I was privileged to witness and which caused a profound sensation.

Queen Alexandra had a more perfect face than any of those I have mentioned; it is visible even now, because the oval is still there, the frownless brows, the carriage and, above all, the grace both of movement and of gesture which made her the idol of her people.

London society is neither better nor worse than it was in the ’eighties; there is less talent and less intellectual ambition and much less religion; but where all the beauty has gone to I cannot think!

When the Princess of Wales walked into the Duchess of Manchester’s boudoir that afternoon, I got up to go away, but the Duchess presented me to her and they asked me to stay and have tea, which I was delighted to do. I sat watching her, with my teacup in my hand, thrilled with admiration.

Queen Alexandra’s total absence of egotism and the warmth of her manner, prompted not by consideration, but by sincerity, her gaiety of heart and refinement—rarely to be seen in royal people —inspired me with a love for her that day from which I have never departed.

I had been presented to the Prince of Wales—before I met the Princess—by Lady Dalhousie, in the Paddock at Ascot. He asked me if I would back my fancy for the Wokingham Stakes and have a little bet with him on the race. We walked down to the rails and watched the horses gallop past. One of them went down in great form; I verified him by his colours and found he was called Wokingham. I told the Prince that he was a sure winner; but out of so many entries no one was more surprised than I was when my horse came romping in. I was given a gold cigarette-case and went home much pleased.

King Edward had great charm and personality and enormous prestige; he was more touchy than King George and fonder of pleasure. He and Queen Alexandra, before they succeeded, were the leaders of London society; they practically dictated what people could and could not do; every woman wore a new dress when she dined at Marlborough House; and we vied with each other in trying to please him.

Opinions differ as to the precise function of royalty, but no one doubts that it is a valuable and necessary part of our Constitution. Just as the Lord Mayor represents

commerce, the Prime Minister the Government, and the Commons the people, the King represents society. Voltaire said we British had shown true genius in preventing our kings by law from doing anything but good. This sounds well, but we all know that laws do not prevent men from doing harm.

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The two kings that I have known have had in a high degree both physical and moral courage and have shown a sense of duty unparalleled in the Courts of Europe; it is this that has given them their stability; and added to this their simplicity of nature has won for them our lasting love.

They have been exceptionally fortunate in their private secretaries: Lord Knollys and Lord Stamfordham are liberal-minded men of the highest honour and discretion; and I am proud to call them my friends.

Before I knew the Prince and Princess of Wales, I did not go to fashionable balls, but after that Ascot I was asked everywhere. I was quite unconscious of it at the time, but was told afterwards that people were beginning to criticise me; one or two incidents might have enlightened me had I been more aware of myself.

One night, when I was dining tete-a-tete with my beloved friend, Godfrey Webb, in his flat in Victoria Street, my father sent the brougham for me with a message to ask if I would accompany him to supper at Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill's, where we had been invited to meet the Prince of Wales. I said I should be delighted if I could keep on the dress that I was wearing, but as it was late and I had to get up early next day I did not want to change my clothes; he said he supposed my dress would be quite smart enough, so we drove to the Randolph Churchills' house together.

I had often wanted to know Lord Randolph, but it was only a few days before the supper that I had had the good fortune to sit next to him at dinner. When he observed that he had been put next to a "miss," he placed his left elbow firmly on the table and turned his back upon me through several courses. I could not but admire the way he appeared to eat everything with one hand. I do not know whether it was the lady on his right or what it was that prompted him, but he ultimately turned round and asked me if I knew any politicians. I told him that, with the exception of himself, I knew them all intimately. This surprised him, and after discussing Lord Rosebery—to whom he was devoted—he said:

"Do you know Lord Salisbury?"

I told him that I had forgotten his name in my list, but that I would like above everything to meet him; at which he remarked that I was welcome to all his share of him, adding:

"What do you want to know him for?"

Margot: "Because I think he is amazingly amusing and a very fine writer."

Lord Randolph (muttering something I could not catch about Salisbury lying dead at his feet): "I wish to God that I had *never* known him!"

Margot: “I am afraid you resigned more out of temper than conviction, Lord Randolph.” At this he turned completely round and, gazing at me, said:

“Confound your cheek! What do you know about me and my convictions? I hate Salisbury! He jumped at my resignation like a dog at a bone. The Tories are ungrateful, short-sighted beasts. I hope you are a Liberal?”

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I informed him that I was and exactly what I thought of the Tory party; and we talked through the rest of dinner. Towards the end of our conversation he asked me who I was. I told him that, after his manners to me in the earlier part of the evening, it was perhaps better that we should remain strangers. However, after a little chaff, we made friends and he said that he would come and see me in Grosvenor Square.

On the night of the supper-party, I was wearing a white muslin dress with transparent chemise sleeves, a fichu and a long skirt with a Nattier blue taffeta sash. I had taken a bunch of rose carnations out of a glass and pinned them into my fichu with three diamond ducks given me by Lord Carmichael, our delightful Peeblesshire friend and neighbour.

On my arrival at the Churchills', I observed all the fine ladies wearing ball-dresses off the shoulder and their tiaras. This made me very conspicuous and I wished profoundly that I had changed into something smarter before going out.

The Prince of Wales had not arrived and, as our hostess was giving orders to the White Hungarian Band, my father and I had to walk into the room alone.

I saw several of the ladies eyeing my toilette, and having painfully sharp ears I heard some of their remarks:

"Do look at Miss Tennant! She is in her night-gown!"

"I suppose it is meant to be 'ye olde Englishe pictury!' I wonder she has not let her hair down like the Juliets at the Oakham balls!"

Another, more charitable, said:

"I daresay no one told her that the Prince of Wales was coming. ... Poor child! What a shame!"

And finally a man said:

"There is nothing so odd as the passion some people have for self-advertisement; it only shows what it is to be intellectual!"

At that moment our hostess came up to us with a charming accueil.

The first time I saw Lady Randolph was at Punchestown races, in 1887, where I went with my new friends, Mrs. Bunbury, Hatfield Harter and Peter Flower. I was standing at the double when I observed a woman next to me in a Black Watch tartan skirt, braided coat and astrachan hussar's cap. She had a forehead like a panther's and great wild eyes that looked through you; she was so arresting that I followed her about till I found some one who could tell me who she was.

Had Lady Randolph Churchill been like her face, she could have governed the world.

My father and I were much relieved at her greeting; and while we were talking the Prince of Wales arrived. The ladies fell into position, ceased chattering and made subterranean curtsies. He came straight up to me and told me I was to sit on the other side of him at supper. I said, hanging my head with becoming modesty and in a loud voice:

“Oh no, Sir, I am not dressed at all for the part! I had better slip away, I had no notion this was going to be such a smart party ... I expect some of the ladies here think I have insulted them by coming in my night-gown!”

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I saw every one straining to hear what the Prince's answer would be, but I took good care that we should move out of earshot. At that moment Lord Hartington [Footnote: The late Duke of Devonshire.] came up and told me I was to go in to supper with him. More than ever I wished I had changed my dress, for now every one was looking at me with even greater curiosity than hostility.

The supper was gay and I had remarkable talks which laid the foundation of my friendship both with King Edward and the Duke of Devonshire. The Prince told me he had had a dull youth, as Queen Victoria could not get over the Prince Consort's death and kept up an exaggerated mourning. He said he hoped that when I met his mother I should not be afraid of her, adding, with a charming smile, that with the exception of John Brown everybody was. I assured him with perfect candour that I was afraid of no one. He was much amused when I told him that before he had arrived that evening some of the ladies had whispered that I was in my night-gown and I hope he did not think me lacking in courtesy because I had not put on a ball-dress. He assured me that on the contrary he admired my frock very much and thought I looked like an old picture. This remark made me see uncomfortable visions of the Oakham ball and he did not dispel them by adding:

"You are so original! You must dance the cotillion with me."

I told him that I could not possibly stay, it would bore my father stiff, as he hated sitting up late; also I was not dressed for dancing and had no idea there was going to be a ball. When supper was over, I made my best curtsy and, after presenting my father to the Prince, went home to bed.

Lord Hartington told me in the course of our conversation at supper that Lady Grosvenor [Footnote: The Countess of Grosvenor.] was by far the most dangerous syren in London and that he would not answer for any man keeping his head or his heart when with her, to which I entirely agreed.

When the London season came to an end we all went up to Glen.

Here I must retrace my steps.

In the winter of 1880 I went to stay with my sister, Lucy Graham Smith, in Wiltshire.

I was going out hunting for the first time, never having seen a fox, a hound or a fence in my life; my heart beat as my sisters superintending my toilette put the last hair-pin into a crinkly knot of hair; I pulled on my top-boots and, running down to the front door, found Ribblesdale, who was mounting me, waiting to drive me to the meet. Hounds met at Christian Malford station.

Not knowing that with the Duke of Beaufort's hounds every one wore blue and buff, I was disappointed at the appearance of the field. No one has ever suggested that a touch of navy blue improves a landscape; and, although I had never been out hunting before, I had looked forward to seeing scarlet coats.

We moved off, jostling each other as thick as sardines, to draw the nearest cover. My mount was peacocking on the grass when suddenly we heard a "Halloa!" and the whole field went hammering like John Gilpin down the hard high road.

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Plunging through a gap, I dashed into the open country. Storm flung herself up to the stars over the first fence and I found myself seated on the wettest of wet ground, angry but unhurt; all the stragglers—more especially the funkers—agreeably diverted from pursuing the hunt, galloped off to catch my horse. I walked to a cottage; and nearly an hour afterwards Storm was returned to me.

After this contretemps my mount was more amenable and I determined that nothing should unseat me again. Not being hurt by a fall gives one a sense of exhilaration and I felt ready to face an arm of the sea.

The scattered field were moving aimlessly about, some looking for their second horses, some eating an early sandwich, some in groups laughing and smoking and no one knowing anything about the hounds; I was a little away from the others and wondering—like all amateurs—why we were wasting so much time, when a fine old gentleman on a huge horse came up to me and said, with a sweet smile:

"Do you always whistle out hunting?"

Margot: "I didn't know I was whistling ... I've never hunted before."

Stranger: "Is this really the first time you've ever been out with hounds?"

Margot: "Yes, it is."

Stranger: "How wonderfully you ride! But I am sorry to see you have taken a toss."

Margot: "I fell off at the first fence, for though I've ridden all my life I've never jumped before."

Stranger: "Were you frightened when you fell?"

Margot: "No, my horse was ..."

Stranger: "Would you like to wear the blue and buff?"

Margot: "It's pretty for women, but I don't think it looks sporting for men, though I see you wear it; but in any case I could not get the blue habit."

Stranger: "Why not?"

Margot: "Because the old Duke of Beaufort only gives it to women who own coverts; I am told he hates people who go hard and after today I mean to ride like the devil."

Stranger: "Oh, do you? But is the 'old Duke,' as you call him, so severe?"

Margot: "I've no idea; I've never seen him or any other duke!"

Stranger: "If I told you I could get you the blue habit, what would you say?"

Margot (with a patronising smile): "I'm afraid I should say you were running hares!"

Stranger: "You would have to wear a top-hat, you know, and you would not like that! But, if you are going to ride like the devil, it might save your neck; and in any case it would keep your hair tidy."

Margot (anxiously pushing back her stray curls): "Why, is my hair very untidy? It is the first time it has ever been up; and, when I was 'thrown from my horse,' as the papers call it, all the hair-pins got loose."

Stranger: "It doesn't matter with your hair; it is so pretty I think I shall call you Miss Fluffy! By the bye, what is your name?"

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When I told him he was much surprised:

“Oh, then you are a sister-in-law of the Ancestor’s, are you?”

This was the first time I ever heard Ribblesdale called “the Ancestor”; and as I did not know what he meant, I said:

“And who are you?”

To which he replied:

“I am the Duke of Beaufort and I am not running hares this time. I will give you the blue habit, but you know you will have to wear a top-hat.”

Margot: “Good gracious! I hope I’ve said nothing to offend you? Do you always do this sort of thing when you meet any one like me for the first time?”

Duke of Beaufort (with a smile, lifting his hat): “Just as it is the first time you have ever hunted, so it is the first time I have ever met any one like you.”

On the third day with the Beaufort hounds, my horse fell heavily in a ditch with me and, getting up, galloped away. I was picked up by a good-looking man, who took me into his house, gave me tea and drove me back in his brougham to Easton Grey; I fell passionately in love with him. He owned a horse called Lardy Dardy, on which he mounted me.

Charty and the others chaffed me much about my new friend, saying that my father would never approve of a Tory and that it was lucky he was married.

I replied, much nettled, that I did not want to marry any one and that, though he was a Tory, he was not at all stupid and would probably get into the Cabinet.

This was my first shrewd political prophecy, for he is in the Cabinet now.

I cannot look at him without remembering that he was the first man I was ever in love with, and that, at the age of seventeen, I said he would be in the Cabinet in spite of his being a Tory.

For pure unalloyed happiness those days at Easton Grey were undoubtedly the most perfect of my life. Lucy’s sweetness to me, the beauty of the place, the wild excitement of riding over fences and the perfect certainty I had that I would ride better than any one in the whole world gave me an insolent confidence which no earthquake could have shaken.

Off and on, I felt qualms over my lack of education; and when I was falling into a happy sleep, dreaming I was overriding hounds, echoes of “Pray, Mamma” out of Mrs. Markham, or early punishments of unfinished poems would play about my bed.

On one occasion at Easton Grey, unable to sleep for love of life, I leant out of the window into the dark to see if it was thawing. It was a beautiful night, warm and wet, and I forgot all about my education.

The next day, having no mount, I had procured a hireling from a neighbouring farmer, but to my misery the horse did not turn up at the meet; Mr. Golightly, the charming parish priest, said I might drive about in his low black pony-carriage, called in those days a Colorado beetle, but hunting on wheels was no role for me and I did not feel like pursuing the field.

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My heart sank as I saw the company pass me gaily down the road, preceded by the hounds, trotting with a staccato step and their noses in the air.

Just as I was turning to go home, a groom rode past in mufti, leading a loose horse with a lady's saddle on it. The animal gave a clumsy lurch; and the man, jerking it violently by the head, bumped it into my phaeton. I saw my chance.

Margot: "Hullo, man! ... That's my horse! Whose groom are you?"

Man (rather frightened at being caught jobbing his lady's horse in the mouth): "I am Mrs. Chaplin's groom, miss."

Margot: "Jump off; you are the very man I was looking for; tell me, does Mrs. Chaplin ride this horse over everything?"

Man (quite unsuspicious and thawing at my sweetness and authority): "Bless your soul! Mrs. Chaplin doesn't 'unt this 'orse! It's the Major's! She only 'acked it to the meet."

Margot (apprehensively and her heart sinking): "But can it jump? ... Don't they hunt it?"

Man (pulling down my habit skirt): "It's a 'orse that can very near jump anythink, I should say, but the Major says it shakes every tooth in 'is gums and she says it's pig-'eaded."

It did not take me long to mount and in a moment I had left the man miles behind me. Prepared for the worst, but in high glee, I began to look about me: not a sign of the hunt! Only odd remnants of the meet, straggling foot-passengers, terriers straining at a strap held by drunken runners—some in old Beaufort coats, others in corduroy—one-horse shays of every description by the sides of the road and sloppy girls with stick and tammies standing in gaps of the fences, straining their eyes across the fields to see the hounds.

My horse with a loose rein was trotting aimlessly down the road when, hearing a "Halloa!" I pulled up and saw the hounds streaming towards me all together, so close that you could have covered them with a handkerchief.

What a scent! What a pack! Have I headed the fox? Will they cross the road? No! They are turning away from me! Now's the moment!!

I circled the Chaplin horse round with great resolution and trotted up to a wall at the side of the road; he leapt it like a stag; we flew over the grass and the next fence; and, after a little scrambling, I found myself in the same field with hounds. The horse was as rough as the boy said, but a wonderful hunter; it could not put a foot wrong; we had a great gallop over the walls, which only a few of the field saw.

When hounds checked, I was in despair; all sorts of ladies and gentlemen came riding towards me and I wondered painfully which of them would be Mr. and which Mrs. Chaplin. What was I to do? Suddenly remembering my new friend and patron, I peered about for the Duke; when I found him and told him of the awkward circumstances in which I had placed myself, he was so much amused that he made my peace with the Chaplins, who begged me to go on riding their horse. They were not less susceptible to dukes than other people and in any case no one was proof against the old Duke of Beaufort. At the end of the day I was given the brush—a fashion completely abandoned in the hunting-field now—and I went home happy and tired.

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CHAPTER IV

Margot at A *girls' school—who spilt the ink?—The engine driver's mistaken flirtation—-Margot leaves school in disgust— decides to go to Germany to study*

Although I did not do much thinking over my education, others did it for me.

I had been well grounded by a series of short-stayed governesses in the Druids and woad, in Alfred and the cakes, Romulus and Remus and Bruce and the spider. I could speak French well and German a little; and I knew a great deal of every kind of literature from Tristram Shandy and The Antiquary to Under Two Flags and The Grammarian's Funeral; but the governesses had been failures and, when Lucy married, my mother decided that Laura and I should go to school.

Mademoiselle de Mennecy—a Frenchwoman of ill-temper and a lively mind—had opened a hyper-refined seminary in Gloucester Crescent, where she undertook to "finish" twelve young ladies. My father had a horror of girls' schools (and if he could "get through"—to use the orthodox expression of the spookists—he would find all his opinions on this subject more than justified by the manners, morals and learning of the young ladies of the present day) but as it was a question of only a few months he waived his objection.

No. 7 Gloucester Crescent looked down on the Great Western Railway; the lowing of cows, the bleating of sheep and sudden shrill whistles and other odd sounds kept me awake, and my bed rocked and trembled as the vigorous trains passed at uncertain intervals all through the night. This, combined with sticky food, was more than Laura could bear and she had no difficulty in persuading my papa that if she were to stay longer than one week her health would certainly suffer. I was much upset when she left me, but faintly consoled by receiving permission to ride in the Row three times a week; *Mlle*. de Mennecy thought my beautiful hack gave prestige to her front door and raised no objections.

Sitting alone in the horsehair schoolroom, with a French patent-leather Bible in my hands, surrounded by eleven young ladies, made my heart sink. "Et le roi David deplut a l' Eternel," I heard in a broad Scotch accent; and for the first time I looked closely at my stable companions.

Mlle. de Mennecy allowed no one to argue with her; and our first little brush took place after she informed me of this fact.

"But in that case, mademoiselle," said I, "how are any of us to learn anything? I don't know how much the others know, but I know nothing except what I've read; so, unless I ask questions, how am I to learn?"

Mlle. *De Mennecy*: “Je ne vous ai jamais defendu de me questionner; vous n’ecoutez pas, mademoiselle. J’ai dit qu’il ne fallait pas discuter avec moi.”

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Margot (keenly): "But, mademoiselle, discussion is the only way of making lessons interesting."

Mlle. *De Mennecy* (with violence): "Voulez-vous vous taire?"

To talk to a girl of nearly seventeen in this way was so unintelligent that I made up my mind I would waste neither time nor affection on her.

None of the girls were particularly clever, but we all liked each other and for the first time—and I may safely say the last—I was looked upon as a kind of heroine. It came about in this way: *Mlle*. de Mennecy was never wrong. To quote Miss Fowler's admirable saying a propos of her father, "She always let us have her own way." If the bottle of ink was upset, or the back of a book burst, she never waited to find out who had done it, but in a torrent of words crashed into the first girl she suspected, her face becoming a silly mauve and her bust heaving with passion. This made me so indignant that, one day when the ink was spilt and *Mlle*. de Mennecy as usual scolded the wrong girl, I determined I would stand it no longer. Meeting the victim of Mademoiselle's temper in the passage, I said to her:

"But why didn't you say you hadn't done it, ass!"

Girl (catching her sob): "What was the good! She never listens; and I would only have had to tell her who really spilt the ink."

This did seem a little awkward, so I said to her:

"That would never have done! Very well, then, I will go and put the thing right for you, but tell the girls they must back me. She's a senseless woman and I can't think why you are all so frightened of her."

Girl: "It's all very well for you! Madmozell is a howling snob, you should have heard her on you before you came! She said your father would very likely be made a peer and your sister Laura marry Sir Charles Dilke." (The thought of this overrated man marrying Laura was almost more than I could bear, but curiosity kept me silent, and she continued.) "You see, she is far nicer to you than to us, because she is afraid you may leave her."

Not having thought of this before, I said:

"Is that really true? What a horrible woman! Well, I had better go and square it up; but will you all back me? Now don't go fretting on and making yourself miserable."

Girl: "I don't so much mind what you call her flux-de-bouche scolding, but, when she flounced out of the room, she said I was not to go home this Saturday."

Margot: "Oh, that'll be all right. Just you go off." (Exit girl, drying her eyes.)

It had never occurred to me that *Mlle*. de Mennecy was a snob: this knowledge was a great weapon in my hands and I determined upon my plan of action. I hunted about in my room till I found one of my linen overalls, heavily stained with dolly dyes. After putting it on, I went and knocked at *Mlle*. de Mennecy's door and opening it said:

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“Mademoiselle, I’m afraid you’ll be very angry, but it was I who spilt the ink and burst the back of your dictionary. I ought to have told you at once, I know, but I never thought any girl would be such an image as to let you scold her without telling you she had not done it.” Seeing a look of suspicion on her sunless face, I added nonchalantly, “Of course, if you think my conduct sets a bad example in your school, I can easily go!”

I observed her eyelids flicker and I said:

“I think, before you scolded Sarah, you might have heard what she had to say.”

Mlle. *De Mennecy*: “Ce que vous dites me choque profondement; il m’est difficile de croire que vous avez fait une pareille lachete, mademoiselle!”

Margot (protesting with indignation): “Hardly lachete, Mademoiselle! I only knew a few moments ago that you had been so amazingly unjust. Directly I heard it, I came to you; but as I said before, I am quite prepared to leave.”

Mlle. *De Mennecy* (feeling her way to a change of front): “Sarah s’est conduite si heroiquement que pour le moment je n’insiste plus. Je vous felicite, mademoiselle, sur votre franchise; vous pouvez rejoindre vos camarades.”

The Lord had delivered her into my hands.

One afternoon, when our instructress had gone to hear Princess Christian open a bazaar, I was smoking a cigarette on the schoolroom balcony which overlooked the railway line.

It was a beautiful evening, and a wave of depression came over me. Our prettiest pupil, Ethel Brydson, said to me:

“Time is up! We had better go in and do our preparation. There would be the devil to pay if you were caught with that cigarette.”

I leant over the balcony blowing smoke into the air in a vain attempt to make rings, but, failing, kissed my hand to the sky and with a parting gesture cursed the school and expressed a vivid desire to go home and leave Gloucester Crescent for ever.

Ethel (pulling my dress): “Good gracious, Margot! Stop kissing your hand! Don’t you see that man?”

I looked down and to my intense amusement saw an engine-driver leaning over the side of his tender, kissing his hand to me. I strained over the balcony and kissed both mine back to him, after which I returned to the school-room.

Our piano was placed in the window and, the next morning, while Ethel was arranging her music preparatory to practising, it appeared my friend the engine-driver began kissing his hand to her. It was eight o'clock and *Mlle*. de Mennecy was pinning on her twists in the window.

I had finished my toilette and was sitting in the reading-room, learning the passage chosen by our elocution master for the final competition in recitation.

My fingers were in my ears and I was murmuring in dramatic tones:

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears, I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. ..."

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The girls came in and out, but I never noticed them; and when the breakfast bell rang, I shoved the book into my desk and ran downstairs to breakfast. I observed that Ethel's place was empty; none of the girls looked at me, but munched their bread and sipped their tepid tea while Mademoiselle made a few frigid general remarks and, after saying a French grace, left the room.

"Well," said I, "what's the row?"

Silence.

Margot (looking from face to face): "Ah! The mot d'ordre is that you are not to speak to me. Is that the idea?"

Silence.

Margot (vehemently, with bitterness): "This is exactly what I thought would happen at a girls' school—that I should find myself boycotted and betrayed."

First girl (bursting out): "Oh, Margot, it's not that at all! It's because Ethel won't betray you that we are all to be punished to-day!"

Margot: "What! Collective punishment? And I am the only one to get off? How priceless! Well, I must say this is *Mlle*. de Mennecy's first act of justice. I've been so often punished for all of you that I'm sure you won't mind standing me this little outing! Where is Ethel? Why don't you answer? (Very slowly) Oh, all right! I have done with you! And I shall leave this very day, so help me God!"

On hearing that *Mlle*. de Mennecy had dismissed Ethel on the spot because the engine-driver had kissed his hand to her, I went immediately and told her the whole story; all she answered was that I was such a liar she did not believe a word I said.

I assured her that I was painfully truthful by nature, but her circular and senseless punishments had so frightened the girls that lying had become the custom of the place and I felt in honour bound to take my turn in the lies and the punishments. After which I left the room and the school.

On my arrival in Grosvenor Square I told my parents that I must go home to Glen, as I felt suffocated by the pettiness and conventionality of my late experience. The moderate teaching and general atmosphere of Gloucester Crescent had depressed me, and London feels airless when one is out of spirits: in any case it can never be quite a home to any one born in Scotland.

The only place I look upon as home which does not belong to me is Archerfield [Footnote: Archerfield belonged to Mrs. Hamilton Ogilvie, of Beale.]—a house near North Berwick, in which we lived for seven years. After Glen and my cottage in

Berkshire, Archerfield is the place I love best in the world. I was both happier and more miserable there than I have ever been in my life. Just as William James has written on varieties of religious experience, so I could write on the varieties of my moral and domestic experiences at that wonderful place. If ever I were to be as unhappy again as I was there, I would fly to the shelter of those Rackham woods, seek isolation on those curving coasts where the gulls shriek and dive and be ultimately healed by the beauty of the anchored seas which bear their islands like the Christ Child on their breasts.

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Unfortunately for me, my father had business which kept him in London. He was in treaty with Lord Gerard to buy his uninteresting house in an uninteresting square. The only thing that pleased me in Grosvenor Square was the iron gate. When I could not find the key of the square and wanted to sit out with my admirers, after leaving a ball early, I was in the habit of climbing over these gates in my tulle dress. This was a feat which was attended by more than one risk: if you did not give a prominent leap off the narrow space from the top of the gate, you would very likely be caught up by the tulle fountain of your dress, in which case you might easily lose your life; or, if you did not keep your eye on the time, you would very likely be caught by an early house-maid, in which case you might easily lose your reputation. No one is a good judge of her own reputation, but I like to think that those iron gates were the silent witnesses of my milder manner.

My father, however, loved Grosvenor Square and, being anxious that Laura and I should come out together, bought the house in 1881.

No prodigal was ever given a warmer welcome than I was when I left the area of the Great Western Railway; but the problem of how to finish my education remained and I was determined that I would not make my debut till I was eighteen. What with reading, hunting and falling in love at Easton Grey, I was not at all happy and wanted to be alone.

I knew no girls and had no friends except my sisters and was not eager to talk to them about my affairs; I never could at any time put all of myself into discussion which degenerates into gossip. I had not formed the dangerous habit of writing good letters about myself, dramatizing the principal part. I shrank then, as I do now, from exposing the secrets and sensations of life. Reticence should guard the soul and only those who have compassion should be admitted to the shrine. When I peer among my dead or survey my living friends, I see hardly any one with this quality. For the moment my cousin Nan Tennant, Mrs. Arthur Sassoon, Mrs. James Rothschild, Antoine Bibesco, and my son and husband are the only people I can think of who possess it.

John Morley has, in carved letters of stone upon his chimney-piece, Bacon's fine words, "The nobler a soul, the more objects of compassion it hath."

When I first read them, I wondered where I could meet those souls and I have wondered ever since. To have compassion you need courage, you must fight for the objects of your pity and you must feel and express tenderness towards all men. You will not meet disinterested emotion, though you may seek it all your life, and you will seldom find enough pity for the pathos of life.

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My husband is a man of disinterested emotion. One morning, when he and I were in Paris, where we had gone for a holiday, I found him sitting with his head in his hands and the newspaper on his knee. I saw he was deeply moved and, full of apprehension, I put my arm round him and asked if he had had bad news. He pointed to a paragraph in the paper and I read how some of the Eton boys had had to break the bars of their windows to escape from fire and others had been burnt to death. We knew neither a boy nor the parent of any boy at Eton at that time, but Henry's eyes were full of tears, and he could not speak.

I had the same experience with him over the wreck of the Titanic. When we read of that challenging, luxurious ship at bay in the ice-fields and the captain sending his unanswered signals to the stars, we could not sit through dinner.

I knew no one of this kind of sympathy in my youth, and my father was too busy and my mother too detached for me to have told them anything. I wanted to be alone and I wanted to learn. After endless talks it was decided that I should go to Germany for four or five months and thus settle the problem of an unbegun but finishing education.

Looking back on this decision, I think it was a remarkable one. I had a passion for dancing and my father wanted me to go to balls; I had a genius for horses and adored hunting; I had such a wonderful hack that every one collected at the Park rails when they saw me coming into the Row; but all this did not deflect me from my purpose and I went to Dresden alone with a stupid maid at a time when—if not in England, certainly in Germany—I might have passed as a moderate beauty.

CHAPTER V

A DRESDEN LODGING HOUSE—MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE WITH AN OFFICER AFTER THE OPERA——AN ELDERLY AMERICAN ADMIRER—YELLOW ROSES, GRAF VON— VON—AND MOTIFS FROM WAGNER

Frau von Mach kept a ginger-coloured lodging-house high up in Luttichau-strasse. She was a woman of culture and refinement; her mother had been English and her husband, having gone mad in the Franco-Prussian war, had left her penniless with three children. She had to work for her living and she cooked and scrubbed without a thought for herself from dawn till dark.

There were thirteen pianos on our floor and two or three permanent lodgers. The rest of the people came and went—men, women and boys of every nationality, professionals and amateurs—but I was too busy to care or notice who went or who came.

Although my mother was bold and right to let me go as a bachelor to Dresden, I could not have done it myself. Later on, like every one else, I sent my stepdaughter and

daughter to be educated in Germany for a short time, but they were chaperoned by a woman of worth and character, who never left them: my German nursery-governess, who came to me when Elizabeth was four.

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In parenthesis, I may mention that, in the early terrible days of the war, our thoughtful Press, wishing to make money out of public hysteria, had the bright idea of turning this simple, devoted woman into a spy. There was not a pressman who did not laugh in his sleeve at this and openly make a stunt of it, but it had its political uses; and, after the Russians had been seen with snow on their boots by everyone in England, the gentlemen of the Press calculated that almost anything would be believed if it could be repeated often enough. And they were right: the spiteful and the silly disseminated lies about our governess from door to door with the kind of venom that belongs in equal proportions to the credulous, the cowards and the cranks. The greenhorns believed it and the funkers, who saw a plentiful crop of spies in every bush, found no difficulty in mobilising their terrors from my governess —already languishing in the Tower of London —to myself, who suddenly became a tennis-champion and an habituee of the German officers' camps!

The Dresden of my day was different from the Dresden of twenty years after. I never saw an English person the whole time I was there. After settling into my new rooms, I wrote out for myself a severe Stundenplan, which I pinned over my head next to my alarm-clock. At 6 every morning I woke up and dashed into the kitchen to have coffee with the solitary slavey; after that I practised the fiddle or piano till 8.30, when we had the pension breakfast; and the rest of the day was taken up by literature, drawing and other lessons. I went to concerts or the opera by myself every night.

One day Frau von Mach came to me greatly disdressed by a letter she had received from my mother begging her to take in no men lodgers while I was in the pension, as some of her friends in England had told her that I might elope with a foreigner. To this hour I do not know whether my mother was serious; but I wrote and told her that Frau von Mach's life depended on her lodgers, that there was only one permanent lodger—-an old American called Loring, who never spoke to me—and that I had no time to elope. Many and futile were the efforts to make me return home; but, though I wrote to England regularly, I never alluded to any of them, as they appeared childish to me.

I made great friends with Frau von Mach and in loose moments sat on her kitchen-table smoking cigarettes and eating black cherries; we discussed Shakespeare, Wagner, Brahms, Middlemarch, Bach and Hegel, and the time flew.

One night I arrived early at the Opera House and was looking about while the fiddles were tuning up. I wore my pearls and a scarlet crepe-de-chine dress and a black cloth cape with a hood on it, which I put on over my head when I walked home in the rain. I was having a frank stare at the audience, when I observed just opposite me an officer in a white uniform. As the Saxon soldiers wore pale blue, I wondered what army he could belong to.

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He was a fine-looking young man, with tailor-made shoulders, a small waist and silver and black on his sword-belt. When he turned to the stage, I looked at him through my opera-glasses. On closer inspection, he was even handsomer than I had thought. A lady joined him in the box and he took off her cloak, while she stood up gazing down at the stalls, pulling up her long black gloves. She wore a row of huge pearls, which fell below her waist, and a black jet decollete dress. Few people wore low dresses at the opera and I saw half the audience fixing her with their glasses. She was evidently famous. Her hair was fox-red and pinned back on each side of her temples with Spanish combs of gold and pearls; she surveyed the stalls with cavernous eyes set in a snow-white face; and in her hand she held a bouquet of lilac orchids. She was the best-looking woman I saw all the time I was in Germany and I could not take my eyes off her. The white officer began to look about the opera-house when my red dress caught his eye. He put up his glasses, and I instantly put mine down. Although the lights were lowered for the overture, I saw him looking at me for some time.

I had been in the habit of walking about in the entr'actes and, when the curtain dropped at the end of the first act, I left the box. It did not take me long to identify the white officer. He was not accompanied by his lady, but stood leaning against the wall smoking a cigar and talking to a man; as I passed him I had to stop for a moment for fear of treading on his outstretched toes. He pulled himself erect to get out of my way; I looked up and our eyes met; I don't think I blush easily, but something in his gaze may have made me blush. I lowered my eyelids and walked on.

The Meistersinger was my favourite opera and so it appeared to be of the Dresdeners; Wagner, having quarrelled with the authorities, refused to allow the Ring to be played in the Dresden Opera House; and every one was tired of the swans and doves of Lohengrin and Tannhauser.

There was a great crowd that night and, as it was raining when we came out, I hung about, hoping to get a cab; I saw my white officer with his lady, but he did not see me; I heard him before he got into the brougham give elaborate orders to the coachman to put him down at some club.

After waiting for some time, as no cab turned up, I pulled the hood of my cloak over my head and started to walk home; when the crowd scattered I found myself alone and I turned into a little street which led into Luttichau-strasse. Suddenly I became aware that I was being followed; I heard the even steps and the click of spurs of some one walking behind me; I should not have noticed this had I not halted under a lamp to pull on my hood, which the wind had blown off. When I stopped, the steps also stopped. I walked on, wondering if it had been my imagination, and again I heard the click of spurs coming nearer. The street being deserted, I was unable to endure it any longer; I turned round and there was the officer. His black cloak hanging loosely over his shoulders showed me the white uniform and silver belt. He saluted me and asked me in a curious Belgian French if he might accompany me home. I said:

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“Oh, certainly! But I am not at all nervous in the dark.”

Officer (stopping under the lamp to light a cigarette): “You like Wagner? Do you know him well? I confess I find him long and loud.”

Margot: “He is a little long, but so wonderful!”

Officer: “Don’t you feel tired? (With emphasis) *I do*!”

Margot: “No, I’m not at all tired.”

Officer: “You would not like to go and have supper with me in a private room in a hotel, would you?”

Margot: “You are very kind, but I don’t like supper; besides, it is late. (Leaving his side to look at the number on the door) I am afraid we must part here.”

Officer (drawing a long breath): “But you said I might take you home!!”

Margot (with a slow smile): “I know I did, but this is my home.”

He looked disappointed and surprised, but taking my hand he kissed it, then stepping back saluted and said:

“Pardonnez-moi, mademoiselle.”

My second adventure occurred on my way back to England. After a little correspondence, my mother allowed me to take Frau von Mach with me to Berlin to hear the Ring der Nibelungen. She and I were much excited at this little outing, in honour of which I had ordered her a new black satin dress. German taste is like German figures, thick and clumsy, and my dear old friend looked like a hold-all in my gift.

When we arrived in Berlin I found my room in the hotel full of every kind of flower; and on one of the bouquets was placed the card of our permanent lodger, Mr. Loring. I called out to Frau von Mach, who was unpacking:

“Do come here, dearest, and look at my wonderful roses! You will never guess who they come from!”

Frau von Mach (looking rather guilty): “I think I can guess.”

Margot: “I see you know! But who would have dreamt that an old maid like Loring would have thought of such gallantry?”

Frau von Mach: “But surely, dear child, you knew that he admired you?”

Margot: “Admired me! You must be cracked! I never remember his saying a civil word to me the whole time I was in Dresden. Poor mamma! If she were here now she would feel that her letter to you on the danger of my elopement was amply justified!”

Frau von Mach and I sat side by side at the opera; and on my left was a German officer. In front of us there was a lady with beautiful hair and diamond grasshoppers in it; her two daughters sat on either side of her.

Everything was conducted in the dark and it was evident that the audience was strung up to a high pitch of expectant emotion, for, when I whispered to Frau von Mach, the officer on my left said, “Hush!” which I thought extremely rude. Several men in the stalls, sitting on the nape of their necks, had covered their faces with pocket-handkerchiefs, which I thought infinitely ridiculous, bursting as they were with beef and beer. My musical left was only a little less good-looking than the white officer. He kept a rigid profile towards me and squashed up into a corner to avoid sharing an arm of the stall with me. As we had to sit next to each other for four nights running, I found this a little exaggerated.

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I was angry with myself for dropping my fan and scent-bottle; the lady picked up the bottle and the officer the fan. The lady gave me back my bottle and, when the curtain fell, began talking to me.

She had turned round once or twice during the scene to look at me. I found her most intelligent; she knew England and had heard Rubinstein and Joachim play at the Monday Pops. She had been to the Tower of London, Madame Tussaud's and Lord's.

The officer kept my fan in his hands and, instead of going out in the entr'acte, stayed and listened to our conversation. When the curtain went up and the people returned to their seats, he still held my fan. In the next interval the lady and the girls went out and my left-hand neighbour opened conversation with me. He said in perfect English:

"Are you really as fond of this music as you appear to be?"

To which I replied:

"You imply I am humbugging! I never pretend anything; why should you think I do? I don't lean back perspiring or cover my face with a handkerchief as your compatriots are doing, it is true, but..."

He (interrupting): "I am very glad of that! Do you think you would recognise a motif if I wrote one for you?"

Feeling rather nettled, I said:

"You must think me a perfect gowk if you suppose I should not recognise any motif in any opera of Wagner!"

I said this with a commanding gesture, but I was far from confident that he would not catch me out. He opened his cigarette-case, took out a visiting card and wrote the Schlummermotif on the back before giving it to me. After telling him what the motif was, I looked at his very long name on the back of the card: Graf von— .

Seeing me do this, he said with a slight twinkle:

"Won't you write me a motif now?"

Margot: "Alas! I can't write music and to save my life could not do what you have done; are you a composer?"

Graf von—: "I shan't tell you what I am—especially as I have given you my name—till you tell me who you are."

Margot: "I'm a young lady at large!"

At this, Frau von Mach nudged me; I thought she wanted to be introduced, so I looked at his name and said seriously:

“Graf von—, this is my friend Frau von Mach.”

He instantly stood up, bent his head and, clicking his heels, said to her:

“Will you please introduce me to this young lady?”

Frau von Mach (with a smile): “Certainly. Miss Margot Tennant.”

Graf von—: “I hope, mademoiselle, you will forgive me thinking your interest in Wagner might not be as great as it appeared, but it enabled me to introduce myself to you.”

Margot: “Don’t apologise, you have done me a good turn, for I shall lie back and cover my face with a handkerchief all through this next act to convince you.”

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Graf von—: "That would be a heavy punishment for me... and incidentally for this ugly audience."

On the last night of the Ring, I took infinite trouble with my toilette. When we arrived at the theatre neither the lady, her girls, nor the Graf were there. I found an immense bouquet on my seat, of yellow roses with thick clusters of violets round the stalk, the whole thing tied up with wide Parma violet ribbons. It was a wonderful bouquet. I buried my face in the roses, wondering why the Graf was so late, fervently hoping that the lady and her daughters would not turn up: no Englishman would have thought of giving one flowers in this way, said I to myself. The curtain! How very tiresome! The doors would all be shut now, as late-comers were not allowed to disturb the Gotterdammerung. The next day I was to travel home, which depressed me; my life would be different in London and all my lessons were over for ever! What could have happened to the Graf, the lady and her daughters? Before the curtain rose for the last act, he arrived and, flinging off his cloak, said breathlessly to me:

"You can't imagine how furious I am! To-night of all nights we had a regimental dinner! I asked my colonel to let me slip off early, or I should not be here now; I had to say good-bye to you. Is it true then? Are you really off to-morrow?"

Margot (pressing the bouquet to her face, leaning faintly towards him and looking into his eyes): "Alas, yes! I will send you something from England so that you mayn't quite forget me. I won't lean back and cover my head with a handkerchief to-night, but if I hide my face in these divine roses now and then, you will forgive me and understand."

He said nothing but looked a little perplexed. We had not observed the curtain rise but were rudely reminded of it by a lot of angry "Hush's" all round us. He clasped his hands together under his chin, bending his head down on them and taking up both arms of the stall with his elbows. When I whispered to him, he did not turn his head at all but just cocked his ear down to me. Was he pretending to be more interested in Wagner than he really was?"

I buried my face in my roses, the curtain dropped. It was all over.

Graf von—(turning to me and looking straight into my eyes): "If it is true what you said, that you know no one in Berlin, what a wonderful compliment the lady with the diamond grasshoppers has paid you!"

He took my bouquet, smelt the roses and, giving it back to me with a sigh, said:

"Good-bye."

CHAPTER VI

Margot rides A *horse into London home and smashes furniture— Suitor is forbidden the house—advises girl friend to elope*; *interview with girl's father—tete-*A*-tete dinner in Paris with baron Hirsch—winning tip from Fred Archer*, *the jockey*

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When I first came out in London we had no friends of fashion to get me invitations to balls and parties. The Walters, who were my mother's rich relations, in consequence of a family quarrel were not on speaking terms with us; and my prospects looked by no means rosy.

One day I was lunching with an American to whom I had been introduced in the hunting-field and found myself sitting next to a stranger. Hearing that he was Arthur Walter, I thought that it would be fun to find out his views upon my family and his own. He did not know who I was, so I determined I would enjoy what looked like being a long meal. We opened in this manner:

Margot: "I see you hate Gladstone!"

Arthur Walter: "Not at all. I hate his politics."

Margot: "I didn't suppose you hated the man."

Arthur Walter: "I am ashamed to say I have never even seen him or heard him speak, but I entirely agree that for the Duke of Westminster to have sold the Millais portrait of him merely because he does not approve of Home Rule shows great pettiness! I have of course never seen the picture as it was bought privately."

Margot: "The Tennants bought it, so I suppose you could easily see it."

Arthur Walter: "I regret to say that I cannot ever see this picture."

Margot: "Why not?"

Arthur Walter: "Because though the Tennants are relations of mine, our family quarrelled."

Margot: "What did they quarrel over?"

Arthur Walter: "Oh, it's a long story! Perhaps relations quarrel because they are too much alike."

Margot: "You are not in the least like the Tennants!"

Arthur Walter: "What makes you say that? Do you know them?"

Margot: "Yes, I do."

Arthur Walter: "In that case perhaps you could take me to see the picture."

Margot: "Oh, certainly! ... And I know Mr. Gladstone too!"

Arthur Walter: "What a fortunate young lady! Perhaps you could manage to take me to see him also."

Margot: "All right. If you will let me drive you away from lunch in my phaeton, I will show you the Gladstone picture."

Arthur Walter: "Are you serious? Do you know them well enough?"

Margot (nodding confidently): "Yes, yes, don't you fret!"

After lunch I drove him to 40 Grosvenor Square and, when I let myself in with my latch-key, he guessed who I was, but any interest he might have felt in this discovery was swamped by what followed.

I opened the library door. Mr. Gladstone was sitting talking to my parents under his own portrait. After the introduction he conversed with interest and courtesy to my new relation about the Times newspaper, its founder and its great editor, Delane.

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What I really enjoyed most in London was riding in the Row. I bought a beautiful hack for myself at Tattersalls, 15.2, bright bay with black points and so well-balanced that if I had ridden it with my face to its tail I should hardly have known the difference. I called it Tatts; it was bold as a lion, vain as a peacock and extremely moody. One day, when I was mounted to ride in the Row, my papa kept me waiting so long at the door of 40 Grosvenor Square that I thought I would ride Tatts into the front hall and give him a call; it only meant going up one step from the pavement to the porch and another through the double doors held open by the footman. Unluckily, after a somewhat cautious approach by Tatts up the last step into the marble hall, he caught his reflection in a mirror. At this he instantly stood erect upon his hind legs, crashing my tall hat into the crystal chandelier. His four legs all gave way on the polished floor and down we went with a noise like thunder, the pony on the top of me, the chandelier on the top of him and my father and the footman helpless spectators. I was up and on Tatts' head in a moment, but not before he had kicked a fine old English chest into a jelly. This misadventure upset my father's temper and my pony's nerve, as well as preventing me from dancing for several days.

My second scrape was more serious. I engaged myself to be married.

If any young "miss" reads this autobiography and wants a little advice from a very old hand, I will say to her, when a man threatens to commit suicide after you have refused him, you may be quite sure that he is a vain, petty fellow or a great goose; if you felt any doubts about your decision before, you need have none after this and under no circumstances must you give way. To marry a man out of pity is folly; and, if you think you are going to influence the kind of fellow who has "never had a chance, poor devil," you are profoundly mistaken. One can only influence the strong characters in life, not the weak; and it is the height of vanity to suppose that you can make an honest man of any one. My fiance was neither petty nor a goose, but a humorist; I do not think he meant me to take him seriously, but in spite of my high spirits I was very serious, and he was certainly more in love with me than any one had ever been before. He was a fine rider and gave me a mount with the Beaufort hounds.

When I told my mother of my engagement, she sank upon a settee, put a handkerchief to her eyes, and said:

"You might as well marry your groom!"

I struggled very hard to show her how worldly she was. Who wanted money? Who wanted position? Who wanted brains? Nothing in fact was wanted, except my will!

I was much surprised, a few days later, to hear from G., whom I met riding in the Row, that he had called every day of the week but been told by the footman that I was out. The under-butler, who was devoted to me, said sadly, when I complained:

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“I am afraid, miss, your young gentleman has been forbidden the house.”

Forbidden the house! I rushed to my sister Charty and found her even more upset than my mother. She pointed out with some truth that Lucy’s marriage and the obstinacy with which she had pursued it had gone far towards spoiling her early life; but “the squire,” as Graham Smith was called, although a character-part, was a man of perfect education and charming manners. He had beaten all the boys at Harrow, won a hundred steeplechases and loved books; whereas my young man knew little about anything but horses and, she added, would be no companion to me when I was ill or old.

I flounced about the room and said that forbidding him the house was grotesque and made me ridiculous in the eyes of the servants. I ended a passionate protest by telling her gravely that if I changed my mind he would undoubtedly commit suicide. This awful news was received with an hilarity which nettled me.

Charty: “I should have thought you had too much sense of humour and Mr. G. too much common sense for either of you to believe this. He must think you very vain. ...”

I did not know at all what she meant and said with the utmost gravity:

“The terrible thing is I believe that I have given him a false impression of my feelings for him; for, though I love him very much, I would never have promised to marry him if he had not said he was going to kill himself.” Clasping my two hands together and greatly moved, I concluded, “If I break it off now and *anything should* happen, my life is over and I shall feel as if I had murdered him.”

Charty (looking at me with a tender smile): “I should risk it, darling.”

A propos of vanity, in the interests of my publisher I must here digress and relate the two greatest compliments that I ever had paid to me. Although I cannot listen to reading out loud, I have always been fond of sermons and constantly went to hear Canon Eyton, a great preacher, who collected large and attentive congregations in his church in Sloane Street. I nearly always went alone, as my family preferred listening to Stopford Brooke or going to our pew in St. George’s, Hanover Square.

One of my earliest recollections is of my mother and father taking me to hear Liddon preach; I remember nothing at all about it except that I swallowed a hook and eye during the service: not a very flattering tribute to the great divine!

Eyton was a striking preacher and his church was always crowded. I had to stand a long time before I could ever get a seat. One morning I received this letter:

Dear miss Tennant,

I hope you will excuse this written by a stranger. I have often observed you listening to the sermon in our church. My wife and I are going abroad, so we offer you our pew; you appear to admire Eyton's preaching as much as we do—we shall be very glad if you can use it.

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Yours truly,

Francis Buxton.

The other compliment was also a letter from a stranger. It was dirty and misspelt, and enclosed a bill from an undertaker; the bill came to seven pounds and the letter ran as follows:

Honoured Miss father passed away quite peaceful last Saturday, he set store by his funeral and often told us as much sweeping a crossing had paid him pretty regular, but he left nothing as one might speak of, and so we was put to it for the funeral, as it throws back so on a house not to bury your father proper, I remember you and all he thought of you and told the undertaker to go ahead with the thing for as you was my fathers friend I hoped you would understand and excuse me.

This was from the son of our one-legged crossing-sweeper, and I need hardly say I owed him a great deal more than seven pounds. He had taken all our love-letters, presents and messages to and fro from morning till night for years past and was a man who thoroughly understood life.

To return to my fiance, I knew things could not go on as they were; scenes bored me and I was quite incapable of sustaining a campaign of white lies; so I reassured my friends and relieved my relations by telling the young man that I could not marry him. He gave me his beautiful mare, Molly Bawn, sold all his hunters and went to Australia. His hair when he returned to England two years later was grey. I have heard of this happening, but have only known of it twice in my life, once on this occasion and the other time when the boiler of the Thunderer burst in her trial trip; the engine was the first Government order ever given to my father's firm of Humphreys & Tennant and the accident made a great sensation. My father told me that several men had been killed and that young Humphreys' hair had turned white. I remember this incident very well, as when I gave Papa the telegram in the billiard room at Glen he covered his face with his hands and sank on the sofa in tears.

About this time Sir William Miller, a friend of the family, suggested to my parents that his eldest son—a charming young fellow, since dead—should marry me. I doubt if the young man knew me by sight, but in spite of this we were invited to stay at Manderston, much to my father's delight.

On the evening of our arrival my host said to me in his broad Scottish accent:

"Margy, will you marry my son Jim?"

"My dear Sir William," I replied, "your son Jim has never spoken to me in his life!"

Sir William: "He is shy."

I assured him that this was not so and that I thought his son might be allowed to choose for himself, adding:

“You are like my father, Sir William, and think every one wants to marry.”

Sir William: “So they do, don’t they?” (With a sly look.) “I am sure they all want to marry you.”

Margot (mischievously): “I wonder!”

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Sir William: "Margy, would you rather marry me or break your leg?"

Margot: Break both, Sir William."

After this promising beginning I was introduced to the young man.
It was impossible to pay me less attention than he did.

Sir William had two daughters, one of whom was anxious to marry a major quartered in Edinburgh, but he was robustly and rudely against this, in consequence of which the girl was unhappy. She took me into her confidence one afternoon in their schoolroom.

It was dark and the door was half open, with a bright light in the passage; Miss Miller was telling me with simple sincerity exactly what she felt and what her father felt about the major. I suddenly observed Sir William listening to our conversation behind the hinges of the door. Being an enormous man, he had screwed himself into a cramped posture and I was curious to see how long he would stick it out. It was indique that I should bring home the proverbial platitude that "listeners never hear any good of themselves."

Miss Miller: "You see, there is only one real objection to him, he is not rich!"

I told her that as she would be rich some day, it did not matter. Why should the rich marry the rich? It was grotesque! I intended to marry whatever kind of man I cared for and papa would certainly find the money.

Miss Miller (not listening): "He loves me so! And he says he will kill himself if I give him up now."

Margot (with vigour): "Oh, if he is *that* sort of man, a really brave fellow, there is only one thing for you both to do!"

Miss Miller (leaning forward with hands clasped and looking at me earnestly): "Oh, tell me, tell me!"

Margot: "Are you sure he is a man of dash? Is he really unworldly and devoted? Not afraid of what people say?"

Miss Miller (eagerly): "No, no! Yes, yes! He would die for me, indeed he would, and is afraid of no one!"

Margot (luring her on): "I expect he is very much afraid of your father."

Miss Miller (hesitating): "Papa is so rude to him."

Margot (with scorn): "Well, if your major is afraid of your father, I think nothing of him!" (Slight movement behind the door.)

Miss Miller (impulsively): "He is afraid of no one! But Papa never talks to him."

Margot (very deliberately): "Well, there is only one thing for you to do; and that is to run away!" (Sensation behind the door.)

Miss Miller (with determination, her eyes sparkling): "If he will do it, I *will*! But oh, dear! ...What will people say? How they will talk!"

Margot (lightly): "Oh, of course, if you care for what people say, you will be done all through life!"

Miss Miller: "Papa would be furious, you know, and would curse fearfully!"

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To this I answered:

“I know your father well and I don’t believe he would care a damn!”

I got up suddenly, as if going to the door, at which there was a sound of a scuffle in the corridor.

Miss Miller (alarmed and getting up): “What was that noise? Can any one have been in the passage? Could they have heard us? Let us shut the door.”

Margot: “No, don’t shut the door, it’s so hot and we shan’t be able to talk alone again.”

Miss *Miller* (relieved and sitting down): “You are very good. ... I must think carefully over what you have said.”

Margot: “Anyhow, tell your major that *I* know your father; he is really fond of me.”

Miss Miller: “Oh, yes, I heard him ask your father if he would exchange you for us.”

Margot: “That’s only his chaff; he is devoted to you. But what he likes about me is my dash: nothing your papa admires so much as courage. If the major has pluck enough to carry you off to Edinburgh, marry you in a registrar’s office and come back and tell your family the same day, he will forgive everything, give you a glorious allowance and you’ll be happy ever after! ... Now, my dear, I must go.”

I got up very slowly, and, putting my hands on her shoulders, said:

“Pull up your socks, Amy!”

I need hardly say the passage was deserted when I opened the door. I went downstairs, took up the Scotsman and found Sir William writing in the hall. He was grumpy and restless and at last, putting down his pen, he came up to me and said, in his broad Scotch accent:

“Margy, will you go round the garden with me?”

“*Margy*”: “Yes, if we can sit down alone and have a good talk.”

Sir William (delighted): “What about the summerhouse?”

“*Margy*”: “All right, I’ll run up and put on my hat and meet you here.”

When we got to the summer-house he said:

“Margy, my daughter Amy’s in love with a pauper.”

"*Margy*": "What does that matter?"

Sir William: "He's not at all clever."

"*Margy*": "How do you know?"

Sir William: "What do you mean?"

"*Margy*": "None of us are good judges of the people we dislike."

Sir William (cautiously): "I would much like your advice on all this affair and I want you to have a word with my girl Amy and tell her just what you think on the matter."

"*Margy*": "I have."

Sir William: "What did she say to you?"

"*Margy*": "Really, Sir William, would you have me betray confidences?"

Sir William: "Surely you can tell me what *you* said, anyway, without betraying her."

"*Margy*" (looking at him steadily): "Well, what do you suppose you would say in the circumstances? If a well-brought-up girl told you that she was in love with a man that her parents disliked, a man who was unable to keep her and with no prospects..."

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Sir William (interrupting): "Never mind what I should say! What did *you* say?"

"*Margy*" (evasively): "The thing is unthinkable! Good girls like yours could never go against their parents' wishes! Men who can't keep their wives should not marry at all. ..."

Sir William (with great violence, seizing my hands): "*What did you say*?"

"*Margy*" (with a sweet smile): "I'm afraid, Sir William, you are changing your mind and, instead of leaning on my advice, you begin to suspect it."

Sir William (very loud and beside himself with rage): "*What did you say*?"

"*Margy*" (coolly, putting her hand on his): "I can't think why you are so excited! If I told you that I had said, 'Give it all up, my dear, and don't vex your aged father,' what would you say?"

Sir William (getting up and flinging my hand away from him): "Hoots! You're a liar!"

"*Margy*": "No, I'm not, Sir William; but, when I see people listening at doors, I give them a run for their money."

I had another vicarious proposal. One night, dining with the Bischoffheims, I was introduced for the first time to Baron Hirsch, an Austrian who lived in Paris. He took me in to dinner and a young man whom I had met out hunting sat on the other side of me.

I was listening impressively to the latter, holding my champagne in my hand, when the footman in serving one of the dishes bumped my glass against my chest and all its contents went down the front of my ball-dress. I felt iced to the bone; but, as I was thin, I prayed profoundly that my pink bodice would escape being marked. I continued in the same position, holding my empty glass in my hand as if nothing had happened, hoping that no one had observed me and trying to appear interested in the young man's description of the awful dangers he had run when finding himself alone with hounds.

A few minutes later Baron Hirsch turned to me and said:

"Aren't you very cold?"

I said that I was, but that it did not matter; what I really minded was spoiling my dress and, as I was not a kangaroo, I feared the worst. After this we entered into conversation and he told me among other things that, when he had been pilled for a sporting club in Paris, he had revenged himself by buying the club and the site upon which it was built, to which I observed:

"You must be very rich."

He asked me where I had lived and seemed surprised that I had never heard of him.

The next time we met each other was in Paris. I lunched with him and his wife and he gave me his opera box and mounted me in the Bois de Boulogne.

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One day he invited me to dine with him tete-a-tete at the Cafe Anglais and, as my father and mother were out, I accepted. I felt a certain curiosity about this invitation, because my host in his letter had given me the choice of several other dates in the event of my being engaged that night. When I arrived at the Cafe Anglais Baron Hirsch took off my cloak and conducted me into a private room. He reminded me of our first meeting, said that he had been much struck by my self-control over the iced champagne and went on to ask if I knew why he had invited me to dine with him. I said:

“I have not the slightest idea!”

Baron Hirsch: “Because I want you to marry my son, Lucien. He is quite unlike me, he is very respectable and hates money; he likes books and collects manuscripts and other things, and is highly educated.”

Margot: “Your son is the man with the beard, who wears glasses and collects coins, isn’t he?”

Baron Hirsch (thinking my description rather dreary): “Quite so! You talked to him the other day at our house. But he has a charming disposition and has been a good son; and I am quite sure that, if you would take a little trouble, he would be devoted to you and make you an excellent husband: he does not like society, or racing, or any of the things that I care for.”

Margot: “Poor man! I don’t suppose he would even care much for me! I hate coins!”

Baron Hirsch: “Oh, but you would widen his interests! He is shy and I want him to make a good marriage; and above all he must marry an Englishwoman.”

Margot: “Has he ever been in love?”

Baron Hirsch: “No, he has never been in love; but a lot of women make up to him and I don’t want him to be married for his money by some designing girl.”

Margot: “Over here I suppose that sort of thing might happen; I don’t believe it would in England.”

Baron Hirsch: “How can you say such a thing to me? London society cares more for money than any other in the world, as I know to my cost! You may take it from me that a young man who will be as rich as Lucien can marry almost any girl he likes.”

Margot: “I doubt it! English girls don’t marry for money!”

Baron Hirsch: “Nonsense, my dear! They are like other people; it is only the young that can afford to despise money!”

Margot: "Then I hope that I shall be young for a very long time."

Baron Hirsch (smiling): "I don't think you will ever be disappointed in that hope; but surely you wouldn't like to be a poor man's wife and live in the suburbs? Just think what it would be if you could not hunt or ride in the Row in a beautiful habit or have wonderful dresses from Worth! You would hate to be dowdy and obscure!"

"That," I answered energetically, "could never happen to me."

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Baron Hirsch: "Why not?"

Margot: "Because I have too many friends."

Baron Hirsch: "And enemies?"

Margot (thoughtfully): "Perhaps. ...I don't know about that. I never notice whether people dislike me or not. After all, you took a fancy to me the first time we met; why should not other people do the same? Do you think I should not improve on acquaintance?"

Baron Hirsch: "How can you doubt that, when I have just asked you to marry my son?"

Margot: "What other English girl is there that you would like for a daughter-in-law?"

Baron Hirsch: "Lady Katie Lambton,[Footnote: The present Duchess of Leeds.] Durham's sister."

Margot: "I don't know her at all. Is she like me?"

Baron Hirsch: "Not in the least; but you and she are the only girls I have met that I could wish my son to marry."

I longed to know what my rival was like, but all he could tell me was that she was lovely and clever and mignonne, to which I said:

"But she sounds exactly like me!"

This made him laugh:

"I don't believe you know in the least what you are like," he said.

Margot: "You mean I have no idea how plain I am? But what an odd man you are! If I don't know what I'm like, I am sure you can't! How do you know that I am not just the sort of adventuress you dread most? I might marry your son and, so far from widening his interests, as you suggest, keep him busy with his coins while I went about everywhere, enjoying myself and spending all your money. In spite of what you say, some man might fall in love with me, you know! Some delightful, clever man. And then Lucien's happiness would be over."

Baron Hirsch: "I do not believe you would ever cheat your husband."

Margot: "You never can tell! Would Lady Katie Lambton many for money?"

Baron Hirsch: "To be perfectly honest with you, I don't think she would."

Margot: "There you are! I know heaps of girls who wouldn't; anyhow, *I* never would!"

Baron Hirsch: "You are in love with some one else, perhaps, are you?"

It so happened that in the winter I had fallen in love with a man out hunting and was counting the hours till I could meet him again, so the question annoyed me; I thought it vulgar and said, with some dignity:

"If I am, I have never told him so."

My dignity was lost, however, on my host, who persisted. I did not want to give myself away, so, simulating a tone of light banter, I said:

"If I have not confided in the person most interested, why should I tell *you*?" This was not one of my happiest efforts, for he instantly replied:

"Then he *is* interested in you, is he? Do I know him?"

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I felt angry and told him that, because I did not want to marry his son, it did not at all follow that my affections were engaged elsewhere; and I added:

“I only hope that Mr. Lucien is not as curious as you are, or I should have a very poor time; there is nothing I should hate as much as a jealous husband.”

Baron Hirsch: “I don’t believe you! If it’s tiresome to have a jealous husband, it must be humiliating to have one who is not.”

I saw he was trying to conciliate me, so I changed the subject to racing. Being a shrewd man, he thought he might find out whom I was in love with and encouraged me to go on. I told him I knew Fred Archer well, as we had hunted together in the Vale of White Horse. He asked me if he had ever given me a racing tip. I told him the following story:

One day, at Ascot, some of my impecunious Melton friends,—having heard a rumour that Archer, who was riding in the race, had made a bet on the result—came and begged me to find out from him what horse was going to win. I did not listen much to them at first, as I was staring about at the horses, the parasols and the people, but my friends were very much in earnest and began pressing me in lowered voices to be as quick as I could, as they thought that Archer was on the move. It was a grilling day; most men had handkerchiefs or cabbages under their hats; and the dried-up grass in the Paddock was the colour of pea-soup. I saw Fred Archer standing in his cap and jacket with his head hanging down, talking to a well-groomed, under-sized little man, while the favourite—a great, slashing, lazy horse—was walking round and round with the evenness of a metronome. I went boldly up to him and reminded him of how we had cannoned at a fence in the V.W.H. Fred Archer had a face of carved ivory, like the top of an umbrella; he could turn it into a mask or illuminate it with a smile; he had long thin legs, a perfect figure and wonderful charm. He kept a secretary, a revolver and two valets and was a god among the gentry and the jockeys. After giving a slight wink at the under-sized man, he turned away from him to me and, on hearing what I had to say, whispered a magic name in my ear. ...

I was a popular woman that night in Melton.

Baron Hirsch returned to the charge later on; and I told him definitely that I was the last girl in the world to suit his son.

It is only fair to the memory of Lucien Hirsch to say that he never cared the least about me. He died a short time after this and some one said to the Baron:

“What a fool Margot Tennant was not to have married your son! She would be a rich widow now.”

At which he said:

“No one would die if they married Margot Tennant.”

CHAPTER VII

PHOENIX PARK MURDERS—REMEDIES FOR IRELAND—TELEPATHY AND PLANCHETTE—VISIT TO BLAVATSKY—SIR CHARLES DILKE’S KISS—VISITS TO GLADSTONE—THE LATE LORD SALISBURY’S POLITICAL PROPHECIES

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The political event that caused the greatest sensation when I was a girl was the murder of Mr. Burke and Lord Frederick Cavendish on May 6, 1882. We were in London at the time; and the news came through on a Sunday. Alfred Lyttelton told me that Lady Frederick Cavendish's butler had broken it to her by rushing into the room saying:

"They have knifed his lordship!"

The news spread from West to East and North to South; groups of people stood talking in the middle of the streets without their hats and every one felt that this terrible outrage was bound to have consequences far beyond the punishment of the criminals.

These murders in the Phoenix Park tended to confirm Gladstone in his belief that the Irish were people whom we did not understand and that they had better be encouraged to govern themselves. He hoped to convert his colleagues to a like conviction, but Mr. Chamberlain and he disagreed.

Just as I ask myself what would have been the outcome of the Paris Conference if the British had made the League of Nations a genuine first plank in their programme instead of a last postscript, so I wonder what would have happened if Chamberlain had stuck to Gladstone at that time. Gladstone had all the playing cards—as President Wilson had—and was not likely to under-declare his hand, but he was a much older man and I cannot but think that if they had remained together Chamberlain would not have been thrown into the arms of the Tories and the reversion of the Premiership must have gone to him. It seems strange to me that the leaders of the great Conservative party have so often been hired bravos or wandering minstrels with whom it can share no common conviction. I never cease wondering why it cannot produce a man of its own faith. There must be something inherent in its creed that produces sterility.

When Mr. Gladstone went in for Home Rule, society was rent from top to bottom and even the most devoted friends quarrelled over it. Our family was as much divided as any other.

One day, when Lord Spencer was staying at Glen, I was sent out of the room at dinner for saying that Gladstone had made a Balaclava blunder with his stupid Home Rule; we had all got so heated over the discussion that I was glad enough to obey my papa. A few minutes later he came out full of penitence to see if he had hurt my feelings; he found me sitting on the billiard-table smoking one of his best cigars. I gave him a good hug, and told him I would join him when I had finished smoking; he said he was only too glad that his cigars were appreciated and returned to the dining-room in high spirits.

Events have proved that I was quite wrong about Home Rule. Now that we have discovered what the consequences are of withholding from Ireland the self-government which for generations she has asked for, can we doubt that Gladstone should have been vigorously backed in his attempt to still the controversy? As it is, our follies in

Ireland have cursed the political life of this country for years. Some one has said, “L’Irlande est une maladie incurable mais jamais mortelle”; and, if she can survive the present regime, no one will doubt the truth of the saying.

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In May, June and July, 1914, within three months of the war, every donkey in London was cutting, or trying to cut us, for wishing to settle this very same Irish question. My presence at a hall with Elizabeth—who was seventeen—was considered not only provocative to others but a danger to myself. All the brains of all the landlords in Ireland, backed by half the brains of half the landlords in England, had ranged themselves behind Sir Edward Carson, his army and his Covenant. Earnest Irish patriots had turned their fields into camps and their houses into hospitals; aristocratic females had been making bandages for months, when von Kuhlmann, Secretary of the German Embassy in London, went over to pay his first visit to Ireland. On his return he told me with conviction that, from all he had heard and seen out there during a long tour, nothing but a miracle could avert civil war, to which I replied:

“Shocking as that would be, it would not break England.”

Our follies in Ireland have cursed not only the political but the social life of this country.

It was not until the political ostracisms over Home Rule began all over again in 1914 that I realised how powerful socially my friends and I were in the ’eighties.

Mr. Balfour once told me that, before our particular group of friends—generally known as the Souls—appeared in London, prominent politicians of opposite parties seldom if ever met one another; and he added:

“No history of our time will be complete unless the influence of the Souls upon society is dispassionately and accurately recorded.”

The same question of Home Rule that threw London back to the old parochialisms in 1914 was at its height in 1886 and 1887; but at our house in Grosvenor Square and later in those of the Souls, everyone met—Randolph Churchill, Gladstone, Asquith, Morley, Chamberlain, Balfour, Rosebery, Salisbury, Hartington, Harcourt and, I might add, jockeys, actors, the Prince of Wales and every ambassador in London. We never cut anybody—not even our friends —or thought it amusing or distinguished to make people feel uncomfortable; and our decision not to sacrifice private friendship to public politics was envied in every capital in Europe. It made London the centre of the most interesting society in the world and gave men of different tempers and opposite beliefs an opportunity of discussing them without heat and without reporters. There is no individual or group among us powerful enough to succeed in having a salon of this kind to-day.

The daring of that change in society cannot be over-estimated. The unconscious and accidental grouping of brilliant, sincere and loyal friends like ourselves gave rise to so much jealousy and discussion that I shall devote a chapter of this book to the Souls.

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It was at No. 40 Grosvenor Square that Gladstone met Lord Randolph Churchill. The latter had made himself famous by attacking and abusing the Grand Old Man with such virulence that every one thought it impossible that they could ever meet in intimacy again. I was not awed by this, but asked them to a luncheon party; and they both accepted. I need hardly say that when they met they talked with fluency and interest, for it was as impossible for Gladstone to be gauche or rude as it was for any one to be ill at ease with Randolph Churchill. The news of their lunching with us spread all over London; and the West-end buzzed round me with questions: all the political ladies, including the Duchess of Manchester, were torn with curiosity to know whether Randolph was going to join the Liberal Party. I refused to gratify their curiosity, but managed to convey a general impression that at any moment our ranks, having lost Mr. Chamberlain, were going to be reinforced by Lord Randolph Churchill.

The Duchess of Manchester (who became the late Duchess of Devonshire) was the last great political lady in London society as I have known it. The secret of her power lay not only in her position—many people are rich and grand, gay and clever and live in big houses—but in her elasticity, her careful criticisms, her sense of justice and discretion. She not only kept her own but other people's secrets; and she added to a considerable effrontery and intrepid courage, real kindness of heart. I have heard her reprove and mildly ridicule all her guests, both at Compton Place and at Chatsworth, from the Prince of Wales to the Prime Minister. I asked her once what she thought of a certain famous lady, whose arrogance and vulgarity had annoyed us all, to which she answered:

"I dislike her too much to be a good judge of her."

One evening, many years after the time of which I am writing, she was dining with us, and we were talking tete-a-tete.

"Margot," she said, "you and I are very much alike."

It was impossible to imagine two more different beings than myself and the Duchess of Devonshire—morally, physically or intellectually—so I asked her what possible reason she had for thinking so, to which she answered:

"We have both married angels; when Hartington dies he will go straight to Heaven"—-pointing her first finger high above her head—"and when Mr. Asquith dies he will go straight there, too; not so Lord Salisbury," pointing her finger with a diving movement to the floor.

You met every one at her house, but she told me that before 1886- 1887 political opponents hardly ever saw one another and society was much duller.

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One day in 1901 my husband and I were staying at Chatsworth. There was a huge house-party, including Arthur Balfour and Chamberlain. Before going down to dinner, Henry came into my bedroom and told me he had had a telegram to say that Queen Victoria was very ill and he feared the worst; he added that it was a profound secret and that I was to tell no one. After dinner I was asked by the Duchess' granddaughters—-Lady Aldra and Lady Mary Acheson—to join them at planchette, so, to please them, I put my hand upon the board. I was listening to what the Duchess was saying, and my mind was a blank. After the girls and I had scratched about for a little time, one of them took the paper off the board and read out loud:

"The Queen is dying." She added, "What Queen can that be?"

We gathered round her and all looked at the writing; and there I read distinctly out of a lot of hieroglyphics:

"The Queen is dying."

If the three of us had combined to try to write this and had poked about all night, we could not have done it.

I have had many interesting personal experiences of untraceable communication and telepathy and I think that people who set themselves against all this side of life are excessively stupid; but I do not connect them with religion any more than with Marconi and I shall always look upon it as a misfortune that people can be found sufficiently material to be consoled by the rubbish they listen to in the dark at expensive seances.

At one time, under the influence of Mr. Percy Wyndham, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney (the last-named a dear friend with whom I corresponded for some months before he committed suicide), Laura and I went through a period of "spooks." There was no more delightful companion than Mr. Percy Wyndham; he adored us and, though himself a firm believer in the spirit world, he did not resent it if others disagreed with him. We attended every kind of seance and took the matter up quite seriously.

Then, as now, everything was conducted in the dark. The famous medium of that day was a Russian Jewess, Madame Blavatsky by name. We were asked to meet her at tea, in the dining-room of a private house in Brook Street, a non-professional affair, merely a little gathering to hear her views upon God. On our arrival I had a good look at her heavy, white face, as deeply pitted with smallpox as a solitaire board, and I wondered if she hailed from Moscow or Margate. She was tightly surrounded by strenuous and palpitating ladies and all the blinds were up. Seeing no vacant seat near her, I sat down upon a low, stuffed chair in the window. After making a substantial tea, she was seen to give a sobbing and convulsive shudder, which caused the greatest excitement; the company closed up round her in a circle of sympathy and concern. When pressed to say why her bust had heaved and eyelids flickered, she replied:

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“A murderer has passed below our windows.” The awe-struck ladies questioned her reverently but ardently as to how she knew and what she felt. Had she visualised him? Would she recognise the guilty one if she saw him and, after recognising him, feel it on her conscience if she did not give him up to the law? One lady proposed that we should all go round to the nearest police-station and added that a case of this kind, if proved, would do more to dispell doubts on spirits than all the successful raps, taps, turns and tables. Being the only person in the window at the time, I strained my eyes up and down Brook Street to see the murderer, but there was not a creature in sight.

Madame Blavatsky turned out to be an audacious swindler.

To return to Chatsworth: our host, the Duke of Devonshire, was a man whose like we shall never see again; he stood by himself and could have come from no country in the world but England. He had the figure and appearance of an artisan, with the brevity of a peasant, the courtesy of a king and the noisy sense of humour of a Falstaff. He gave a great, wheezy guffaw at all the right things, and was possessed of endless wisdom. He was perfectly disengaged from himself, fearlessly truthful and without pettiness of any kind.

Bryan, the American politician, who came over here and heard all our big guns speak—-Rosebery, Chamberlain, Asquith, *etc*.—when asked what he thought, said that a Chamberlain was not unknown to them in America, and that they could produce a Rosebery or an Asquith, but that a Hartington no man could find. His speaking was the finest example of pile-driving the world had ever seen.

After the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and his wife were the great social, semi-political figures of my youth. One day they came to pay us a visit in Cavendish Square, having heard that our top storey had been destroyed by fire. They walked round the scorched walls of the drawing-room, with the blue sky overhead, and stopped in front of a picture of a race-horse, given to me on my wedding day by my habit-maker, Alexander Scott (a Scotchman who at my suggestion had made the first patent safety riding-skirt). The Duke said:

“I am sorry that your Zoffany and Longhi were burnt, but I myself would far rather have the Herring.” [Footnote: A portrait by J. F. Herring, sen., of Rockingham, winner of the St. Leger Stakes, 1833, ridden by Sam Darling.]

The Duchess laughed at this and asked me if my baby had suffered from shock, adding:

“I should be sorry if my little friend, Elizabeth, has had a fright.”

I told her that luckily she was out of London at the time of the fire. When the Duchess got back to Devonshire House, she sent Elizabeth two tall red wax candles, with a note in which she said:

“When you brought your little girl here, she wanted the big red candles in my boudoir and I gave them to her; they must have melted in the fire, so I send her these new ones.”

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I was walking alone on the high road at Chatsworth one afternoon in winter, while the Duchess was indoors playing cards, when I saw the family barouche, a vast vehicle which swung and swayed on C-springs, stuck in the middle of a ploughed field, the horses plunging about in unsuccessful efforts to drag the wheels out of the mud. The coachman was accompanied by a page, under life size. Observing their dilemma, I said:

“Hullo, you’re in a nice fix! What induced you to go into that field?”

The coachman, who knew me well, explained that they had met a hearse in the narrow part of the road and, as her Grace’s orders were that no carriage was to pass a funeral if it could be avoided, he had turned into the field, where the mud was so deep and heavy that they were stuck. It took me some time to get assistance; but, after I had unfastened the bearing-reins and mobilised the yokels, the coachman, carriage and I returned safely to the house.

Death was the only thing of which I ever saw the Duchess afraid and, when I referred to the carriage incident and chaffed her about it, she said:

“My dear child, do you mean to tell me you would not mind dying? What do you feel about it?”

I answered her, in all sincerity, that I would mind more than anything in the world, but not because I was afraid, and that hearses did not affect me in the least.

She asked me what I was most interested in after hunting and I said politics. I told her I had always prophesied I would marry a Prime Minister and live in high political circles. This amused her and we had many discussions about politics and people. She was interested in my youth and upbringing and made me tell her about it.

As I have said before, we were not popular in Peeblesshire. My papa and his vital family disturbed the country conventions; and all Liberals were looked upon as aliens by the Scottish aristocracy of those days. At election times the mill-hands of both sexes were locked up for fear of rows, but in spite of this the locks were broken and the rows were perpetual. When my father turned out the sitting Tory, Sir Graham Montgomery, in 1880, there were high jinks in Peebles. I pinned the Liberal colours, with the deftness of a pick-pocket, to the coat-tails of several of the unsuspecting Tory landlords, who had come from great distances to vote. This delighted the electors, most of whom were feather-stitching up and down the High Street, more familiar with drink than jokes.

The first politicians of note that came to stay with us when I was a girl were Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke. Just as, later on, my friends (the Souls) discussed which would go farthest, George Curzon, George Wyndham or Harry Cust, so in those days people were asking the same question about Chamberlain and Dilke. To my mind

it wanted no witch to predict that Chamberlain would beat not only Dilke but other men; and Gladstone made a profound mistake in not making him a Secretary of State in his Government of 1885.

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Mr. Chamberlain never deceived himself, which is more than could be said of some of the famous politicians of that day. He also possessed a rare measure of intellectual control. Self-mastery was his idiosyncrasy; it was particularly noticeable in his speaking; he encouraged in himself such scrupulous economy of gesture, movement and colour that, after hearing him many times, I came to the definite conclusion that Chamberlain's opponents were snowed under by his accumulated moderation. Whatever Dilke's native impulses were, no one could say that he controlled them. Besides a defective sense of humour, he was fundamentally commonplace and had no key to his mind, which makes every one ultimately dull. My father, being an ardent Radical, with a passion for any one that Gladstone patronised, had made elaborate preparations for Dilke's reception; when he arrived at Glen he was given a warm welcome; and we all sat down to tea. After hearing him talk uninterruptedly for hours and watching his stuffy face and slow, protruding eyes, I said to Laura:

"He may be a very clever man, but he has not a ray of humour and hardly any sensibility. If he were a horse, I would certainly not buy him!"

With which she entirely agreed.

On the second night of his visit, our distinguished guest met Laura in the passage on her way to bed; he said to her:

"If you will kiss me, I will give you a signed photograph of myself."

To which she answered:

"It is awfully good of you, Sir Charles, but I would rather not, for what on earth should I do with the photograph?"

Mr. Gladstone was the dominating politician of the day, and excited more adoration and hatred than any one.

After my first visit to Hawarden, he sent me the following poem, which he had written the night before I left:

MARGOT

When Parliament ceases and comes the recess,
And we seek in the country rest after distress,
As a rule upon visitors place an embargo,
But make an exception in favour of Margot.

For she brings such a treasure of movement and life,
Fun, spirit and stir, to folk weary with strife.

Though young and though fair, who can hold such a cargo
Of all the good qualities going as Margot?

Up hill and down dale,'tis a capital name
To blossom in friendship, to sparkle in fame;
There's but one objection can light upon Margot,
Its likeness in rhyming, not meaning, to argot.

Never mind, never mind, we will give it the slip,
'Tis not argot, the language, but Argo, the ship;
And by sea or by land, I will swear you may far go
Before you can hit on a double for Margot.

W. E. G. December 17th, 1889.

I received this at Glen by the second post on the day of my arrival, too soon for me to imagine my host had written it, so I wrote to our dear old friend, Godfrey Webb—always under suspicion of playing jokes upon us—to say that he had overdone it this time, as Gladstone had too good a hand-writing for him to caricature convincingly. When I found that I was wrong, I wrote to my poet:

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Dec. 19th, 1889. *Very dear and honoured Mr. Gladstone*,

At first I thought your poem must have been a joke, written by some one who knew of my feelings for you and my visit to Hawarden; but, when I saw the signature and the post-mark, I was convinced it could be but from you. It has had the intoxicating effect of turning my head with pleasure; if I began I should never cease thanking you. Getting four rhymes to my name emphasizes your uncommon genius, I think! And Argo the ship is quite a new idea and a charming one. I love the third verse; that Margot is a capital name to blossom in friendship and sparkle in fame. You must allow me to say that you are ever such a dear. It is impossible to believe that you will be eighty to-morrow, but I like to think of it, for it gives most people an opportunity of seeing how life should be lived without being spent.

There is no blessing, beauty or achievement that I do not wish you.

In truth and sincerity, Yours,

MARGOT TENNANT

A propos of this, twelve years later I received the following letter from Lord Morley:

The red house, *Hawarden*, *Chester*,

July 18th, 1901.

I have just had such a cheerful quarter-of-an-hour—a packet of *your* letters to Mr. G. Think—! I've read them all!—and they bring the writer back to me with queer and tender vividness. Such a change from Bishops!!! Why do you never address me as "Very dear and honoured Sir"? I'm not quite eighty-five yet, but I soon shall be.

Ever yours, *John Morley*.

I have heard people say that the Gladstone family never allowed him to read a newspaper with anything hostile to himself in it; all this is the greatest rubbish; no one interfered with his reading. The same silly things were said about the great men of that day as of this and will continue to be said; and the same silly geese will believe them. I never observed that Gladstone was more easily flattered than other men. He *was* more flattered and by more people, because he was a bigger man and lived a longer life; but he was remarkably free from vanity of any kind. He would always laugh at a good thing, if you chose the right moment in which to tell it to him; but there were moods in which he was not inclined to be amused.

Once, when he and I were talking of Jane Welsh Carlyle, I told him that a friend of Carlyle's, an old man whom I met at Balliol, had told me that one of his favourite stories was of an Irishman who, when asked where he was driving his pig to, said:

"Cark. ..." (Cork.)

"But," said his interlocutor, "your head is turned to Mullingar ... !"

To which the man replied:

"Whist! He'll hear ye!"

This delighted Mr. Gladstone. I also told him one of Jowett's favourite stories, of how George *iv*. went down to Portsmouth for some big function and met a famous admiral of the day. He clapped him on the back and said in a loud voice:

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“Well, my dear Admiral, I hear you are the greatest blackguard in Portsmouth!”

At which the Admiral drew himself up, saluted the King and said:

“I hope, Sir, *you* have not come down to take away my reputation.”

I find in an old diary an account of a drive I had with Gladstone after my sister Laura died. This is what I wrote:

“On Saturday, 29th May, 1886, Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone came to pay us a visit at 40 Grosvenor Square. Papa had been arranging the drawing-room preparatory to their arrival and was in high spirits. I was afraid he might resent my wish to take Mr. Gladstone up to my room after lunch and talk to him alone. However, Aunty Pussy—as we called Mrs. Gladstone—with a great deal of winking, led papa away and said to mamma:

“‘William and Margot are going to have a little talk!’

“I had not met or seen Mr. Gladstone since Laura’s death.

“When he had climbed up to my boudoir, he walked to the window and admired the trees in the square, deploring their uselessness and asking whether the street lamp—-which crossed the square path in the line of our eyes—was a child.

“I asked him if he would approve of the square railings being taken away and the glass and trees made into a place with seats, such as you see in foreign towns, not merely for the convenience of sitting down, but for the happiness of invalids and idlers who court the shade or the sun. This met with his approval, but he said with some truth that the only people who could do this—or prevent it—were ‘the resident aristocracy.’

“He asked if Laura had often spoken of death. I said yes and that she had written about it in a way that was neither morbid nor terrible. I showed him some prayers she had scribbled in a book, against worldliness and high spirits. He listened with reverence and interest. I don’t think I ever saw his face wear the expression that Millais painted in our picture as distinctly as when, closing the book, he said to me:

“’It requires very little faith to believe that so rare a creature as your sister Laura is blessed and with God.’

“Aunty Pussy came into the room and the conversation turned to Laurence Oliphant’s objection to visiting the graves of those we love. They disagreed with this and he said:

“’I think, on the contrary, one should encourage oneself to find consolation in the few tangible memories that one can claim; it should not lessen faith in their spirits; and there is surely a silent lesson to be learnt from the tombstone.’

“Papa and mamma came in and we all went down to tea. Mr. G., feeling relieved by the change of scene and topic, began to talk and said he regretted all his life having missed the opportunity of knowing Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Arnold and Lord Melbourne. He told us a favourite story of his. He said:

“’An association of ladies wrote and asked me to send them a few words on that unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. In the penury of my knowledge and the confusion arising from the conflicting estimates of poor Mary, I thought I would write to Bishop Stubbs. All he replied was, “Mary is looking up.”’

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“After this I drove him back to Downing Street in my phaeton, round the Park and down Knights bridge. I told him I found it difficult to judge of people’s brains if they were very slow.

“*Mr*. *Gladstone*: “I wish, then, that you had had the privilege of knowing Mr. Cobden; he was at once the slowest and quite one of the cleverest men I ever met. Personally I find it far easier to judge of brains than character; perhaps it is because in my line of life motives are very hard to fathom, and constant association with intelligence and cultivation leads to a fair toleration and criticism of all sorts and conditions of men.’

“He talked of Bright and Chamberlain and Lord Dalhousie,[Footnote: The late Earl of Dalhousie.] who, he said, was one of the best and most conscientious men he had ever known. He told me that, during the time he had been Prime Minister, he had been personally asked for every great office in the State, including the Archbishopric of Canterbury, and this not by maniacs but by highly respectable men, sometimes even his friends. He said that Goschen’s critical power was sound and subtle, but that he spoilt his speeches by a touch of bitterness. Mr. Parnell, he said, was a man of genius, born to great things. He had power, decision and reserve; he saw things as they were and had confidence in himself. (Ten days after this drive, Mr. Gladstone made his last great speech on Irish Home Rule.)

“I made him smile by telling him how Lord Kimberley told me that, one day in Dublin, when he was Viceroy, he had received a letter which began:

“’My Lord, To-morrow we intend to kill you at the corner of Kildare Street; but we would like you to know there is nothing personal in it!’

“He talked all the way down Piccadilly about the Irish character, its wit, charm, grace and intelligence. I nearly landed my phaeton into an omnibus in my anxiety to point out the ingratitude and want of purpose of the Irish; but he said that in the noblest of races the spirit of self-defence had bred mean vices and that generation after generation were born in Ireland with their blood discoloured by hatred of the English Governments.

“‘Tories have no hope, no faith,’ he continued, ’and the best of them have class-interest and the spirit of antiquity, but the last has been forgotten, and only class-interest remains. Disraeli was a great Tory. It grieves me to see people believing in Randolph Churchill as his successor, for he has none of the genius, patience or insight which Dizzy had in no small degree.’

“Mr. Gladstone told me that he was giving a dinner to the Liberal party that night, and he added:

“’If Hartington is in a good humour, I intend to say to him, “Don’t move a vote of want of confidence in me after dinner, or you will very likely carry it.”’

“’He laughed at this, and told me some days after that Lord Hartington had been delighted with the idea.

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“He strongly advised me to read a little book by one Miss Tollet, called Country Conversations, which had been privately printed, and deplored the vast amount of poor literature that was circulated, ’when an admirable little volume like this cannot be got by the most ardent admirers now the authoress is dead.’” (In parenthesis, I often wish I had been able to tell Mr. Gladstone that Jowett left me this little book and his Shakespeare in his will.)

“We drove through the Green Park and I pulled up on the Horse Guards Parade at the garden-gate of 10 Downing Street. He got out of the phaeton, unlocked the gate and, turning round, stood with his hat off and his grey hair blowing about his forehead, holding a dark, homespun cape close round his shoulders. He said with great grace that he had enjoyed his drive immensely, that he hoped it would occur again and that I had a way of saying things and a tone of voice that would always remind him of my sister Laura. His dear old face looked furrowed with care and the outline of it was sharp as a profile. I said good-bye to him and drove away; perhaps it was the light of the setting sun, or the wind, or perhaps something else, but my eyes were full of tears.”

My husband, in discussing with me Gladstone’s sense of humour, told me the following story:

“During the Committee Stage of the Home Rule Bill in the session of 1893, I was one evening in a very thin House, seated by the side of Mr. Gladstone on the Treasury Bench, of which we were the sole occupants. His eyes were half-closed, and he seemed to be absorbed in following the course of a dreary discussion on the supremacy of Parliament. Suddenly he turned to me with an air of great animation and said, in his most solemn tones, ’Have you ever considered who is the ugliest man in the party opposite?

“*Mr*. *Asquith*: ‘Certainly; it is without doubt X’ (naming a famous Anglo-Indian statesman).

“*Mr*. *Gladstone*: ’You are wrong. X is no doubt an ugly fellow, but a much uglier is Y’ (naming a Queen’s Counsel of those days).

“*Mr*. *Asquith*: ‘Why should you give him the preference?’

“*Mr*. *Gladstone*: ’Apply a very simple test. Imagine them both magnified on a colossal scale. X’s ugliness would then begin to look dignified and even impressive, while the more you enlarged Y the meaner he would become.’”

I have known seven Prime Ministers—Gladstone, Salisbury, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman, Arthur Balfour, Asquith and Lloyd George—every one of them as different from the others as possible. I asked Arthur Balfour once if there was much difference between him and his uncle. I said:

"Lord Salisbury does not care fanatically about culture or literature. He may like Jane Austen, Scott or Sainte-Beuve, for all I know, *but he is not* A *scholar*; he does not care for Plato, Homer, Virgil or any of the great classics. He has a wonderful sense of humour and is a beautiful writer, of fine style; but I should say he is above everything a man of science and a Churchman. All this can be said equally well of you."

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To which he replied:

“There is a difference. My uncle is a Tory... and I am a Liberal.”

I delighted in the late Lord Salisbury, both in his speaking and in his conversation. I had a kind of feeling that he could always score off me with such grace, good humour and wit that I would never discover it. He asked me once what my husband thought of his son Hugh’s speaking, to which I answered:

“I will not tell you, because you don’t know anything about my husband and would not value his opinion. You know nothing about our House of Commons either, Lord Salisbury; only the other day you said in public that you had never even seen Parnell.”

Lord Salisbury (pointing to his waistcoat): “My figure is not adapted for the narrow seats in your peers’ gallery, but I can assure you you are doing me an injustice. I was one of the first to predict, both in private and in public, that Mr. Asquith would have a very great future. I see no one of his generation, or even among the younger men, at all comparable to him. Will you not gratify my curiosity by telling me what he thinks of my son Hugh’s speaking?”

I was luckily able to say that my husband considered Lord Hugh Cecil the best speaker in the House of Commons and indeed anywhere, at which Lord Salisbury remarked:

“Do you think he would say so if he heard him speak on subjects other than the Church?”

I assured him that he had heard him on Free Trade and many subjects and that his opinion remained unchanged. He thought that, if they could unknot themselves and cover more ground, both he and his brother, Bob Cecil, had great futures.

I asked Lord Salisbury if he had ever heard Chamberlain speak (Chamberlain was Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time).

Lord Salisbury: “It is curious you should ask me this. I heard him for the first time this afternoon.”

Margot: “Where did you hear him? And what was he speaking about?”

Lord Salisbury: “I heard him at Grosvenor House. Let me see...what was he speaking about? ... (reflectively) Australian washer-women? I think...or some such thing. ...”

Margot: “What did you think of it?”

Lord Salisbury: “He seems a good, business-like speaker.”

Margot: "I suppose at this moment Mr. Chamberlain is as much hated as Gladstone ever was?"

Lord Salisbury: "There is a difference. Mr. Gladstone was hated, but he was very much loved. Does any one love Mr. Chamberlain?"

One day after this conversation he came to see me, bringing with him a signed photograph of himself. We of the Liberal Party were much exercised over the shadow of Protection which had been presented to us by Mr. Ritchie, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, putting a tax upon corn; and the Conservative Party, with Mr. Balfour as its Prime Minister, was not doing well. We opened the conversation upon his nephew and the fiscal question.

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I was shocked by his apparent detachment and said:

“But do you mean to tell me you don’t think there is any danger of England becoming Protectionist?”

Lord Salisbury (with a sweet smile): “Not the slightest! There will always be a certain number of foolish people who will be Protectionists, but they will easily be overpowered by the wise ones. Have you ever known a man of first-rate intellect in this country who was a Protectionist?”

Margot: “I never thought of it, but Lord Milner is the only one I can think of for the moment.”

He entirely agreed with me and said:

“No, you need not be anxious. Free Trade will always win against Protection in this country. This will not be the trouble of the future.”

Margot: “Then what will be?”

Lord Salisbury: “The House of Lords is the difficulty that I foresee.”

I was surprised and incredulous and said quietly:

“Dear Lord Salisbury, I have heard of the House of Lords all my life! But, stupid as it has been, no one will ever have the power to alter it. Why do you prophesy that it will cause trouble?”

Lord Salisbury: “You may think me vain, Mrs. Asquith, but, as long as I am there, nothing will happen. I understand my lords thoroughly; but, when I go, mistakes will be made: the House of Lords will come into conflict with the Commons.”

Margot: “You should have taught it better ways! I am afraid it must be your fault!”

Lord Salisbury (smiling): “Perhaps; but what do *you* think will be the next subject of controversy?”

Margot: “If what you say is true and Protection *is* impossible in this country, I think the next row will be over the Church of England; it is in a bad way.”

I proceeded to denounce the constant building of churches while the parsons’ pay was so cruelly small. I said that few good men could afford to go into the Church at all; and the assumed voices, both in the reading and in the preaching, got on the nerves of every one who cared to listen to such a degree that the churches were becoming daily duller and emptier.

He listened with patience to all this and then got up and said:

“Now I must go; I shall not see you again.”

Something in his voice made me look at him.

“You aren’t ill, are you?” I asked with apprehension.

To which he replied:

“I am going into the country.”

I never saw him again and, when I heard of his death, I regretted I had not seen him oftener.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEAUTIFUL KATE VAUGHAN—COACHED BY COQUELIN IN MOLIERE—ROSEBERY’S POPULARITY AND ELOQUENCE—CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN BON-VIVANT AND BOULEVARDIER—BALFOUR’S MOT; HIS CHARM AND WIT; HIS TASTES AND PREFERENCES; HIS RELIGIOUS SPECULATION

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The next Prime Minister, whom I knew better than either Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury, was Lord Rosebery.

When I was a little girl, my mother took us to stay at Thomas's Hotel, Berkeley Square, to have a course of dancing lessons from the fashionable and famous M. d'Egville. These lessons put me in high spirits, because my master told me I could always make a living on the stage. His remarks were justified by a higher authority ten years later: the beautiful Kate Vaughan of the Gaiety Theatre.

I made her acquaintance in this way: I was a good amateur actress and with the help of Miss Annie Schletter, a friend of mine who is on the English stage now, I thought we might act Moliere's Precieuses ridicules together for a charity matinee. Coquelin—the finest actor of Moliere that ever lived—was performing in London at the time and promised he would not only coach me in my part but lend his whole company for our performance. He gave me twelve lessons and I worked hard for him. He was intensely particular; and I was more nervous over these lessons than I ever felt riding over high timber. My father was so delighted at what Coquelin said to him about me and my acting that he bought a fine early copy of Moliere's plays which he made me give him. I enclose his letter of refusal:

My dearest little Margot,

Je suis tres mecontent de vous. Je croyais que vous me traitiez tout a fait en ami, car c'etait en ami que j'avais accepte de vous offrir quelques indications sur les Precieuses...et voila que vous m'envoyez un enorme cadeau...imprudence d'abord parce que j'ai tous les beaux Moliere qui existent et ensuite parce qu'il ne fallait pas envoyer ombre de quoi que ce soit a votre ami Coq.

Je vais tout faire, malgre cela, pour aller vous voir un instant au'jourd'hui, mais je ne suis pas certain d'y parvenir.

Remerciez votre amie Madelon et dites-lui bien qu'elle non plus ne me doit absolument rien.

J'aime mieux un tout petit peu de la plus legere gratitude que n'importe quoi. Conservez, ma chere Margot, un bon souvenir de ce petit travail qui a du vous amuser beaucoup et qui nous a reunis dans les meilleurs sentiments du monde; continuons nous cette sympathie que je trouve moi tout a fait exquise—et croyez qu'en la continuant de votre cote, vous serez mille fois plus que quitte envers votre tres devoue

Coq.

Coquelin the younger was our stage-manager, and acted the principal part. When it was over and the curtain went down, "Freddy Wellesley's [Footnote: The Hon. F.

Wellesley, a famous bean and the husband of Kate Vaughan.] band" was playing Strauss valses in the entr'acve, while the audience was waiting for Kate Vaughan to appear in a short piece called The Dancing Lesson, the most beautiful solo dance ever seen. I was alone on the stage and, thinking that no one could see me, I slipped off my Moliere hoop of flowered silk and let myself go, in lace petticoats, to the wonderful music. Suddenly I heard a rather Cockney voice say from the wings:

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“My Lord! How you can dance! Who taught you, I’d like to know?”

I turned round and saw the lovely face of Kate Vaughan. She wore a long, black, clinging crepe-de-chine dress and a little black bonnet with a velvet bow over one ear; her white throat and beautiful arms were bare.

“Why,” she said, “you could understudy me, I believe! You come round and I’ll show you my parts and *you* will never lack for goldie boys!”

I remember the expression, because I had no idea what she meant by it. She explained that, if I became her under-study at the Gaiety, I would make my fortune. I was surprised that she had taken me for a professional, but not more so than she was when I told her that I had never had a lesson in ballet-dancing in my life.

My lovely coach, however, fell sick and had to give up the stage. She wrote me a charming letter, recommending me to her own dancing-master, M. d’Auban, under whom I studied for several years.

One day, on returning from my early dancing-lesson to Thomas’s Hotel, I found my father talking to Lord Rosebery. He said I had better run away; so, after kissing him and shaking hands with the stranger I left the room. As I shut the door, I heard Lord Rosebery say:

“Your girl has beautiful eyes.”

I repeated this upstairs, with joy and excitement, to the family, who, being in a good humour, said they thought it was true enough if my eyes had not been so close together. I took up a glass, had a good look at myself and was reluctantly compelled to agree.

I asked my father about Lord Rosebery afterwards, and he said:

“He is far the most brilliant young man living and will certainly be Prime Minister one day.”

Lord Rosebery was born with almost every advantage: he had a beautiful smile, an interesting face, a remarkable voice and natural authority. When at Oxford, he had been too much interested in racing to work and was consequently sent down—a punishment shared at a later date and on different grounds by another distinguished statesman, the present Viscount Grey—but no one could say he was not industrious at the time that I knew him and a man of education. He made his fame first by being Mr. Gladstone’s chairman at the political meetings in the great Midlothian campaign, where he became the idol of Scotland. Whenever there was a crowd in the streets or at the station, in either Glasgow or Edinburgh, and I enquired what it was all about, I always received the same reply:

“Rozbury!”

I think Lord Rosebery would have had a better nervous system and been a happier man if he had not been so rich. Riches are over-estimated in the Old Testament: the good and successful man receives too many animals, wives, apes, she-goats and peacocks. The values are changed in the New: Christ counsels a different perfection and promises another reward. He does not censure the man of great possessions, but He points out that his riches will hamper him in his progress to the Kingdom of Heaven and that he would do better to sell all; and He concludes with the penetrating words:

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“Of what profit is it to a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

The soul here is freedom from self.

Lord Rosebery was too thin-skinned, too conscious to be really happy. He was not self-swayed like Gladstone, but he was self-enfolded. He came into power at a time when the fortunes of the Liberal party were at their lowest; and this, coupled with his peculiar sensibility, put a severe strain upon him. Some people thought that he was a man of genius, morbidly sensitive shrinking from public life and the Press, cursed with insufficient ambition, sudden, baffling, complex and charming. Others thought that he was a man irresistible to his friends and terrible to his enemies, dreaming of Empire, besought by kings and armies to put countries and continents straight, a man whose notice blasted or blessed young men of letters, poets, peers or politicians, who at once scared and compelled every one he met by his freezing silence, his playful smile, or the weight of his moral indignation: the truth being that he was a mixture of both.

Lord Salisbury told me he was the best occasional speaker he had ever heard; and certainly he was an exceptionally gifted person. He came to Glen constantly in my youth and all of us worshipped him. No one was more alarming to the average stranger or more playful and affectionate in intimacy than Lord Rosebery.

An announcement in some obscure paper that he was engaged to be married to me came between us in later years. He was seriously annoyed and thought I ought to have contradicted this. I had never even heard the report till I got a letter in Cairo from Paris, asking if I would not agree to the high consideration and respectful homages of the writer and allow her to make my chemises. After this, the matter went completely out of my head, till, meeting him one day in London, I was greeted with such frigid self-suppression that I felt quite exhausted. A few months later, our thoughtful Press said I was engaged to be married to Arthur Balfour. As I had seen nothing of Lord Rosebery since he had gone into a period of long mourning, I was acclimatised to doing without him, but to lose Arthur’s affection and friendship would have been an irreparable personal loss to me. I need not have been afraid, for this was just the kind of rumour that challenged his insolent indifference to the public and the Press. Seeing me come into Lady Rothschild’s ball-room one night, he left the side of the man he was conversing with and with his elastic step stalked down the empty parquet floor to greet me. He asked me to sit down next to him in a conspicuous place; and we talked through two dances. I was told afterwards that some one who had been watching us said to him:

“I hear you are going to marry Margot Tennant.”

To which he replied:

“No, that is not so. I rather think of having a career of my own.”

Lord Rosebery's two antagonists, Sir William Harcourt and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, were very different men.

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Sir William ought to have lived in the eighteenth century. To illustrate his sense of humour: he told me that women should be played with like fish; only in the one case you angle to make them rise and in the other to make them fall. He had a great deal of wit and nature, impulsive generosity of heart and a temperament that clouded his judgment. He was a man to whom life had added nothing; he was perverse, unreasonable, brilliant, boisterous and kind when I knew him; but he must have been all these in the nursery.

At the time of the split in our party over the Boer War, when we were in opposition and the phrase “methods of barbarism” became famous, my personal friends were in a state of the greatest agitation. Lord Spencer, who rode with me nearly every morning, deplored the attitude which my husband had taken up. He said it would be fatal to his future, dissociating himself from the Pacifists and the Pro-Boers, and that he feared the Harcourts would never speak to us again. As I was devoted to the latter, and to their son Lulu [Footnote: The present Viscount Harcourt.] and his wife May—still my dear and faithful friends—I felt full of apprehension. We dined with Sir Henry and Lady Lucy one night and found Sir William and Lady Harcourt were of the company. I had no opportunity of approaching either of them before dinner, but when the men came out of the dining-room, Sir William made a bee-line for me. Sitting down, he took my hand in both of his and said:

“My dear little friend, you need not mind any of the quarrels! The Asquith evenings or the Rosebery afternoons, all these things will pass; but your man is the man of the future!”

These were generous words, for, if Lord Morley, my husband and others had backed Sir William Harcourt instead of Lord Rosebery when Gladstone resigned, he would certainly have become Prime Minister.

I never knew Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman well, but whenever we did meet we had great laughs together. He was essentially a bon vivant, a boulevardier and a humorist. At an official luncheon given in honour of some foreign Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, in an admirable speech in French—a language with which he was familiar—described Arthur Balfour, who was on one side of him, as l’enfant gate of English politics and Chamberlain, who was also at the lunch, as l’enfant terrible.

On the opening day of Parliament, February the 14th, 1905, he made an amusing and telling speech. It was a propos of the fiscal controversy which was raging all over England and which was destined to bring the Liberal party into power at the succeeding two general elections. He said that Arthur Balfour was “like a general who, having given the command to his men to attack, found them attacking one another; when informed of this, he shrugs his shoulders and says that he can’t help it if they will misunderstand his orders!”

In spite of the serious split in the Liberal Party over the Boer War, involving the disaffection of my husband, Grey and Haldane, Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister in 1905.

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He did not have a coupon election by arrangement with the Conservative Party to smother his opponents, hut asked Henry, before he consulted any one, what office he would take for himself and what he thought suitable for other people in his new Cabinet. Only men of a certain grandeur of character can do these things, but every one who watched the succeeding events would agree that Campbell-Bannerman's generosity was rewarded.

When C.B.—as he was called—went to Downing Street, he was a tired man; his wife was a complete invalid and his own health had been undermined by nursing her. As time went on, the late hours in the House of Commons began to tell upon him and he relegated more and more of his work to my husband.

One evening he sent for Henry to go and see him at 10 Downing Street and, telling him that he was dying, thanked him for all he had done, particularly for his great work on the South African constitution. He turned to him and said:

"Asquith, you are different from the others, and I am glad to have known you ... God bless you!"

C.B. died a few hours after this.

I now come to another Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour.

When Lord Morley was writing the life of Gladstone, Arthur Balfour said to me:

"If you see John Morley, give him my love and tell him to be bold and indiscreet."

A biography must not be a brief either for or against its client and it should be the same with an autobiography. In writing about yourself and other living people you must take your courage in both hands. I had thought of putting as a motto on the title-page of this book, "As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb"; but I gave it up when my friends gave me away and I saw it quoted in the newspapers; and I chose Blake and the Bible.

If I have written any words here that wound a friend or an enemy, I can only refer them to my general character and ask to be judged by it. I am not tempted to be spiteful and have never consciously hurt any one in my life; but in this book I must write what I think without fear or favour and with a strict regard to unmodelled truth.

Arthur Balfour was never a standard-bearer. He was a self-indulgent man of simple tastes. For the average person he was as puzzling to understand and as difficult to know as he was easy for me and many others to love. You may say that no average man can know a Prime Minister intimately; but most of us have met strangers whose minds we understood and whose hearts we reached without knowledge and without effort; and some of us have had an equally surprising and more painful experience

when, after years of love given and received, we find the friend upon whom we had counted has become a stranger.

He was difficult to understand, because I was never sure that he needed me; and difficult to know intimately, because of his formidable detachment. The most that many of us could hope for was that he had a taste in us as one might have in clocks or furniture.

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Balfour was blessed or cursed at his birth, according to individual opinion, by two assets: charm and wits. The first he possessed to a greater degree than any man, except John Morley, that I have ever met. His social distinction, exquisite attention, intellectual tact, cool grace and lovely bend of the head made him not only a flattering listener, but an irresistible companion. The disadvantage of charm—which makes me say cursed or blessed—is that it inspires every one to combine and smooth the way for you throughout life. As the earnest housemaid removes dust, so all his friends and relations kept disagreeable things from his path; and this gave him more leisure in his life than any one ought to have.

His wits, with which I say that he was also cursed or blessed— quite apart from his brains—gave him confidence in his improvisings and the power to sustain any opinion on any subject, whether he held the opinion or not, with equal brilliance, plausibility and success, according to his desire to dispose of you or the subject. He either finessed with the ethical basis of his intellect or had none. This made him unintelligible to the average man, unforgivable to the fanatic and a god to the blunderer.

On one occasion my husband and I went to a lunch, given by old Mr. McEwan, to meet Mr. Frank Harris. I might have said what my sister Laura did, when asked if she had enjoyed herself at a similar meal. “I would not have enjoyed it if I hadn’t been there,” as, with the exception of Arthur Balfour, I did not know a soul in the room. He sat like a prince, with his sphinx-like imperviousness to bores, courteous and concentrated on the languishing conversation. I made a few gallant efforts and my husband, who is particularly good on these self-conscious occasions, did his best ... but to no purpose.

Frank Harris, in a general disquisition to the table, at last turned to Arthur Balfour and said, with an air of finality:

“The fact is, Mr. Balfour, all the faults of the age come from Christianity and journalism.”

To which Arthur replied with rapier quickness and a child-like air:

“Christianity, of course ... but why journalism?”

When men said, which they have done now for over thirty years, that Arthur Balfour was too much of a philosopher to be really interested in politics, I always contradicted them. With his intellectual taste, perfect literary style and keen interest in philosophy and religion, nothing but a great love of politics could account for his not having given up more of his time to writing. People thought that he was not interested because he had nothing active in his political aspirations; he saw nothing that needed changing. Low wages, drink, disease, sweating and overcrowding did not concern him; they left him cold, and he had not the power to express moral indignation which he was too detached to feel.

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He was a great Parliamentarian, a brilliant debater and a famous Irish Secretary in difficult times, but his political energies lay in tactics. He took a Puck-like pleasure in watching the game of party politics, not in the interests of any particular political party, nor from esprit de corps, but from taste. This was very conspicuous in the years 1903 to 1906, during the fiscal controversy; but any one with observation could watch this peculiarity carried to a fine art wherever and whenever the Government to which he might be attached was in a tight place.

Politically, what he cared most about were problems of national defence. He inaugurated the Committee of Defence and appointed as its permanent Chairman the Prime Minister of the day; everything connected with the size of the army and navy interested him. The size of your army, however, must depend on the aims and quality of your diplomacy; and, if you have Junkers in your Foreign Office and jesters on your War Staff, you must have permanent conscription. It is difficult to imagine any one in this country advocating a large standing army plus a navy, which is vital to us; but such there were and such there will always be. With the minds of these militarists, protectionists and conscriptionists, Arthur Balfour had nothing in common at any time. He and the men of his opinions were called the Blue Water School; they deprecated fear of invasion and in consequence were violently attacked by the Tories. But, in spite of an army corps of enthusiasts kept upon our coasts to watch the traitors with towels signalling to the sea with full instructions where to drive the county cows to, no German army during the great War attempted to land upon our shores, thus amply justifying Arthur Balfour's views.

The artists who have expressed with the greatest perfection human experience, from an external point of view, he delighted in. He preferred appeals to his intellect rather than claims upon his feelings. Handel in music, Pope in poetry, Scott in narration, Jane Austen in fiction and Sainte-Beuve in criticism supplied him with everything he wanted. He hated introspection and shunned emotion.

What interested me most and what I liked best in Arthur Balfour was not his charm or his wit—and not his politics—but his writing and his religion.

Any one who has read his books with a searching mind will perceive that his faith in God is what has really moved him in life; and no one can say that he has not shown passion here. Religious speculation and contemplation were so much more to him than anything else that he felt justified in treating politics and society with a certain levity.

His mother, Lady Blanche Balfour, was a sister of the late Lord Salisbury and a woman of influence. I was deeply impressed by her character as described in a short private life of her written by the late minister of Whittingehame, Mr. Robertson. I should be curious to know, if it were possible, how many men and women of mark in this generation have had religious mothers. I think much fewer than in mine. My husband's mother, Mr. McKenna's and Lord Haldane's were all profoundly religious.

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This is part of one of Lady Blanche Balfour's prayers, written at the age of twenty-six:

From the dangers of metaphysical subtleties and from profitless speculation on the origin of evil—Good Lord deliver me.

From hardness of manner, coldness, misplaced sarcasm, and all errors and imperfections of manner or habit, from words and deeds by which Thy good may be evil-spoken, of through me, or not promoted to the utmost of my ability—Good Lord deliver me.

Teach me my duties to superiors, equals and inferiors. Give me gentleness and kindliness of manner and perfect tact; a thoughtful heart such as Thou lovest; leisure to care for the little things of others, and a habit of realising in my own mind their positions and feelings.

Give me grace to trust my children—with the peace that passeth all understanding—to Thy love and care. Teach me to use my influence over each and all, especially children and servants, aright, that I may give account of this, as well as of every other talent, with joy—and especially that I may guide with the love and wisdom which are far above the religious education of my children.

By Lady Blanche Balfour, 1851.

Born and bred in the Lowlands of Scotland, Arthur Balfour avoided the narrowness and materialism of the extreme High Church; but he was a strong Churchman. I wrote in a very early diary: "I wish Arthur would write something striking on the Established Church, as he could express better than any one living how much its influence for good in the future will depend on the spirit in which it is worked."

His mind was more critical than constructive; and those of his religious writings which I have read have been purely analytical. My attention was first arrested by an address he delivered at the Church Congress at Manchester in 1888. The subject which he chose was Positivism, without any special reference to the peculiarities of Comte's system. He called it The Religion of Humanity. [Footnote: An essay delivered at the Church Congress, Manchester, and printed in a pamphlet] In this essay he first dismisses the purely scientific and then goes on to discuss the Positivist view of man. The following passages will give some idea of his manner and style of writing:

Man, so far as natural science itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his history a brief and discreditable episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a piece or pieces of unorganised jelly into the living progenitors of humanity, science indeed, as yet, knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings, Famine, Disease, and Mutual

Slaughter, fit nurses of the future lord of creation, have gradually evolved, after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to know that it is vile,

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and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. The uneasy consciousness, which in this obscure corner has for a brief space broken the contented silence of the Universe, will be at rest. Matter will know itself no longer. Imperishable monuments and immortal deeds, death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been. Nor will anything that is be better or be worse for all that the labour, genius, devotion, and suffering of man have striven through countless generations to effect.

He continues on Positivism as an influence that cannot be disregarded:

One of the objects of the “religion of humanity,” and it is an object beyond all praise, is to stimulate the imagination till it lovingly embraces the remotest fortunes of the whole human family. But in proportion as this end is successfully attained, in proportion as we are taught by this or any other religion to neglect the transient and the personal, and to count ourselves as labourers for that which is universal and abiding, so surely must be the increasing range which science is giving to our vision over the time and spaces of the material universe, and the decreasing importance of the place which man is seen to occupy in it, strike coldly on our moral imagination, if so be that the material universe is all we have to do with. My contention is that every such religion and every such philosophy, so long as it insists on regarding man as merely a phenomenon among phenomena, a natural object among other natural objects, is condemned by science to failure as an effective stimulus to high endeavour. Love, pity, and endurance it may indeed leave with us; and this is well. But it so dwarfs and impoverishes the ideal end of human effort, that though it may encourage us to die with dignity, it hardly permits us to live with hope.

Apart from the unvarying love I have always had for Arthur Balfour, I should be untrue to myself if I did not feel deeply grateful for the unchanging friendship of a man who can think and write like this.

Of the other two Prime Ministers I cannot write, though no one knows them better than I do. By no device of mine could I conceal my feelings; both their names will live with lustre, without my conscience being chargeable with frigid impartiality or fervent partisanship, and no one will deny that all of us should be allowed some “private property in thought.”

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END OF BOOK ONE

MARGOT ASQUITH

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BOOK TWO

PSALM XXXIX

5. Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

6. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee.

CHAPTER I

The souls—lord CURZON's *poem and dinner party and who were there —*MARGOT'S *inventory of the group—Tilt with the late lady Londonderry—visit to Tennyson*; *his contempt for critics*; *his habit of living—*J. K. S. *Not* A *soul—*MARGOT'S *friendship with John Addington Symonds*; *his praise of Marie Bashkirtseff*

No one ever knew how it came about that I and my particular friends were called "the Souls." The origin of our grouping together I have already explained: we saw more of one another than we should probably have done had my sister Laura Lyttelton lived, because we were in mourning and did not care to go out in general society; but why we were called "Souls" I do not know.

The fashionable—what was called the "smart set"—of those days centred round the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, and had Newmarket for its head-quarters. As far as I could see, there was more exclusiveness in the racing world than I had ever observed among the Souls; and the first and only time I went to Newmarket the welcome extended to me by the shrewd and select company there made me feel exactly like an alien.

We did not play bridge or baccarat and our rather intellectual and literary after-dinner games were looked upon as pretentious.

Arthur Balfour—the most distinguished of the Souls and idolised by every set in society—was the person who drew the enemy's fire. He had been well known before he came among us and it was considered an impertinence on our part to make him play pencil-games or be our intellectual guide and critic. Nearly all the young men in my circle were clever and became famous; and the women, although not more intelligent, were less worldly than their fashionable contemporaries and many of them both good to be with and distinguished to look at.

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What interests me most on looking back now at those ten years is the loyalty, devotion and fidelity which we showed to one another and the pleasure which we derived from friendships that could not have survived a week had they been accompanied by gossip, mocking, or any personal pettiness. Most of us had a depth of feeling and moral and religious ambition which are entirely lacking in the clever young men and women of to-day. Our after-dinner games were healthier and more inspiring than theirs. "Breaking the news," for instance, was an entertainment that had a certain vogue among the younger generation before the war. It consisted of two people acting together and conveying to their audience various ways in which they would receive the news of the sudden death of a friend or a relation and was considered extraordinarily funny; it would never have amused any of the Souls. The modern habit of pursuing, detecting and exposing what was ridiculous in simple people and the unkind and irreverent manner in which slips were made material for epigram were unbearable to me. This school of thought—which the young group called "anticant"—encouraged hard sayings and light doings, which would have profoundly shocked the most frivolous among us. Brilliance of a certain kind may bring people together for amusement, but it will not keep them together for long; and the young, hard pre-war group that I am thinking of was short-lived.

The present Lord Curzon [Footnote: Earl Curzon of Kedleston.] also drew the enemy's fire and was probably more directly responsible for the name of the Souls than any one.

He was a conspicuous young man of ability, with a ready pen, a ready tongue, an excellent sense of humour in private life and intrepid social boldness. He had appearance more than looks, a keen, lively face, with an expression of enamelled selfassurance. Like every young man of exceptional promise, he was called a prig. The word was so misapplied in those days that, had I been a clever young man, I should have felt no confidence in myself till the world had called me a prig. He was a remarkably intelligent person in an exceptional generation. He had ambition and—what he claimed for himself in a brilliant description—"middle-class method"; and he added to a kindly feeling for other people a warm corner for himself. Some of my friends thought his contemporaries in the House of Commons, George Wyndham and Harry Cust, would go farther, as the former promised more originality and the latter was a finer scholar, but I always said—and have a record of it in my earliest diaries—that George Curzon would easily outstrip his rivals. He had two incalculable advantages over them: he was chronically industrious and self-sufficing; and, though Oriental in his ideas of colour and ceremony, with a poor sense of proportion, and a childish love of fine people, he was never self-indulgent. He neither ate, drank nor smoked too much and left nothing to chance.

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No one could turn with more elasticity from work to play than George Curzon; he was a first-rate host and boon companion and showed me and mine a steady and sympathetic love over a long period of years. Even now, if I died, although he belongs to the more conventional and does not allow himself to mix with people of opposite political parties, he would write my obituary notice.

At the time of which I am telling, he was threatened with lung trouble and was ordered to Switzerland by his doctors. We were very unhappy and assembled at a farewell banquet, to which he entertained us in the Bachelors' Club, on the 10th of July, 1889. We found a poem welcoming us on our chairs, when we sat down to dinner, in which we were all honourably and categorically mentioned. Some of our critics called us "the Gang"—to which allusion is made here—but we were ultimately known as the Souls.

This famous dinner and George's poem caused a lot of fun and friction, jealousy, curiosity and endless discussion. It was followed two years later by another dinner given by the same host to the same guests and in the same place, on the 9th of July, 1891.

The repetition of this dinner was more than the West End of London could stand; and I was the object of much obloquy. I remember dining with Sir Stanley and Lady Clarke to meet King Edward—then Prince of Wales—when my hostess said to me in a loud voice, across the table:

"There were some clever people in the world, you know, before you were born, Miss Tennant!"

Feeling rather nettled, I replied:

"Please don't pick me out, Lady Clarke, as if I alone were responsible for the stupid ones among whom we find ourselves to-day."

Having no suspicion of other people, I was seldom on the defensive and did not mean to be rude but I was young and intolerant. This was George Curzon's poem:

[Editor's Note: See footnotes at bottom of poem]

10th *July*, 1889.

Ho! list to a lay
Of that company gay,
Compounded of gallants and graces,
Who gathered to dine,
In the year '89,
In a haunt that in Hamilton Place is.

There, there where they met,
And the banquet was set
At the bidding of GEORGIUS *Curzon*;
Brave youth! ’tis his pride,
When he errs, that the side
Of respectable licence he errs on.

Around him that night—
Was there e’er such a sight?
Souls sparkled and spirits expanded;
For of them critics sang,
That tho’ christened the Gang,
By a spiritual link they were banded.

Souls and spirits, no doubt
But neither without
Fair visible temples to dwell in!
E’en your image divine
Must be girt with a shrine,
For the pious to linger a spell in.

There was seen at that feast
Of this band, the High Priest,
The heart that to all hearts is nearest;
Him may nobody steal
From the true Common weal,
Tho’ to each is dear *Arthur* the dearest. [1]

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America lends,
Nay, she gives when she sends
Such treasures as *Harry* and *Daisy*; [2]
Tho' many may yearn,
None but *Harry* can turn
That sweet little head of hers crazy.

There was much-envied *strath* [3]
With the lady who hath [3]
Taught us all what may life be at twenty;
Of pleasure a taste,
Of duty no waste,
Of gentle philosophy plenty.

Kitty Drummond was there— [4]
Where was *Lawrence*, oh! where?—
And my Lord and my Lady *Granby*; [5]
Is there one of the Gang
Has not wept at the pang
That he never can *violet's* man be?

From *Wilton*, whose streams
Murmur sweet in our dreams,
Come the Earl and his Countess together; [6]
In her spirit's proud flights
We are whirled to the heights,
He sweetens our stay in the nether.

Dear *Evan* was there, [7]
The first choice of the fair,
To all but himself very gentle!
And ASHRIDGE'S lord [8]
Most insufferably bored
With manners and modes Oriental.

The Shah, I would bet,
In the East never met
Such a couple as him and his consort. [8]
If the *Horners* you add, [9]
That a man must be mad
Who complains that the Gang is a wrong sort.

From kindred essay
lady Mary to-day [10]

Should have beamed on a world that adores her.
Of her spouse debonair [10]
No woman has e'er
Been able to say that he bores her.

Next BINGY escorts [11]
His dear wife, to our thoughts [11]
Never lost, though withdrawn from our vision,
While of late she has shown
That of spirit alone
Was not fashioned that fair composition.

No, if humour we count,
The original fount
Must to *Hugo* be ceded in freehold,
Tho' of equal supplies
In more subtle disguise
Old *Godfrey* has far from a wee hold! [12]

Mrs. *Eddy* has come [13]
And we all shall be dumb
When we hear what a lovely voice Emmy's is;
Spencer, too, would show what [14]
He can do, were it not
For that cursed laryngeal Nemesis.

At no distance away
Behold *Alan* display [15]
That smile that is found so upsetting;
And *Edgar* in bower, [16]
In statecraft, in power,
The favourite first in the betting.

Here a trio we meet,
Whom you never will beat,
Tho' wide you may wander and far go;
From what wonderful art
Of that Gallant Old Bart,
Sprang *Charty* and *Lucy* and *Margot*?

To *Lucy* he gave [17]
The wiles that enslave,
Heart and tongue of an angel to *Charty*; [18]
To *Margot* the wit [19]
And the wielding of it,
That make her the joy of a party.

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Lord Tommy is proud [20]
That to *Charty* he vowed
The graces and gifts of a true man.
And proud are the friends
Of *Alfred*, who blends [21]
The athlete, the hero, the woman!

From the Gosford preserves
Old *st*. *John* deserves [22]
Great praise for a bag such as *Hilda*; [22]
True worth she esteemed,
Overpowering he deemed
The subtle enchantment that filled her.

Very dear are the pair,
He so strong, she so fair,
Renowned as the TAPLOVITE WINNIES;
Ah! he roamed far and wide,
Till in *Etty* he spied [23]
A treasure more golden than guineas.

Here is *doll* who has taught [24]
Us that “words conceal thought”
In his case is a fallacy silly;
Harry Cust could display [25]
Scalps as many, I lay,
From Paris as in Piccadilly.

But some there were too—
Thank the Lord they were few!
Who were bidden to come and who could not:
Was there one of the lot,
Ah! I hope there was not,
Looked askance at the bidding and would not.

The brave *little Earl* [26]
Is away, and his pearl-
Laden spouse, the imperial *Gladys*; [26]
By that odious gout
Is *lord Cowper* knocked out. [27]
And the wife who his comfort and aid is. [27]

Miss BETTY’S engaged,
And we all are enraged

That the illness of SIBELL'S not over; [28]
George Wyndham can't sit [29]
At our banquet of wit,
Because he is standing at Dover.

But we ill can afford
To dispense with the Lord
Of WADDESDON and ill *Harry Chaplin*; [30, 31]
Were he here, we might shout
As again he rushed out
From the back of that "d—d big sapling."

We have lost *lady gay* [32]
'Tis a price hard to pay
For that Shah and his appetite greedy;
And alas! we have lost—
At what ruinous cost!—
The charms of the brilliant Miss D.D. [33]

But we've got in their place,
For a gift of true grace,
Virginia's marvellous daughter. [34]
Having conquered the States,
She's been blown by the Fates
To conquer us over the water.

Now this is the sum
Of all those who have come
Or ought to have come to that banquet.
Then call for the bowl,
Flow spirit and soul,
Till midnight not one of you can quit!

And blest by the Gang
Be the Rhymester who sang
Their praises in doggrel appalling;
More now were a sin—
Ho, waiters, begin!
Each soul for consomme is calling!

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[Footnotes: 1 The Right Eton A. J. Balfour. 2 Mr. and Mrs White. 3 The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland. 4 Col. and Mrs L. Drummond. 5 Now the Duke and Duchess of Rutland. 6 Earl and Countess of Pembroke. 7 Hon. Evan Charteris. 8 Earl and Countess Brownlow. 9 Sir J. and Lady Horner.
10 Lord and Lady Elcho (now Earl and Countess of Wemyss).
11 Lord and Lady Wenlock.
12 Mr. Godfrey Webb.
13 The Hon. Mrs. E. Bourke.
14 The Hon. Spencer Lyttelton.
15 The Hon. Alan Charteris.
16 Sir E. Vincent (now Lord D'Abernon).
17 Mrs. Graham Smith.
18 Lady Ribblesdale.
19 Mrs. Asquith.
20 Lord Ribblesdale.
21 The Hon. Alfred Lyttelton.
22 The Hon. St. John Brodrick (now Earl of Midleton) and Lady Hilda Brodrick.
23 Mr. and Mrs. Willy Grenfell (now Lord and Lady Desborough).
24 Mr. A. G. Liddell.
25 Mr. Harry Cust.
26 Earl and Countess de Grey.
27 Earl and Countess Cowper.
28 Countess Grosvenor.
29 The late Right Hon. George Wyndham.
30 Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild.
31 Now Viscount Chaplin.
32 Lady Windsor (now Marchioness of Plymouth).
33 Miss E. Balfour (Widow of the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton).
34 Mrs. Chanler, the American novelist (now Princess Troubetzkoy).]

For my own and the children's interest I shall try, however imperfectly, to make a descriptive inventory of some of the Souls mentioned in this poem and of some of my friends who were not.

Gladstone's secretary, Sir Algernon West, [Footnote: The Right Hon. Sir Algernon West.] and Godfrey Webb had both loved Laura and corresponded with her till she died and they spent all their holidays at Glen. I never remember the time when Algy West was not getting old and did not say he wanted to die; but, although he is ninety, he is still young, good-looking and—what is even more remarkable—a strong Liberal. He was never one of the Souls, but he was a faithful and loving early friend of ours.

Mr. Godfrey Webb was the doyen of the Souls. He was as intimate with my brothers and parents as he was with my sisters and self. Godfrey—or Webber as some called

him—was not only a man of parts, but had a peculiar flavour of his own: he had the sense of humour and observation of a memoirist and his wit healed more than it cut. For hours together he would poke about the country with a dog, a gun and a cigar, perfectly independent and self-sufficing, whether engaged in sport, repartee, or literature. He wrote and published for private circulation a small book of poems and made the Souls famous by his proficiency at all our pencil-games. It would be unwise to quote verses or epigrams that depend so much upon the occasion and the environment. Only a George Meredith can sustain a preface boasting of his heroine's wit throughout the book, but I will risk one example of Godfrey Webb's quickness. He took up a newspaper one morning in the dining-room at Glen and, reading that a Mr. Pickering Phipps had broken his leg on rising from his knees at prayer, he immediately wrote this couplet:

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On bended knees, with fervent lips, Wrestled with Satan Pickering Phipps, But when for aid he ceased to beg, The wily devil broke his leg!

He spent every holiday with us and I do not think he ever missed being with us on the anniversary of Laura's death, whether I was at home or abroad. He was a man in a million, the last of the wits, and I miss him every day of my life.

Lord Midleton [Footnote: The Right Hon. the Earl of Midleton, of Peper, Harow, Godalming.]—better known as St. John Brodrick—was my first friend of interest; I knew him two years before I met Arthur Balfour or any of the Souls. He came over to Glen while he was staying with neighbours of ours.

I wired to him not long ago to congratulate him on being made an Earl and asked him in what year it was that he first came to Glen; this is his answer:

Jan. 12th, 1920. *Dearest Margot*,

I valued your telegram of congratulation the more that I know you and Henry (who has given so many and refused all) attach little value to titular distinctions. Indeed, it is the only truly democratic trait about *you*, except a general love of Humanity, which has always put you on the side of the feeble. I am relieved to hear you have chosen such a reliable man as Crewe—with his literary gifts—to be the only person to read your autobiography.

My visit to Glen in R—y's company was October, 1880, when you were sixteen. You and Laura flashed like meteors on to a dreary scene of empty seats at the luncheon table (the shooting party didn't come in) and filled the room with light, electrified the conversation and made old R—y falter over his marriage vows within ten minutes. From then onwards, you have always been the most loyal and indulgent of friends, forgetting no one as you rapidly climbed to fame, and were raffled for by all parties—-from Sandringham to the crossing-sweeper.

Your early years will sell the book.

Bless you.

St. *John*.

St. John Midleton was one of the rare people who tell the truth. Some people do not lie, but have no truth to tell; others are too agreeable—or too frightened—and lie; but the majority are indifferent: they are the spectators of life and feel no responsibility either towards themselves or their neighbour.

He was fundamentally humble, truthful and one of the few people I know who are truly loyal and who would risk telling me, or any one he loved, before confiding to an inner

circle faults which both he and I think might be corrected. I have had a long experience of inner circles and am constantly reminded of the Spanish proverb, “Remember your friend has a friend.” I think you should either leave the room when those you love are abused or be prepared to warn them of what people are thinking. This is, as I know to my cost, an unpopular view of friendship, but neither St. John nor I would think it loyal to join in the laughter or censure of a friend’s folly.

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Arthur Balfour himself—the most persistent of friends—remarked laughingly:

“St. John pursues us with his malignant fidelity.” [Footnote: The word malignity was obviously used in the sense of the French malin.]

This was only a coloured way of saying that Midleton had none of the detachment commonly found among friends; but, as long as we are not merely responsible for our actions to the police, so long must I believe in trying to help those we love.

St. John has the same high spirits and keenness now that he had then and the same sweetness and simplicity. There are only a few women whose friendships have remained as loving and true to me since my girlhood as his—Lady Horner, Miss Tomlinson [Footnote: Miss May Tomlinson, of Rye.], Lady Desborough, Mrs. Montgomery, Lady Wemyss and Lady Bridges [Footnote: J Lady Bridges, wife of General Sir Tom Bridges.]—but ever since we met in 1880 he has taken an interest in me and all that concerns me. He was much maligned when he was Secretary of State for War and bore it without blame or bitterness. He had infinite patience, intrepid courage and a high sense of duty; these combined to give him a better place in the hearts of men than in the fame of newspapers.

His first marriage was into a family who were incapable of appreciating his particular quality and flavour; even his mother-in-law—a dear friend of mine—never understood him and was amazed when I told her that her son-in-law was worth all of her children put together, because he had more nature and more enterprise. I have tested St. John now for many years and never found him wanting.

Lord Pembroke [Footnote: George, 13th Earl of Pembroke.] and George Wyndham were the handsomest of the Souls. Pembroke was the son of Sidney Herbert, famous as Secretary of State for War during the Crimea. I met him first the year before I came out. Lord Kitchener’s friend, Lady Waterford—sister to the present Duke of Beaufort—-wrote to my mother asking if Laura could dine with her, as she had been thrown over at the last minute and wanted a young woman. As my sister was in the country, my mother sent me. I sat next to Arthur Balfour; Lord Pembroke was on the other side, round the corner of the table; and I remember being intoxicated with my own conversation and the manner in which I succeeded in making Balfour and Pembroke join in. I had no idea who the splendid stranger was. He told me several years later that he had sent round a note in the middle of that dinner to Blanchie Waterford, asking her what the name of the girl with the red heels was, and that, when he read her answer, “Margot Tennant,” it conveyed nothing to him. This occurred in 1881 and was for me an eventful evening. Lord Pembroke was one of the four best-looking men I ever saw: the others, as I have already said, were the late Earl of Wemyss, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt—whose memoirs have been recently published—and Lord D’Abernon

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[Footnote: Our Ambassador in Berlin.]. He was six foot four, but his face was even more conspicuous than his height. There was Russian blood in the Herbert family and he was the eldest brother of the beautiful Lady Ripon [Footnote: The late wife of the present Marquis of Ripon.]. He married Lady Gertrude Talbot, daughter of the twentieth Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot, who was nearly as fine to look at as he himself. He told me among other things at that dinner that he had known Disraeli and had been promised some minor post in his government, but had been too ill at the time to accept it. This developed into a discussion on politics and Peeblesshire, leading up to our county neighbours; he asked me if I knew Lord Elcho, [Footnote: The father of the present Earl of Wemyss and March.] of whose beauty Ruskin had written, and who owned property in my county.

"Elcho," said he, "always expected to be invited to join the government, but I said to Dizzy, 'Elcho is an impossible politician; he has never understood the meaning of party government and looks upon it as dishonest for even three people to attempt to modify their opinions sufficiently to come to an agreement, leave alone a Cabinet! He is an egotist!' To which Disraeli replied, 'Worse than that! He is an Elchoist!'"

Although Lord Pembroke's views on all subjects were remarkably wide—as shown by the book he published called Roots—he was a Conservative. We formed a deep friendship and wrote to one another till he died a few years after my marriage. In one of his letters to me he added this postscript:

Keep the outer borders of your heart's sweet garden free from garish flowers and wild and careless weeds, so that when your fairy godmother turns the Prince's footsteps your way he may not, distrusting your nature or his own powers, and only half-guessing at the treasure within, tear himself reluctantly away, and pass sadly on, without perhaps your ever knowing that he had been near.

This, I imagine, gave a correct impression of me as I appeared to some people. "Garish flowers" and "wild and careless weeds" describe my lack of pruning; but I am glad George Pembroke put them on the "outer," not the inner, borders of my heart.

In the tenth verse of Curzon's poem, allusion is made to Lady Pembroke's conversation, which though not consciously pretentious, provoked considerable merriment. She "stumbled upwards into vacuity," to quote my dear friend Sir Walter Raleigh.

There is no one left to-day at all like George Pembroke. His combination of intellectual temperament, gregariousness, variety of tastes—yachting, art, sport and literature—his beauty of person and hospitality to foreigners made him the distinguished centre of any company. His first present to me was Butcher and Lang's translation of the Odyssey, in which he wrote on the fly-leaf, "To Margot, who most reminds me of Homeric days,

1884," and his last was his wedding present, a diamond dagger, which I always wear close to my heart.

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Among the Souls, Milly Sutherland [Footnote: The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland.], Lady Windsor [Footnote: The present Countess of Plymouth.] and Lady Granby [Footnote: The present Duchess of Rutland.] were the women whose looks I admired most. Lady Brownlow [Footnote: Countess Brownlow, who died a few years ago.], mentioned in verse eleven, was Lady Pembroke's handsome sister and a famous Victorian beauty. Lady Granby—the Violet of verse nine, Gladys Ripon [Footnote: My friend Lady de Grey.] and Lady Windsor (alluded to as Lady Gay in verse twenty-eight), were all women of arresting appearance: Lady Brownlow, a Roman coin; Violet Rutland, a Burne-Jones Medusa; Gladys Ripon, a court lady; Gay Windsor, an Italian Primitive and Milly Sutherland, a Scotch ballad. Betty Montgomery was a brilliant girl and the only unmarried woman, except Mrs. Lyttelton, among us. She was the daughter of Sir Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's famous private secretary, and one of the strongest Liberals I ever met. Her sister Maggie, though socially uncouth, had a touch of her father's genius; she said of a court prelate to me one day at Windsor Castle:

"There goes God's butler!"

It was through Betty and Maggie Ponsonby that I first met my beloved friend, Lady Desborough. Though not as good-looking as the beauties I have catalogued, nor more intellectual than Lady Horner or Lady Wemyss, Lady Desborough was the cleverest of us. Her flavour was more delicate, her social sensibility finer; and she added to chronic presence of mind undisguised effrontery. I do not suppose she was ever unconscious in her life, but she had no self-pity and no egotism. She was not an artist in any way: music, singing, flowers, painting and colour left her cold. She was not a game-player nor was she sporting and she never invested in parlour tricks; yet she created more fun for other people than anybody. She was a woman of genius, who, if subtly and accurately described, either in her mode of life, her charm, wits or character, would have made the fortune of any novelist. To an outsider she might—like all over-agreeable femmes du monde—give an impression of light metal, but this would be misleading. Etty Desborough was fundamentally sound, and the truest friend that ever lived. Possessed of social and moral sang-froid of a high order, she was too elegant to fall into the trap of the candid friend, but nevertheless she could, when asked, give both counsel and judgment with the sympathy of a man and the wisdom of a god. She was the first person that I sought and that I would still seek if I were unhappy, because her genius lay in a penetrating understanding of the human heart and a determination to redress the balance of life's unhappiness. Etty and I attracted the same people. She married Willy Grenfell,[Footnote: Lord Desborough of Taplow Court.] a man to whom I was much attached and a British gladiator capable of challenging the world in boating and boxing.

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Of their soldier sons, Julian and Billy, I cannot write. They and their friends, Edward Horner, Charles Lister and Raymond Asquith all fell in the war. They haunt my heart; I can see them in front of me now, eternal sentinels of youth and manliness.

In spite of a voracious appetite for enjoyment and an expert capacity in entertaining, Etty Desborough was perfectly happy either alone with her family or alone with her books and could endure, with enviable patience, cold ugly country-seats and fashionable people. I said of her when I first knew her that she ought to have lived in the days of the great King's mistresses. I would have gone to her if I were sad, but never if I were guilty. Most of us have asked ourselves at one time or another whom we would go to if we had done a wicked thing; and the interesting part of this question is that in the answer you will get the best possible indication of human nature. Many have said to me, "I would go to So-and-so, because they would understand my temptation and make allowances for me"; but the majority would choose the confidante most competent to point to the way of escape. Etty Desborough would be that confidante.

She had neither father nor mother, but was brought up by two prominent and distinguished members of the Souls, my life-long and beloved friends, Lord and Lady Cowper of Panshanger, now, alas, both dead. Etty had eternal youth and was alive to everything in life except its irony.

If for health or for any other reason I had been separated from my children when they were young, I would as soon have confided them to the love of Etty and Willy Desborough as to any of my friends.

To illustrate the jealousy and friction which the Souls caused, I must relate a conversational scrap I had at this time with Lady Londonderry,[Footnote: The late Marchioness of Londonderry.] which caused some talk among our critics.

She was a beautiful woman, a little before my day, happy, courageous and violent, with a mind which clung firmly to the obvious. Though her nature was impulsive and kind, she was not forgiving. One day she said to me with pride:

"I am a good friend and a bad enemy. No kiss-and-make-friends about me, my dear!"

I have often wondered since, as I did then, what the difference between a good and a bad enemy is.

She was not so well endowed intellectually as her rival Lady de Grey, but she had a stronger will and was of sounder temperament.

There was nothing wistful, reflective or retiring about Lady Londonderry. She was keen and vivid, but crude and impenitent.

We were accused entre autres of being conceited and of talking about books which we had not read, a habit which I have never had the temerity to acquire. John Addington Symonds—an intimate friend of mine—had brought out a book of essays, which were not very good and caused no sensation.

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One night, after dinner, I was sitting in a circle of fashionable men and women—none of them particularly intimate with me—when Lady Londonderry opened the talk about books. Hardly knowing her, I entered with an innocent zest into the conversation. I was taken in by her mention of Symonds' Studies in Italy, and thought she must be literary. Launching out upon style, I said there was a good deal of rubbish written about it, but it was essential that people should write simply. At this some one twitted me with our pencil-game of "Styles" and asked me if I thought I should know the author from hearing a casual passage read out aloud from one of their books. I said that some writers would be easy to recognise—such as Meredith, Carlyle, De Quincey or Browning—but that when it came to others—men like Scott or Froude, for instance—I should not be so sure of myself. At this there was an outcry: Froude, having the finest style in the world, ought surely to be easily recognised! I was quite ready to believe that some of the company had made a complete study of Froude's style, but I had not. I said that I could not be sure, because his writing was too smooth and perfect, and that, when I read him, I felt as if I was swallowing arrow-root. This shocked them profoundly and I added that, unless I were to stumble across a horseman coming over a hill, or something equally fascinating, I should not even be sure of recognising Scott's style. This scandalised the company. Lady Londonderry then asked me if I admired Symonds' writing. I told her I did not, although I liked some of his books. She seemed to think that this was a piece of swagger on my part and, after disagreeing with a lofty shake of her head, said in a challenging manner:

"I should be curious to know, Miss Tennant, what you have read by Symonds!"

Feeling I was being taken on, I replied rather chillily:

"Oh, the usual sort of thing!"

Lady Londonderry, visibly irritated and with the confident air of one who has a little surprise in store for the company, said:

"Have you by any chance looked at Essays, Suggestive and Speculative?"

Margot: "Yes, I've read them all."

Lady Londonderry: "Really! Do you not approve of them?"

Margot: "Approve? I don't know what you mean." *Lady Londonderry*:
"Do you not think the writing beautiful ... the style, I mean?"

Margot: "I think they are all very bad, but then I don't admire Symonds' style."

Lady Londonderry: "I am afraid you have not read the book."

This annoyed me; I saw the company were enchanted with their spokeswoman, but I thought it unnecessarily rude and more than foolish.

I looked at her calmly and said:

“I am afraid, Lady Londonderry, you have not read the preface. The book is dedicated to me. Symonds was a friend of mine and I was staying at Davos at the time he was writing those essays. He was rash enough to ask me to read one of them in manuscript and write whatever I thought upon the margin. This I did, but he was offended by something I scribbled. I was so surprised at his minding that I told him he was never to show me any of his unpublished work again, at which he forgave me and dedicated the book to me.”

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After this flutter I was not taken on by fashionable ladies about books.

Lady Londonderry never belonged to the Souls, but her antagonist, Lady de Grey, was one of its chief ornaments and my friend. She was a luxurious woman of great beauty, with perfect manners and a moderate sense of duty. She was the last word in refinement, perception and charm. There was something septic in her nature and I heard her say one day that the sound of the cuckoo made her feel ill; but, although she was not lazy and seldom idle, she never developed her intellectual powers or sustained herself by reading or study of any kind. She had not the smallest sense of proportion and, if anything went wrong in her entertainments—cold plates, a flat souffle, or some one throwing her over for dinner—she became almost impotent from agitation, only excusable if it had been some great public disaster. She and Mr. Harry Higgins—an exceptionally clever and devoted friend of mine—having revived the opera, Bohemian society became her hobby; but a tenor in the country or a dancer on the lawn are not really wanted; and, although she spent endless time at Covent Garden and achieved considerable success, restlessness devoured her. While receiving the adoration of a small but influential circle, she appeared to me to have tried everything to no purpose and, in spite of an experience which queens and actresses, professionals and amateurs might well have envied, she remained embarrassed by herself, fluid, brilliant and uneasy. The personal nobility with which she worked her hospital in the Great War years brought her peace.

Frances Horner [Footnote: Lady Horner, of Mells, Frome.] was more like a sister to me than any one outside my own family. I met her when she was Miss Graham and I was fourteen. She was a leader in what was called the high art William Morris School and one of the few girls who ever had a salon in London.

I was deeply impressed by her appearance, it was the fashion of the day to wear the autumn desert in your hair and “soft shades” of Liberty velveteen; but it was neither the unusualness of her clothes nor the sight of Burne-Jones at her feet and Ruskin at her elbow that struck me most, but what Charty’s little boy, Tommy Lister, called her “ghost eyes” and the nobility of her countenance.

There may be women as well endowed with heart, head, temper and temperament as Frances Horner, but I have only met a few: Lady de Vesci (whose niece, Cynthia, married our poet-son, Herbert), Lady Betty Balfour[Footnote: Sister of the Earl of Lytton and wife of Mr. Gerald Balfour.] and my daughter Elizabeth. With most women the impulse to crab is greater than to praise and grandeur of character is surprisingly lacking in them; but Lady Horner comprises all that is best in my sex.

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Mary Wemyss was one of the most distinguished of the Souls and was as wise as she was just, truthful, tactful, and generous. She might have been a great influence, as indeed she was always a great pleasure, but she was both physically and mentally badly equipped for coping with life and spent and wasted more time than was justifiable on plans which could have been done by any good servant. It would not have mattered the endless discussion whether the brougham fetching one part of the family from one station and a bus fetching another part of it from another interfered with a guest catching a five or a five-to-five train—which could or could not be stopped—if one could have been quite sure that Mary Wemyss needed her friend so much that another opportunity would be given for an intimate interchange of confidences; but plan-weaving blinds people to a true sense of proportion and my beloved Mary never had enough time for any of us. She is the only woman I know or have ever known without smallness or touchiness of any kind. Her juste milieu, if a trifle becalmed, amounts to genius; and I was—and still am—more interested in her moral, social and intellectual opinions than in most of my friends'. Some years ago I wrote this in my diary about her:

"Mary is generally a day behind the fair and will only hear of my death from the man behind the counter who is struggling to clinch her over a collar for her chow."

One of the less prominent of the Souls was my friend, Lionel Tennyson.[Footnote: Brother of the present Lord Tennyson.] He was the second son of the poet and was an official in the India Office. He had an untidy appearance, a black beard and no manners. He sang German beer-songs in a lusty voice and wrote good verses.

He sent me many poems, but I think these two are the best. The first was written to me on my twenty-first birthday, before the Souls came into existence:

What is a single flower when the world is white
with may?
What is a gift to one so rich, a smile to one so gay?
What is a thought to one so rich in the loving
thoughts of men?
How should I hope because I sigh that you will
sigh again?
Yet when you see my gift, you may
(Ma bayadere aux yeux de jais)
Think of me once to-day.

Think of me as you will, dear girl, if you will let
me be
Somewhere enshrined within the fane of your pure
memory;
Think of your poet as of one who only thinks of
you,

That you *are* all his thought, that he were happy
if he knew—
You *did* receive his gift, and say
(Ma bayadere aux yeux de jais)
“He thinks of me to-day.”

And this is the second:

She drew me from my cosy seat,
She drew me to her cruel feet,
She whispered, “Call me Sally!”
I lived upon her smile, her sigh,
Alas, you fool, I knew not I
Was only her pis-aller.

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The jade! she knew her business well,
She made each hour a heaven or hell,
For she could coax and rally;
She was *so* loving, frank and kind,
That no suspicion crost my mind
That I was her pis-aller.

My brother says "I told you so!
Her conduct was not comme il faut,
But strictly comme il fallait;
She swore that she was fond and true;
No doubt she was, poor girl, but you
Were only her pis-aller."

He asked me what I would like him to give me for a birthday present, and I said:

"If you want to give me pleasure, take me down to your father's country house for a Saturday to Monday."

This Lionel arranged; and he and I went down to Aldworth, Haslemere, together from London.

While we were talking in the train, a distinguished old lady got in. She wore an ample black satin skirt, small black satin slippers in goloshes, a sable tippet and a large, picturesque lace bonnet. She did not appear to be listening to our conversation, because she was reading with an air of concentration; but, on looking at her, I observed her eyes fixed upon me. I wore a scarlet cloak trimmed with cock's feathers and a black, three-cornered hat. When we arrived at our station, the old lady tipped a porter to find out from my luggage who I was; and when she died —several years later—she left me in her will one of my most valuable jewels. This was Lady Margaret Beaumont; and I made both her acquaintance and friendship before her death.

Lady Tennyson was an invalid; and we were received on our arrival by the poet. Tennyson was a magnificent creature to look at. He had everything: height, figure, carriage, features and expression. Added to this he had what George Meredith said of him to me, "the feminine hint to perfection." He greeted me by saying:

"Well, are you as clever and spurty as your sister Laura?"

I had never heard the word "spurty" before, nor indeed have I since. To answer this kind of frontal attack one has to be either saucy or servile; so I said nothing memorable. We sat down to tea and he asked me if I wanted him to dress for dinner, adding:

"Your sister said of me, you know, that I was both untidy and dirty."

To which I replied:

“Did you mind this?”

Tennyson: “I wondered if it was true. Do you think I’m dirty?”

Margot: “You are very handsome.”

Tennyson: “I can see by that remark that you think I am. Very well then, I will dress for dinner. Have you read Jane Welsh Carlyle’s letters?”

Margot: “Yes, I have, and I think them excellent. It seems a pity,” I added, with the commonplace that is apt to overcome one in a first conversation with a man of eminence, “that they were ever married; with any one but each other, they might have been perfectly happy.”

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Tennyson: "I totally disagree with you. By any other arrangement four people would have been unhappy instead of two."

After this I went up to my room. The hours kept at Aldworth were peculiar; we dined early and after dinner the poet went to bed. At ten o'clock he came downstairs and, if asked, would read his poetry to the company till past midnight.

I dressed for dinner with great care that first night and, placing myself next to him when he came down, I asked him to read out loud to me.

Tennyson: "What do you want me to read?"

Margot: "Maud."

Tennyson: "That was the poem I was cursed for writing! When it came out no word was bad enough for me! I was a blackguard, a ruffian and an atheist! You will live to have as great a contempt for literary critics and the public as I have, my child!"

While he was speaking, I found on the floor, among piles of books, a small copy of Maud, a shilling volume, bound in blue paper. I put it into his hands and, pulling the lamp nearer him, he began to read.

There is only one man—a poet also—who reads as my host did; and that is my beloved friend, Professor Gilbert Murray. When I first heard him at Oxford, I closed my eyes and felt as if the old poet were with me again.

Tennyson's reading had the lilt, the tenderness and the rhythm that makes music in the soul. It was neither singing, nor chanting, nor speaking, but a subtle mixture of the three; and the effect upon me was one of haunting harmonies that left me profoundly moved.

He began, "Birds in the high Hall-garden," and, skipping the next four sections, went on to, "I have led her home, my love, my only friend," and ended with:

There has fallen a splendid tear
  From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear,
  She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
  And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
  And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
  Were it ever so airy a tread,

My heart would hear her and beat,
  Were it earth in an earthly bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
  Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
  And blossom in purple and red.

When he had finished, he pulled me on to his knee and said:

“Many may have written as well as that, but nothing that ever sounded so well!”

I could not speak.

He then told us that he had had an unfortunate experience with a young lady to whom he was reading Maud.

“She was sitting on my knee,” he said, “as you are doing now, and after reading,

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling,

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I asked her what bird she thought I meant. She said, 'A nightingale.' This made me so angry that I nearly flung her to the ground: 'No, fool! ... Rook!' said I."

I got up, feeling rather sorry for the young lady, but was so afraid he was going to stop reading that I quickly opened The Princess and put it into his hands, and he went on.

I still possess the little Maud, bound in its blue paper cover, out of which he read to us, with my name written in it by Tennyson.

The morning after my arrival I was invited by our host to go for a walk with him, which flattered me very much; but after walking at a great pace over rough ground for two hours I regretted my vanity. Except my brother Glenconner I never met such an easy mover. The most characteristic feature left on my mind of that walk was Tennyson's appreciation of other poets.

Writing of poets, I come to George Wyndham. [Footnote: The late Right Hon. George Wyndham.] It would be superfluous to add anything to what has already been published of him, but he was among the best-looking and most lovable of my circle.

He was a young man of nature endowed with even greater beauty than his sister, Lady Glenconner, but with less of her literary talent. Although his name will always be associated with the Irish Land Act, he was more interested in literature than politics, and, with a little self-discipline, might have been eminent in both.

Mr. Harry Cust is the last of the Souls that I intend writing about and was in some ways the rarest end the most brilliant of them all. Some one who knew him well wrote truly of him after he died:

"He tossed off the cup of life without fear of it containing any poison, but like many wilful men he was deficient in will-power."

The first time I ever saw Harry Cust was in Grosvenor Square, where he had come to see my sister Laura. A few weeks later I found her making a sachet, which was an unusual occupation for her, and she told me it was for "Mr. Cust," who was going to Australia for his health.

He remained abroad for over a year and, on the night of the Jubilee, 1887, he walked into our house where we were having supper. He had just returned from Australia, and was terribly upset to hear that Laura was dead.

Harry Cust had an untiring enthusiasm for life. At Eton he had been captain of the school and he was a scholar of Trinity. He had as fine a memory as Professor Churton Collins or my husband and an unplumbed sea of knowledge, quoting with equal ease both poetry and prose. He edited the Pall Mall Gazette brilliantly for several years. With his youth, brains and looks, he might have done anything in life; but he was fatally

self-indulgent and success with my sex damaged his public career. He was a fastidious critic and a faithful friend, fearless, reckless and unforgettable.

He wrote one poem, which appeared anonymously in the Oxford Book of English Verse:

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Not unto us, O Lord,
Not unto us the rapture of the day,
The peace of night, or love's divine surprise,
High heart, high speech, high deeds 'mid
  honouring eyes;
For at Thy word
All these are taken away.

Not unto us, O Lord:
To us Thou givest the scorn, the scourge, the scar,
The ache of life, the loneliness of death,
The insufferable sufficiency of breath;
And with Thy sword
Thou piercest very far.

Not unto us, O Lord:
Nay, Lord, but unto her be all things given—
My light and life and earth and sky be blasted—
But let not all that wealth of love be wasted:
Let Hell afford
The pavement of her Heaven!

I print also a letter in verse sent to me on October 20th, 1887:

I came in to-night, made as woful as worry can,
Heart like a turnip and head like a hurricane,
When lo! on my dull eyes there suddenly leaped a
Bright flash of your writing, du Herzensgeliebte;
And I found that the life I was thinking so leavable
Had still something in it made living conceivable;
And that, spite of the sores and the bores and the
flaws in it,
My own life's the better for small bits of yours in it;
And it's only to tell you just that that I write to
you,
And just for the pleasure of saying good night to
you:
For I've nothing to tell you and nothing to talk
about,
Save that I eat and I sleep and I walk about.
Since three days past does the indolent I bury
Myself in the British Museum Lib'ary,
Trying in writing to get in my hand a bit,
And reading Dutch books that I don't understand

a bit:
But to-day Lady Charty and sweet Mrs. Lucy em-
Broidered the dusk of the British Museum,
And made me so happy by talking and laughing on
That I loved them more than the frieze of the
Parthenon.
But I'm sleepy I know and don't know if I silly
ain't;
Dined to-night with your sisters, where Tommy
was brilliant;
And, while I the rest of the company deafened, I
Dallied awhile with your auntlet of seventy,
While one, Mr. Winsloe, a volume before him,
Regarded us all with a moody decorum.
No, I can't keep awake, and so, bowing and blessing
you,
And seeing and loving (while slowly undressing)
you,
Take your small hand and kiss, with a drowsed
benediction, it
Knowing, as you, I'm your ever affectionate

Harry C. C.

I had another friend, James Kenneth Stephen, too pagan, wayward and lonely to be available for the Souls, but a man of genius. One afternoon he came to see me in Grosvenor Square and, being told by the footman that I was riding in the Row, he asked for tea and, while waiting for me wrote the following parody of Kipling and left it on my writing-table with his card:

P.S. *The man who wrote it*.

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We all called him The Man who Wrote It. And we called It what the man wrote, or *it* for short—all of us that is, except The Girl who Read It. She never called anything "It." She wasn't that sort of girl, but she read It, which was a pity from the point of view of The Man who Wrote It.

The man is dead now.

Dropped down a cud out beyond Karachi, and was brought home more like broken meat in a basket. But that's another story.

The girl read It, and told It, and forgot all about It, and in a week It was all over the station. I heard it from Old Bill Buffles at the club while we were smoking between a peg and a hot weather dawn.

J. K. S.

I was delighted with this. Another time he wrote a parody of Myers' "St. Paul" for me. I will only quote one verse out of the eight:

Lo! what the deuce I'm always saying "Lo!" for
God is aware and leaves me uninformed.
Lo! there is nothing left for me to go for,
Lo! there is naught inadequately formed.

He ended by signing his name and writing:

Souvenez-vous si les vers que je trace
Fussent parfois (je l'avoue!) l'argot,
Si vous trouvez un peu trop d'audace
On ose tout quand on se dit
"Margot."

My dear friend J.K.S. was responsible for the aspiration frequently quoted:

When the Rudyards cease from Kipling
And the Haggards ride no more.

Although I can hardly claim Symonds as a Soul, he was so much interested in me and my friends that I must write a short account of him.

I was nursing my sister, Pauline Gordon Duff, when I first met John Addington Symonds, in 1885, at Davos.

I climbed up to Am Hof[Footnote: J. A. Symonds's country house.] one afternoon with a letter of introduction, which was taken to the family while I was shown into a wooden

room full of charming things. As no one came near me, I presumed every one was out, so I settled down peacefully among the books, prepared to wait. In a little time I heard a shuffle of slippered feet and some one pausing at the open door.

“Has he gone?” was the querulous question that came from behind the screen.

And in a moment the thin, curious face of John Addington Symonds was peering at me round the corner.

There was nothing for it but to answer:

“No I am afraid she is still here!”

Being the most courteous of men, he smiled and took my hand; and we went up to his library together.

Symonds and I became very great friends.

After putting my sister to bed at 9.30, I climbed every night by starlight up to Am Hof, where we talked and read out loud till one and often two in the morning. I learnt more in those winter nights at Davos than I had ever learnt in my life. We read The Republic and all the Plato dialogues together; Swift, Voltaire, Browning, Walt Whitman, Edgar Poe and Symonds’ own Renaissance, besides passages from every author and poet, which he would turn up feverishly to illustrate what he wanted me to understand.

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I shall always think Lord Morley [Footnote: Viscount Morley of Blackburn.] the best talker I ever heard and after him I would say Symonds, Birrell and Bergson. George Meredith was too much of a prima donna and was very deaf and uninterruptable when I knew him, but he was amazingly good even then. Alfred Austin was a friend of his and had just been made Poet Laureate by Lord Salisbury, when my beloved friend Admiral Maxse took me down to the country to see Meredith for the first time. Feeling more than usually stupid, I said to him:

“Well Mr. Meredith, I wonder what your friend Alfred Austin thinks of his appointment?”

Shaking his beautiful head he replied:

“It is very hard to say what a bantam is thinking when it is crowing.”

Symonds’ conversation is described in Stevenson’s essay on Talks and Talkers, but no one could ever really give the fancy, the epigram, the swiftness and earnestness with which he not only expressed himself but engaged you in conversation. This and his affection combined to make him an enchanting companion.

The Swiss postmen and woodmen constantly joined us at midnight and drank Italian wines out of beautiful glass which our host had brought from Venice; and they were our only interruptions when Mrs. Symonds and the handsome girls went to bed. I have many memories of seeing our peasant friends off from Symonds’ front door, and standing by his side in the dark, listening to the crack of their whips and their yodels yelled far down the snow roads into the starry skies.

When I first left him and returned to England, Mrs. Symonds told me he sat up all night, filling a blank book with his own poems and translations, which he posted to me in the early morning. We corresponded till he died; and I have kept every letter that he ever wrote to me.

He was the first person who besought me to write. If only he were alive now, I would show him this manuscript and, if any one could make any thing of it by counsel, sympathy and encouragement; my autobiography might become famous.

“You have l’oreille juste” he would say, “and I value your literary judgment.”

I will here insert some of his letters, beginning with the one he sent down to our villa at Davos a propos of the essays over which Lady Londonderry and I had our little breeze:

I am at work upon a volume of essays in art and criticism, puzzling to my brain and not easy to write. I think I shall ask you to read them.

I want an intelligent audience before I publish them. I want to “try them on” somebody’s mind—like a dress—to see how they fit. Only you must promise to write observations

and, most killing remark of all, to say when the tedium of reading them begins to overweigh the profit of my philosophy.

I think you could help me.

After the publication he wrote:

I am sorry that the Essays I dedicated to you have been a failure —as I think they have been—to judge by the opinions of the Press. I wanted, when I wrote them, only to say the simple truth of what I thought and felt in the very simplest language I could find.

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What the critics say is that I have uttered truisms in the baldest, least attractive diction.

Here I find myself to be judged, and not unjustly. In the pursuit of truth, I said what I had to say bluntly—and it seems I had nothing but commonplaces to give forth. In the search for sincerity of style, I reduced every proposition to its barest form of language. And that abnegation of rhetoric has revealed the nudity of my commonplaces.

I know that I have no wand, that I cannot conjure, that I cannot draw the ears of men to listen to my words.

So, when I finally withdraw from further appeals to the public, as I mean to do, I cannot pose as a Prospero who breaks his staff. I am only a somewhat sturdy, highly nervous varlet in the sphere of art, who has sought to wear the robe of the magician—and being now disrobed, takes his place quietly where God appointed him, and means to hold his tongue in future, since his proper function has been shown him.

Thus it is with me. And I should not, my dear friend, have inflicted so much of myself upon you, if I had not, unluckily, and in gross miscalculation of my powers, connected your name with the book which proves my incompetence.

Yes, the Master [Footnote: Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol.] is right: make as much of your life as you can: use it to the best and noblest purpose: do not, when you are old and broken like me, sit in the middle of the ruins of Carthage you have vainly conquered, as I am doing now.

Now good bye. Keep any of my letters which seem to you worth keeping. This will make me write better. I keep a great many of yours. You will never lose a warm corner in the centre of the heart of your friend

J. A. *Symonds*.

P.S. Live well. Live happy. Do not forget me. I like to think of you in plenitude of life and activity. I should not be sorry for you if you broke your neck in the hunting field. But, like the Master, I want you to make sure of the young, powerful life you have—-before the inevitable, dolorous, long, dark night draws nigh.

Later on, a propos of his translation of the Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini, he wrote:

I am so glad that you like my Cellini. The book has been a success; and I am pleased, though I am not interested in its sale. The publisher paid me L210 for my work, which I thought very good wages.

My dear Margot,

I wrote to you in a great hurry yesterday, and with some bothering thoughts in the background of my head.

So I did not tell you how much I appreciated your critical insight into the points of my Introduction to Cellini. I do not rate that piece of writing quite as highly as you do. But you “spotted” the best thing in it—the syllogism describing Cellini’s state of mind as to Bourbon’s death.

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It is true, I think, what you say: that I have been getting more nervous and less elaborate in style of late years. This is very natural. One starts in life with sensuous susceptibilities to beauty, with a strong feeling for colour and for melodious cadence, and also with an impulsive enthusiastic way of expressing oneself. This causes young work to seem decorated and laboured, whereas it very often is really spontaneous and hasty, more instructive and straightforward than the work of middle life. I write now with much more trouble and more slowly, and with much less interest in my subject than I used to do. This gives me more command over the vehicle, language, than I used to have. I write what pleases myself less, but what probably strikes other people more.

This is a long discourse; but not so much about myself as appears. I was struck with your insight, and I wanted to tell you how I analyse the change of style which you point out, and which results, I think, from colder, more laborious, duller effort as one grows in years.

The artist ought never to be commanded by his subject, or his vehicle of expression. But until he ceases to love both with a blind passion, he will probably be so commanded. And then his style will appear decorative, florid, mixed, unequal, laboured. It is the sobriety of a satiated or blunted enthusiasm which makes the literary artist. He ought to remember his dithyrambic moods, but not to be subject to them any longer, nor to yearn after them.

Do you know that I have only just now found the time, during my long days and nights in bed with influenza and bronchitis, to read Marie Bashkirtseff? (Did ever name so puzzling grow upon the Ygdrasil of even Russian life?)

By this time you must be quite tired of hearing from your friends how much Marie Bashkirtseff reminds them of you.

I cannot help it. I must say it once again. I am such a fossil that I permit myself the most antediluvian remarks—if I think they have a grain of truth in them. Of course, the dissimilarities are quite as striking as the likenesses. No two leaves on one linden are really the same. But you and she, detached from the forest of life, seem to me like leaves plucked from the same sort of tree.

It is a very wonderful book. If only messieurs les romanciers could photograph experience in their fiction as she has done in some of her pages! The episode of Pachay, short as that is, is masterly—above the reach of Balzac; how far above the laborious, beetle—flight of Henry James! Above even George Meredith. It is what James would give his right hand to do once. The episode of Antonelli is very good, too, but not so exquisite as the other.

There is something pathetic about both “Asolando” and “Demeter,” those shrivelled blossoms from the stout old laurels touched with frost of winter and old age. But I find

little to dwell upon in either of them. Browning has more sap of life—Tennyson more ripe and mellow mastery. Each is here in the main reproducing his mannerism.

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I am writing to you, you see, just as if I had not been silent for so long. I take you at your word, and expect Margot to be always the same to a comrade.

If you were only here! Keats said that "heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." How false!

Yes, thus it is: somewhere by me
Unheard, by me unfelt, unknown,
The laughing, rippling notes of thee
Are sounding still; while I alone
Am left to sit and sigh and say—
Music unheard is sweet as they.

This is no momentary mood, and no light bubble-breath of improvisatory verse. It expresses what I often feel when, after a long night's work, I light my candle and take a look before I go to bed at your portrait in the corner of my stove.

I have been labouring intensely at my autobiography. It is blocked out, and certain parts of it are written for good. But a thing of this sort ought to be a master's final piece of work—and it is very exhausting to produce.

Am Hof, *Davos Platz*, *Switzerland*, Sept. 27th, 1891.

My dear Margot,

I am sending you back your two typewritten records. They are both very interesting, the one as autobiographical and a study of your family, the other as a vivid and, I think, justly critical picture of Gladstone. It will have a great literary value sometime. I do not quite feel with Jowett, who told you, did he not? that you had made him *understand* Gladstone. But I feel that you have offered an extremely powerful and brilliant conception, which is impressive and convincing because of your obvious sincerity and breadth of view. The purely biographical and literary value of this bit of work seems to me very great, and makes me keenly wish that you would record all your interesting experiences, and your first-hand studies of exceptional personalities in the same way.

Gradually, by doing this, you would accumulate material of real importance; much better than novels or stories, and more valuable than the passionate utterances of personal emotion.

Did I ever show you the record I privately printed of an evening passed by me at Woolner, the sculptor's, when Gladstone met Tennyson for the first time? If I had been able to enjoy more of such incidents, I should also have made documents. But my opportunities have been limited. For future historians, the illuminative value of such writing will be incomparable.

I suppose I must send the two pieces back to Glen. Which I will do, together with this letter. Let me see what you write. I think you have a very penetrative glimpse into character, which comes from perfect disengagement and sympathy controlled by a critical sense. The absence of egotism is a great point.

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When Symonds died I lost my best intellectual tutor as well as one of my dearest friends. I wish I had taken his advice and seriously tried to write years ago, but, except for a few magazine sketches, I have never written a line for publication in my life. I have only kept a careful and accurate diary, [Footnote: Out of all my diaries I have hardly been able to quote fifty pages, for on re-reading them I find they are not only full of Cabinet secrets but jerky, disjointed and dangerously frank.] and here, in the interests of my publishers and at the risk of being thought egotistical, it is not inappropriate that I should publish the following letters in connection with these diaries and my writing:

21 *Carlyle mansions*, *Cheyne walk*, S.W.

April 9th, 1915.

My dear Margot Asquith,

By what felicity of divination were you inspired to send me a few days ago that wonderful diary under its lock and key?—feeling so rightly certain, I mean, of the peculiar degree and particular *pang* of interest that I should find in it? I don't wonder, indeed, at your general presumption to that effect, but the mood, the moment, and the resolution itself conspired together for me, and I have absorbed every word of every page with the liveliest appreciation, and I think I may say intelligence. I have read the thing intimately, and I take off my hat to you as to the very Balzac of diarists. It is full of life and force and colour, of a remarkable instinct for getting close to your people and things and for squeezing, in the case of the resolute portraits of certain of your eminent characters, especially the last drop of truth and sense out of them—at least as the originals affected *your* singularly searching vision. Happy, then, those who had, of this essence, the fewest secrets or crooked lives to yield up to you—for the more complicated and unimaginable some of them appear, the more you seem to me to have caught and mastered them. Then I have found myself hanging on your impression in each case with the liveliest suspense and wonder, so thrillingly does the expression keep abreast of it and really translate it. This and your extraordinary fullness of opportunity, make of the record a most valuable English document, a rare revelation of the human inwardness of political life in this country, and a picture of manners and personal characters as "creditable" on the whole (to the country) as it is frank and acute. The beauty is that you write with such authority, that you've seen so much and lived and moved so much, and that having so the chance to observe and feel and discriminate in the light of so much high pressure, you haven't been in the least afraid, but have faced and assimilated and represented for all you're worth.

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I have lived, you see, wholly out of the inner circle of political life, and yet more or less in wondering sight, for years, of many of its outer appearances, and in superficial contact—though this, indeed, pretty anciently now—with various actors and figures, standing off from them on my quite different ground and neither able nor wanting to be of the craft of mystery (preferring, so to speak, my own poor, private ones, such as they have been) and yet with all sorts of unsatisfied curiosities and yearnings and imaginings in your general, your fearful direction. Well, you take me by the hand and lead me back and in, and still in, and make things beautifully up to me—*all* my losses and misses and exclusions and privation—and do it by having taken all the right notes, apprehended all the right values and enjoyed all the right reactions—meaning by the right ones, those that must have ministered most to interest and emotion; those that I dimly made you out as getting while I flattened my nose against the shop window and you were there within, eating the tarts, shall I say, or handing them over the counter? It's to-day as if you had taken all the trouble for me and left me at last all the unearned increment or fine psychological gain! I have hovered about two or three of your distinguished persons a bit longingly (in the past); but you open up the abysses, or such like, that I really missed, and the torch you play over them is often luridly illuminating. I find my experience, therefore, the experience of simply reading you (you having had all t'other) veritably romantic. But I want so to go on that I deplore your apparent arrest—Saint Simon is in forty volumes—why should Margot be put in one? Your own portrait is an extraordinarily patient and detached and touch-upon-touch thing; but the book itself really constitutes an image of you by its strength of feeling and living individual tone. An admirable portrait of a lady, with no end of finish and style, is thereby projected, and if I don't stop now, I shall be calling it a regular masterpiece. Please believe how truly touched I am by your confidence in your faithful, though old, friend,

Henry James.

My dear and distinguished friend Lord Morley sent me the following letter of the 15th of September, 1919, and it was in consequence of this letter that, two months afterwards, on November the 11th, 1919, I began to write this book:

FLOWERMEAD, *princes road*, *Wimbledon park*, S.W., *September* 15*th*, 1919.

Dear Mrs. *Asquith*,

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Your kindest of letters gave me uncommon pleasure, both personal and literary. Personal, because I like to know that we are still affectionate friends, as we have been for such long, important and trying years. Literary—because it is a brilliant example of that character-writing in which the French so indisputably beat us. If you like, you can be as keen and brilliant and penetrating as Madame de Sevigne or the best of them, and if I were a publisher, I would tempt you by high emoluments and certainty of fame. You ask me to leave you a book when I depart this life. If I were your generous well-wisher, I should not leave, but give you, my rather full collection of French Memoirs now while I am alive. Well, I am in very truth your best well-wisher, but incline to bequeath my modern library to a public body of female ladies, if you pardon that odd and inelegant expression. I have nothing good or interesting to tell you of myself. My strength will stand no tax upon it.

The bequest from my old friend [Footnote: Andrew Carnegie.] in America was a pleasant refresher, and it touched me, considering how different we were in training, character, tastes, temperament. I was first introduced to him with commendation by Mr. Arnold—a curious trio, wasn't it? He thought, and was proud of it, that he, A. C., introduced M. A. and me to the United States.

I watch events and men here pretty vigilantly, with what good and hopeful spirits you can imagine. When you return do pay me a visit. There's nobody who would be such a tonic to an octogenarian.

Always, always, your affectionate friend,

J. M.

When I had been wrestling with this autobiography for two months I wrote and told John Morley of my venture, and this is his reply:

FLOWERMEAD, *princes road*, *Wimbledon park*, S.W. (*Jan*., 1920).

Dear Mrs. *Asquith*,

A bird in the air had already whispered the matter of your literary venture, and I neither had nor have any doubt at all that the publisher knew very well what he was about. The book will be bright in real knowledge of the world; rich in points of life; sympathetic with human nature, which in strength and weakness is never petty or small.

Be sure to *trust yourself*; and don't worry about critics. You need no words to tell you how warmly I am interested in your great design. *Persevere*.

How kind to bid me to your royal [Footnote: I invited him to meet the Prince of Wales.] meal. But I am too old for company that would be so new, so don't take it amiss, my

best of friends, if I ask to be bidden when I should see more of *you*. You don't know how dull a man, once lively, can degenerate into being.

Your always affectionate and grateful

J. *Morley*.

To return to my triumphant youth: I will end this chapter with a note which my friend, Lady Frances Balfour—one of the few women of outstanding intellect that I have known—sent me from her father, the late Duke of Argyll, the wonderful orator of whom it was said that he was like a cannon being fired off by a canary.

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Frances asked me to meet him at a small dinner and placed me next to him. In the course of our conversation, he quoted these words that he had heard in a sermon preached by Dr. Caird:

“Oh! for the time when Church and State shall no longer be the watchword of opposing hosts, when every man shall be a priest and every priest shall be a king, as priest clothed with righteousness, as king with power!”

I made him write them down for me, and we discussed religion, preachers and politics at some length before I went home.

The next morning he wrote to his daughter:

Argyll lodge, *Kensington*.

Dear Frances,

How dare you ask me to meet a syren.

Your affectionate,

A.

CHAPTER II

Character sketch of Margot—plans to start A *magazine—meets master of balliol*; *Jowett’s orthodoxy*; *his interest in and influence over Margot—rose in* “*Robert Elsmere*” *Identified as Margot—Jowett’s opinion of Newman—Jowett advises Margot to marry*—HUXLEY’S *blasphemy*

I shall open this chapter of my autobiography with a character-sketch of myself, written at Glen in one of our pencil-games in January, 1888. Nearly every one in the room guessed that I was the subject, but opinions differed as to the authorship. Some thought that our dear and clever friend, Godfrey Webb, had written it as a sort of joke.

“In appearance she was small, with rapid, nervous movements; energetic, never wholly ungraceful, but inclined to be restless. Her face did not betray the intelligence she possessed, as her eyes, though clear and well-shaped, were too close together. Her hawky nose was bent over a short upper lip and meaningless mouth. The chin showed more definite character than her other features, being large, bony and prominent, and she had curly, pretty hair, growing well on a finely-cut forehead; the ensemble healthy and mobile; in manner easy, unself-conscious, emphatic, inclined to be noisy from over-keenness and perfectly self-possessed. Conversation graphic and exaggerated, eager

and concentrated, with a natural gift of expression. Her honesty more a peculiarity than a virtue. Decision more of instinct than of reason; a disengaged mind wholly unfettered by prejudice. Very observant and a fine judge of her fellow-creatures, finding all interesting and worthy of her speculation. She was not easily depressed by antagonistic circumstances or social situations hostile to herself—on the contrary, her spirit rose in all losing games. She was assisted in this by having no personal vanity,

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the highest vitality and great self-confidence. She was self-indulgent, though not selfish, and had not enough self-control for her passion and impetuosity; it was owing more to dash and grit than to any foresight that she kept out of difficulties. She distrusted the dried-up advice of many people, who prefer coining evil to publishing good. She was lacking in awe, and no respecter of persons; loving old people because she never felt they were old. Warm-hearted, and with much power of devotion, thinking no trouble too great to take for those you love, and agreeing with Dr. Johnson that friendships should be kept in constant repair. Too many interests and too many-sided. Fond of people, animals, books, sport, music, art and exercise. More Bohemian than exclusive and with a certain power of investing acquaintances and even bores with interest. Passionate love of Nature. Lacking in devotional, practising religion; otherwise sensitively religious. Sensible; not easily influenced for good or evil. Jealous, keen and faithful in affection. Great want of plodding perseverance, doing many things with promise and nothing well. A fine ear for music: no execution; a good eye for drawing: no knowledge or practice in perspective; more critical than constructive. Very cool and decided with horses. Good nerve, good whip and a fine rider. Intellectually self-made, ambitious, independent and self-willed. Fond of admiration and love from both men and women, and able to give it."

I sent this to Dr. Jowett with another character-sketch of Gladstone. After reading them, he wrote me this letter:

Ball. *Coll*. Oct. 23rd, 1890.

My dear Margot,

I return the book [Footnote: A commonplace book with a few written sketches of people in it.] which you entrusted to me: I was very much interested by it. The sketch of Gladstone is excellent. Pray write some more of it some time: I understand him better after reading it.

The young lady's portrait of herself is quite truthful and not at all flattered: shall I add a trait or two? "She is very sincere and extremely clever; indeed, her cleverness almost amounts to genius. She might be a distinguished authoress if she would—but she wastes her time and her gifts scampering about the world and going from one country house to another in a manner not pleasant to look back upon and still less pleasant to think of twenty years hence, when youth will have made itself wings and fled away."

If you know her, will you tell her with my love, that I do not like to offer her any more advice, but I wish that she would take counsel with herself. She has made a great position, though slippery and dangerous: will she not add to this a noble and simple life which can alone give a true value to it? The higher we rise, the more self-discipline,

self-control and economy is required of us. It is a hard thing to be in the world but not of it; to be outwardly much like other people and yet to be cherishing an ideal which extends over the whole of life and beyond; to have a natural love for every one, especially for the poor; to get rid, not of wit or good humour, but of frivolity and excitement; to live “selfless” according to the Will of God and not after the fashions and opinions of men and women.

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Stimulated by this and the encouragement of Lionel Tennyson—a new friend—I was anxious to start a newspaper. When I was a little girl at Glen, there had been a schoolroom paper, called "The Glen Gossip: The Tennant Tatler, or The Peeblesshire Prattler." I believe my brother Eddy wrote the wittiest verses in it; but I was too young to remember much about it or to contribute anything. I had many distinguished friends by that time, all of whom had promised to write for me. The idea was four or five numbers to be illustrated by my sister Lucy Graham Smith, and a brilliant letter-press, but, in spite of much discussion among ourselves, it came to nothing. I have always regretted this, as, looking at the names of the contributors and the programme for the first number, I think it might have been a success. The title of the paper gave us infinite trouble. We ended by adopting a suggestion of my own, and our new venture was to have been called "To-morrow." This is the list of people who promised to write for me, and the names they suggested for the paper:

Lord and Lady Pembroke Sympathetic Ink.
The Idle Pen.
The Mail.
The Kite.
Blue Ink.

Mr. A. Lyttelton The Hen.
The Chick.

Mr. Knowles The Butterfly.
Mr. A. J. Balfour The New Eve.
Anonymous.
Mrs. Grundy.

Mr. Oscar Wilde The Life Improver.
Mrs. Grundy's Daughter.

Lady Ribblesdale Jane.
Psyche.
The Mask.

Margot Tennant The Mangle.
Eve.
Dolly Varden.
To-morrow.

Mr. Webb The Petticoat.

Mrs. Horner She.

Miss Mary Leslie The Sphinx.
Eglantine.
Blue Veil.
Pinafore.

Sir A. West The Spinnet.
The Spinning-Wheel.

Mr. J. A. Symonds Muses and Graces.
Causeries en peignoir.
Woman's Wit and Humour.

The contributors on our staff were to have been Laurence Oliphant, J. K. Stephen, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, Hon. George Curzon, George Wyndham, Godfrey Webb, Doll Liddell, Harry Cust, Mr. Knowles (the editor of the Nineteenth Century), the Hon. A. Lyttelton, Mr. A. J. Balfour, Oscar Wilde, Lord and Lady Ribblesdale, Mrs. (now Lady) Horner, Sir Algernon West, Lady Frances Balfour, Lord and Lady Pembroke, Miss Betty Ponsonby (the present Mrs. Montgomery), John Addington Symonds, Dr. Jowett (the Master of Balliol), M. Coquelin, Sir Henry Irving, Miss Ellen Terry, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Mr. George Russell, Mrs. Singleton (alias Violet Fane, afterwards Lady Currie), Lady de Grey, Lady Constance Leslie and the Hon. Lionel Tennyson.

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Our programme for the first number was to have been the following:

TO-MORROW

Leader Persons and Politics Margot Tennant.

The Social Zodiac Rise and fall of
Professional Beauties Lady de Grey.

Occasional Articles The Green-eyed Violet Fane (nom-
Monster de-plume of
Mrs. Singleton).

Occasional Notes Foreign and Colonial
Gossip Harry Cust.

Men and Women Character Sketch Margot Tennant.

Story Oscar Wilde.

Poem Godfrey Webb.

Letters to Men George Wyndham.

Books Reviewed John Addington

Symonds.

Conversations Miss Ponsonby.

This is what I wrote for the first number:

"*Persons and politics*

"In Politics the common opinion is that measures are the important thing, and that men are merely the instruments which each generation produces, equal or unequal to the accomplishment of them.

"This is a mistake. The majority of mankind desire nothing so much as to be led. They have no opinions of their own, and, half from caution, half from laziness, are willing to leave the responsibility to any stronger person. It is the personality of the man which makes the masses turn to him, gives influence to his ideas while he lives, and causes him to be remembered after both he and his work are dead. From the time of Moses downwards, history abounds in such examples. In the present century Napoleon and

Gladstone have perhaps impressed themselves most dramatically on the public mind, and, in a lesser degree, Disraeli and Parnell. The greatest men in the past have been superior to their age and associated themselves with its glory only in so far as they have contributed to it. But in these days the movement of time is too rapid for us to recognise such a man: under modern conditions he must be superior, not so much to his age, as to the men of his age, and absorb what glory he can in his own personality.

“The Code Napoleon remains, but, beyond this, hardly one of Napoleon’s great achievements survives as a living embodiment of his genius. Never was so vast a fabric so quickly created and so quickly dissolved. The moment the individual was caught and removed, the bewitched French world returned to itself; and the fame of the army and the prestige of France were as mere echoes of retreating thunder. Dead as are the results of Bonaparte’s measures and actions, no one would question the permanent vitality of his name. It conjures up an image in the dullest brain; and among all historical celebrities he is the one whom most of us would like to have met.

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“The Home Rule question, which has long distorted the public judgment and looms large at the present political moment, admirably illustrates the power of personality. Its importance has been exaggerated; the grant of Home Rule will not save Ireland; its refusal will not shame England. Its swollen proportions are wholly due to the passionate personal feelings which Mr. Gladstone alone among living statemen inspires. ’He is so powerful that his thoughts are nearly acts,’ as some one has written of him; and at an age when most men would be wheeled into the chimney-corner, he is at the head of a precarious majority and still retains enough force to compel its undivided support.

“Mr. Chamberlain’s power springs from the concentration of a nature which is singularly free from complexity. The range of his mind is narrow, but up to its horizon the whole is illuminated by the same strong and rather garish light. The absoluteness of his convictions is never shaded or softened by any play of imagination or sympathetic insight. It is not in virtue of any exceptionally fine or attractive quality, either of intellect or of character, that Mr. Chamberlain has become a dominant figure. Strength of will, directness of purpose, an aggressive and contagious belief in himself: these—which are the notes of a compelling individuality—made him what he is. On the other hand, culture, intellectual versatility, sound and practised judgment, which was tried and rarely found wanting in delicate and even dangerous situations, did not suffice in the case of Mr. Matthews to redeem the shortcomings of a diffuse and ineffective personality.

“In a different way, Mr. Goschen’s remarkable endowments are neutralised by the same limitations. He has infinite ingenuity, but he can neither initiate nor propel; an intrepid debater in council and in action, he is prey to an invincible indecision.

“If the fortunes of a Government depend not so much on its measures as upon the character of the men who compose it, the new Ministry starts with every chance of success.

“Lord Rosebery is one of our few statesmen whose individuality is distinctly recognised by the public, both at home and abroad.

“Lord Spencer, without a trace of genius, is a person. Sir W. Harcourt, the most brilliant and witty of them all, is, perhaps, not more than a life-like imitation of a strong man. Mr. John Morley has conviction, courage and tenacity; but an over-delicacy of nervous organisation and a certain lack of animal spirits disqualify him from being a leader of men.

“It is premature to criticise the new members of the Cabinet, of whom the most conspicuous is Mr. Asquith. Beyond and above his abilities and eloquence, there is in him much quiet force and a certain vein of scornful austerity. His supreme contempt for the superficial and his independence of mind might take him far.

“The future will not disclose its secrets, but personality still governs the world, and the avenue is open to the man, wherever he may be found, who can control and will not be controlled by fashions of opinion and the shifting movement of causes and cries.”

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My article is not at all good, but I put it in this autobiography merely as a political prophecy.

To be imitative and uninfluenceable—although a common combination—is a bad one. I am not tempted to be imitative except, I hope, in the better sense of the word, but I regret to own that I am not very influenceable either.

Jowett (the Master of Balliol in 1888-1889), my doctor, Sir John Williams (of Aberystwyth), my son Anthony and old Lady Wemyss (the mother of the present Earl) had more influence over me than any other individuals in the world.

The late Countess of Wemyss, who died in 1896, was a great character without being a character-part. She told me that she frightened people, which distressed her. As I am not easily frightened, I was puzzled by this. After thinking it over, I was convinced that it was because she had a hard nut to crack within herself: she possessed a jealous, passionate, youthful temperament, a formidable standard of right and wrong, a distinguished and rather stern accueil, a low, slow utterance and terrifying sincerity. She was the kind of person I had dreamt of meeting and never knew that God had made. She once told me that I was the best friend man, woman or child could ever have. After this wonderful compliment, we formed a deep attachment, which lasted until her death. She had a unique power of devotion and fundamental humbleness. I kept every letter she ever wrote to me.

When we left Downing Street in ten days—after being there for over nine years—and had not a roof to cover our heads, our new friends came to the rescue. I must add that many of the old ones had no room for us and some were living in the country. Lady Crewe[Footnote: The Marchioness of Crewe.]—young enough to be my daughter, and a woman of rare honesty of purpose and clearness of head—took our son Cyril in at Crewe House. Lady Granard[Footnote: The Countess of Granard.] put up my husband; Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck—Lady Granard's aunt and one of God's own—befriended my daughter Elizabeth; Mrs. George Keppel[Footnote: The Hon. Mrs. Keppel.] always large-hearted and kind—gave me a whole floor of her house in Grosvenor Street to live in, for as many months as I liked, and Mrs. McKenna [Footnote: Mrs. McKenna, the daughter of Lady Jekyll, and niece of Lady Horner.] took in my son Anthony. No one has had such wonderful friends as I have had, but no one has suffered more at discovering the instability of human beings and how little power to love many people possess.

Few men and women surrender their wills; and it is considered lowering to their dignity to own that they are in the wrong. I never get over my amazement at this kind of self-value, it passes all my comprehension. It is vanity and this fundamental lack of humbleness that is the bed-rock of nearly every quarrel.

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It was through my beloved Lady Wemyss that I first met the Master of Balliol. One evening in 1888, after the men had come in from shooting, we were having tea in the large marble hall at Gosford. [Footnote: Gosford is the Earl of Wemyss' country place and is situated between Edinburgh and North Berwick.] I generally wore an accordion skirt at tea, as Lord Wemyss liked me to dance to him. Some one was playing the piano and I was improvising in and out of the chairs, when, in the act of making a final curtsey, I caught my foot in my skirt and fell at the feet of an old clergyman seated in the window. As I got up, a loud "Damn!" resounded through the room. Recovering my presence of mind, I said, looking up:

"You are a clergyman and I am afraid I have shocked you!"

"Not at all," he replied. "I hope you will go on; I like your dancing extremely."

I provoked much amusement by asking the family afterwards if the parson whose presence I had failed to notice was their minister at Aberlady. I then learnt that he was the famous Dr. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol.

Before telling how my friendship with the Master developed, I shall go back to the events in Oxford which gave him his insight into human beings and caused him much quiet suffering.

In 1852 the death of Dr. Jenkyns caused the Mastership at Balliol to become vacant. Jowett's fame as a tutor was great, but with it there had spread a suspicion of "rationalism." Persons whispered that the great tutor was tainted with German views. This reacted unduly upon his colleagues; and, when the election came, he was rejected by a single vote. His disappointment was deep, but he threw himself more than ever into his work. He told me that a favourite passage of his in Marcus Aurelius—"Be always doing something serviceable to mankind and let this constant generosity be your only pleasure, not forgetting a due regard to God"—had been of great help to him at that time.

The lectures which his pupils cared most about were those on Plato and St. Paul; both as tutor and examiner he may be said to have stimulated the study of Plato in Oxford: he made it a rival to that of Aristotle.

"Aristotle is dead," he would say, "but Plato is alive."

Hitherto he had published little—an anonymous essay on Pascal and a few literary articles—but under the stimulus of disappointment he finished his share of the edition of St. Paul's Epistles, which had been undertaken in conjunction with Arthur Stanley. Both produced their books in 1855; but while Stanley's Corinthians evoked languid interest, Jowett's Galatians, Thessalonians and Romans provoked a clamour among his friends and enemies. About that time he was appointed to the Oxford Greek Chair, which

pleased him much; but his delight was rather dashed by a hostile article in the Quarterly Review, abusing him and his religious writings. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Cotton, required from him a fresh signature of the Articles of the Church of England. At the interview, when addressed by two men—one pompously explaining that it was a necessary act if he was to retain his cloth and the other apologising for inflicting a humiliation upon him—he merely said:

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“Give me the pen.”

His essay on The Interpretation of Scripture, which came out in 1860 in the famous volume, Essays and Reviews, increased the cry of heterodoxy against him; and the Canons of Christ Church, including Dr. Pusey, persisted in withholding from him an extra salary, without which the endowment of the Greek Chair was worth L40. This scandal was not removed till 1864, after he had been excluded from the university pulpit. He continued working hard at his translation of the whole of Plato; he had already published notes on the Republic and analyses of the dialogue. This took up all his time till 1878, when he became Master of Balliol.

The worst of the Essays and Reviews controversy was that it did an injustice to Jowett’s reputation. For years people thought that he was a great heresiarch presiding over a college of infidels and heretics. His impeached article on The Interpretation of Scripture might to-day be published by any clergyman. His crime lay in saying that the Bible should be criticised like other books.

In his introduction to the Republic of Plato he expresses the same thought:

A Greek in the age of Plato attached no importance to the question whether his religion was an historical fact. ...Men only began to suspect that the narratives of Homer and Hesiod were fictions when they recognised them to be immoral. And so in all religions: the consideration of their morality comes first, afterwards the truth of the documents in which they are recorded, or of the events, natural or supernatural, which are told of them. But in modern times, and in Protestant countries perhaps more than Catholic, we have been too much inclined to identify the historical with the moral; and some have refused to believe in religion at all, unless a superhuman accuracy was discerned in every part of the record. The facts of an ancient or religious history are amongst the most important of all facts, but they are frequently uncertain, and we only learn the true lesson which is to be gathered from them when we place ourselves above them.

Some one writes in the Literary Supplement of the Times to-day, 11th December, 1919:

“An almost animal indifference to mental refinement characterises our great public.”

This is quite true, and presumably was true in Jowett’s day, not only of the great public but of the Established Church.

Catherine Marsh, the author of The Life of Hedley Vicars, wrote to Jowett assuring him of her complete belief in the sincerity of his religious views and expressing indignation that he should have had to sign the thirty-nine Articles again. I give his reply. The postscript is characteristic of his kindliness, gentle temper and practical wisdom.

March 16*th*, 1864. *Dear madam*,

Accept my best thanks for your kind letter, and for the books you have been so good as to send me.

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I certainly hope (though conscious of how little I am able to do) that I shall devote my life to the service of God, and of the youths of Oxford, whom I desire to regard as a trust which He has given me. But I am afraid, if I may judge from the tenour of your letter, that I should not express myself altogether as you do on religious subjects. Perhaps the difference may be more than one of words. I will not, therefore, enter further into the grave question suggested by you, except to say that I am sure I shall be the better for your kind wishes and reading your books.

The recent matter of Oxford is of no real consequence, and is not worth speaking about, though I am very grately to you and others for feeling "indignant" at the refusal.

With sincere respect for your labours, Believe me, dear Madam,

Most truly yours,

B. *Jowett*.

P.S.—I have read your letter again! I think that I ought to tell you that, unless you had been a complete stranger, you would not have had so good an opinion of me. I feel the kindness of your letter, but at the same time, if I believed what you say of me, I should soon become a "very complete rascal." Any letter like yours, which is written with such earnestness, and in a time of illness, is a serious call to think about religion. I do not intend to neglect this because I am not inclined to use the same language.

When Jowett became Master, his pupils and friends gathered round him and overcame the Church chatter. He was the hardest-working tutor, Vice-Chancellor and Master that Oxford ever had. Balliol, under his regime, grew in numbers and produced more scholars, more thinkers and more political men of note than any other college in the university. He had authority and a unique prestige. It was said of Dr. Whewell of Trinity that "knowledge was his forte and omniscience his foible"; the same might have been said of the Master and was expressed in a college epigram, written by an undergraduate. After Jowett's death I cut the following from an Oxford magazine:

The author of a famous and often misquoted verse upon Professor Jowett has written me a note upon his lines which may be appropriately inserted here. "Several versions," he writes, "have appeared lately, and my vanity does not consider them improvements. The lines were written:

> 'First come I, my name is Jowett,
> There's no knowledge but I know it.
> I am Master of this College,
> What I don't know—is not knowledge.'

"The 'First come I' referred to its being a masque of the College in which fellows, scholars, *etc*., appeared in order. The short, disconnected sentences were intentional, as being characteristic. Such a line as 'All that can be known I know it' (which some newspapers substituted for line 2) would express a rather vulgar, Whewellian foible of omniscience, which was quite foreign to the Master's

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nature; the line as originally written was intended to express the rather sad, brooding manner the Master had of giving his oracles, as though he were a spectator of all time and existence, and had penetrated into the mystery of things. Of course, the last line expressed, with necessary exaggeration, what, as a fact, was his attitude to certain subjects in which he refused to be interested, such as modern German metaphysics, philology, and Greek inscriptions."

When I met the Master in 1887, I was young and he was old; but, whether from insolence or insight, I never felt this difference. I do not think I was a good judge of age, as I have always liked older people than myself; and I imagine it was because of this unconsciousness that we became such wonderful friends. Jowett was younger than half the young people I know now and we understood each other perfectly. If I am hasty in making friends and skip the preface, I always read it afterwards.

A good deal of controversy has arisen over the Master's claim to greatness by some of the younger generation. It is not denied that Jowett was a man of influence. Men as different as Huxley, Symonds, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Bowen, Lord Milner, Sir Robert Morier and others have told me in reverent and affectionate terms how much they owed to him and to his influence. It is not denied that he was a kind man; infinitely generous, considerate and good about money. It may be denied that he was a fine scholar of the first rank, such as Munro or Jebb, although no one denies his contributions to scholarship; but the real question remains: was he a great man? There are big men, men of intellect, intellectual men, men of talent and men of action; but the great man is difficult to find, and it needs—apart from discernment—a certain greatness to find him. The Almighty is a wonderful handicapper: He will not give us everything. I have never met a woman of supreme beauty with more than a mediocre intellect, by which I do not mean intelligence. There may be some, but I am only writing my own life, and I have not met them. A person of magnetism, temperament and quick intelligence may have neither intellect nor character. I have known one man whose genius lay in his rapid and sensitive understanding, real wit, amazing charm and apparent candour, But whose meanness, ingratitude and instability injured everything he touched. You can only discover ingratitude or instability after years of experience, and few of us, I am glad to think, ever suspect meanness in our fellow-creatures; the discovery is as painful when you find it as the discovery of a worm in the heart of a rose. A man may have a fine character and be taciturn, stubborn and stupid. Another may be brilliant, sunny and generous, but self-indulgent, heartless and a liar. There is no contradiction I have not met with in men and women: the rarest combination is to find fundamental humbleness, freedom from self, intrepid courage and the power to love;

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when you come upon these, you may be quite sure that you are in the presence of greatness. Human beings are made up of a good many pieces. Nature, character, intellect and temperament: roughly speaking, these headings cover every one. The men and women whom I have loved best have been those whose natures were rich and sweet; but, alas, with a few exceptions, all of them have had gimcrack characters; and the qualities which I have loved in them have been ultimately submerged by self-indulgence.

The present Archbishop of Canterbury is one of these exceptions: he has a sweet and rich nature, a fine temper and is quite unspoilable. I have only one criticism to make of Randall Davidson: he has too much moderation for his intellect; but I daresay he would not have steered the Church through so many shallows if he had not had this attribute. I have known him since I was ten (he christened, confirmed, married and buried us all); and his faith in such qualities of head and heart as I possess has never wavered. He reminds me of Jowett in the soundness of his nature and his complete absence of vanity, although no two men were ever less alike. The first element of greatness is fundamental humbleness (this should not be confused with servility); the second is freedom from self; the third is intrepid courage, which, taken in its widest interpretation, generally goes with truth; and the fourth, the power to love, although I have put it last, is the rarest. If these go to the makings of a great man, Jowett possessed them all. He might have mocked at the confined comprehension of Oxford and exposed the arrogance, vanity and conventionality of the Church; intellectual scorn and even bitterness might have come to him; but, with infinite patience and imperturbable serenity, he preserved his faith in his fellow-creatures.

“There was in him a simple trust in the word of other men that won for him a devotion and service which discipline could never have evoked.” [Footnote:] I read these words in an obituary notice the other day and thought how much I should like to have had them written of me. Whether his criticisms of the Bible fluttered the faith of the flappers in Oxford, or whether his long silences made the undergraduates more stupid than they would otherwise have been, I care little: I only know that he was what I call great and that he had an ennobling influence over my life. He was apprehensive of my social reputation; and in our correspondence, which started directly we parted at Gosford, he constantly gave me wise advice. He was extremely simple-minded and had a pathetic belief in the fine manners, high tone, wide education and lofty example of the British aristocracy. It shocked him that I did not share it; I felt his warnings much as a duck swimming might feel the cluckings of a hen on the bank; nevertheless, I loved his exhortations. In one of his letters he begs me to give up the idea of shooting bears with the Prince of Wales in Russia. It was the first I had heard of it! In another of his letters to me he ended thus:

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But I must not bore you with good advice. Child, why don't you make a better use of your noble gifts? And yet you do not do anything wrong—only what other people do, but with more success. And you are very faithful to your friends. And so, God bless you.

He was much shocked by hearing that I smoked. This is what he says:

What are you doing—breaking a young man's heart; not the first time nor the second, nor the third—I believe? Poor fellows! they have paid you the highest compliment that a gentleman can pay a lady, and are deserving of all love. Shall I give you a small piece of counsel? It is better for you and a duty to them that their disappointed passions should never be known to a single person, for as you are well aware, one confidante means every body, and the good-natured world, who are of course very jealous of you, will call you cruel and a breaker of hearts, *etc*. I do not consider this advice, but merely a desire to make you see things as others see them or nearly. The Symonds girls at Davos told me that you smoked!!! at which I am shocked, because it is not the manner of ladies in England. I always imagine you with a long hookah puffing, puffing, since I heard this; give it up, my dear Margaret—it will get you a bad name. Please do observe that I am always serious when I try to make fun. I hope you are enjoying life and friends and the weather: and believe me

Ever yours truly,
B. *Jowett*.

He asked me once if I ever told any one that he wrote to me, to which I answered:

"I should rather think so! I tell every railway porter!"

This distressed him. I told him that he was evidently ashamed of my love for him, but that I was proud of it.

Jowett (after a long silence): "Would you like to have your life written, Margaret?"

Margot: "Not much, unless it told the whole truth about me and every one and was indiscreet. If I could have a biographer like Froude or Lord Hervey, it would be divine, as no one would be bored by reading it. Who will you choose to write your life, Master?"

Jowett: "No one will be in a position to write my life, Margaret." (For some time he called me Margaret; he thought it sounded less familiar than Margot.)

Margot: "What nonsense! How can you possibly prevent it? If you are not very good to me, I may even write it myself!"

Jowett (smiling): "If I could have been sure of that, I need not have burnt all my correspondence! But you are an idle young lady and would certainly never have concentrated on so dull a subject."

Margot (indignantly): "Do you mean to say you have burnt all George Eliot's letters, Matthew Arnold's, Swinburne's, Temple's and Tennyson's?"

Jowett: "I have kept one or two of George Eliot's and Florence Nightingale's; but great men do not write good letters."

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Margot: "Do you know Florence Nightingale? I wish I did."

Jowett (evidently surprised that I had never heard the gossip connecting his name with Florence Nightingale): "Why do you want to know her?"

Margot: "Because she was in love with my friend George Pembroke's [Footnote: George, Earl of Pembroke, uncle of the present Earl.] father."

Jowett (guardedly): "Oh, indeed! I will take you to see her and then you can ask her about all this."

Margot: "I should love that! But perhaps she would not care for me."

Jowett: "I do not think she will care for you, but would you mind that?"

Margot: "Oh, not at all! I am quite unfemnine in those ways. When people leave the room, I don't say to myself, "I wonder if they like me," but, "I wonder if I like them."

This made an impression on the Master, or I should not have remembered it. Some weeks after this he took me to see Florence Nightingale in her house in South Street. Groups of hospital nurses were waiting outside in the hall to see her. When we went in I noted her fine, handsome, well-bred face. She was lying on a sofa, with a white shawl round her shoulders and, after shaking hands with her, the Master and I sat down. She pointed to the beautiful Richmond print of Sidney Herbert, hanging above her mantelpiece, and said to me:

"I am interested to meet you, as I hear George Pembroke, the son of my old and dear friend, is devoted to you. Will you tell me what he is like?"

I described Lord Pembroke, while Jowett sat in stony silence till we left the house.

One day, a few months after this visit, I was driving in the vicinity of Oxford with the Master and I said to him:

"You never speak of your relations to me and you never tell me whether you were in love when you were young; I have told you so much about myself!"

Jowett: "Have you ever heard that I was in love with any one?"

I did not like to tell him that, since our visit to Florence Nightingale, I had heard that he had wanted to marry her, so I said:

"Yes, I have been told you were in love once."

Jowett: "Only once?"

Margot: "Yes."

Complete silence fell upon us after this: I broke it at last by saying:

"What was your lady-love like, dear Master?"

Jowett: "Violent . . . very violent."

After this disconcerting description, we drove back to Balliol.

Mrs. Humphry Ward's novel "Robert Elsmere" had just been published and was dedicated to my sister Laura and Thomas Hill Green, Jowett's rival in Oxford. This is what the Master wrote to me about it:

Nov. 28, 1888.

Dear miss Tennant,

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I have just finished examining for the Balliol Scholarships: a great institution of which you may possibly have heard. To what shall I liken it? It is not unlike a man casting into the sea a great dragnet, and when it is full of fish, pulling it up again and taking out fishes, good, bad and indifferent, and throwing the bad and indifferent back again into the sea. Among the good fish there have been Archbishop Tait, Dean Stanley, A. H. Clough, Mr. Arnold, Lord Coleridge, Lord Justice Bowen, Mr. Ilbert, &c., &c., &c. The institution was founded about sixty years ago.

I have been dining alone rather dismally, and now I shall imagine that I receive a visit from a young lady about twenty-three years of age, who enlivens me by her prattle. Is it her or her angel? But I believe that she is an angel, pale, volatile and like Laodamia in Wordsworth, ready to disappear at a moment's notice. I could write a description of her, but am not sure that I could do her justice.

I wish that I could say anything to comfort you, my dear Margot, or even to make you laugh. But no one can comfort another. The memory of a beautiful character is "a joy for ever," especially of one who was bound to you in ties of perfect amity. I saw what your sister [Footnote: Mrs. Gordon Duff.] was from two short conversations which I had with her, and from the manner in which she was spoken of at Davos.

I send you the book [Footnote: Plato's Republic] which I spoke of, though I hardly know whether it is an appropriate present; at any rate I do not expect you to read it. It has taken me the last year to revise and, in parts, rewrite it. The great interest of it is that it belongs to a different age of the human mind, in which there is so much like and also unlike ourselves. Many of our commonplaces and common words are being thought out for the first time by Plato. Add to this that in the original this book is the most perfect work of art in the world. I wonder whether it will have any meaning or interest for you.

You asked me once whether I desired to make a Sister of Charity of you. Certainly not (although there are worse occupations); nor do I desire to make anything. But your talking about plans of life does lead me to think of what would be best and happiest for you. I do not object to the hunting and going to Florence and Rome, but should there not be some higher end to which these are the steps? I think that you might happily fill up a great portion of your life with literature (I am convinced that you have considerable talent and might become eminent) and a small portion with works of benevolence, just to keep us in love and charity with our poor neighbours; and the rest I do not grudge to society and hunting. Do you think that I am a hard taskmaster? Not very, I think. More especially as you will not be led away by my good advice. You see that I cannot bear to think of you hunting and ballet-dancing when you are "fair, fat and forty-five." Do prepare yourself for that awful age.

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I went to see Mrs. H. Ward the other day: she insists on doing battle with the reviewer in the Quarterly, and is thinking of another novel, of which the subject will be the free-thinking of honest working-men in Paris and elsewhere. People say that in "Robert Elsmere" Rose is intended for you, Catherine for your sister Laura, the Squire for Mark Pattison, the Provost for me, *etc*., and Mr. Grey for Professor Green. All the portraits are about equally unlike the originals.

Good-bye, you have been sitting with me for nearly an hour, and now, like Laodamia or Protesilaus, you disappear. I have been the better for your company. One serious word: May God bless you and help you in this and every other great hurt of life.

Ever yours,

B. *Jowett*.

I will publish all his letters to me together, as, however delightful letters may be, I find they bore me when they are scattered all through an autobiography.

March 11th, 1889.

My dear Margaret,

As you say, friendships grow dull if two persons do not care to write to one another. I was beginning to think that you resented my censorious criticisms on your youthful life and happiness.

Can youth be serious without ceasing to be youth? I think it may. The desire to promote the happiness of others rather than your own may be always "breaking in." As my poor sister (of whom I will talk to you some day) would say: "When others are happy, then I am happy." She used to commend the religion of Sydney Smith—"Never to let a day pass without doing a kindness to some body"—and I think that you understand something about this; or you would not be so popular and beloved.

You ask me what persons I have seen lately: I doubt whether they would interest you. Mr. Welldon, the Headmaster of Harrow, a very honest and able man with a long life before him, and if he is not too honest and open, not unlikely to be an Archbishop of Canterbury. Mr. J. M. Wilson, Headmaster of Clifton College—a very kind, genial and able man—there is a great deal of him and in him—not a man of good judgment, but very devoted—a first-rate man in his way. Then I have seen a good deal of Lord Rosebery— very able, shy, sensitive, ambitious, the last two qualities rather at war with each other—very likely a future Prime Minister. I like Lady Rosebery too—very sensible and high-principled, not at all inclined to give up her Judaism to please the rest of the world. They are rather overloaded with wealth and fine houses: they are both very kind. I also like Lady Leconfield [Footnote: Lady Leconfield was a sister of Lord

Rosebery's and one of my dearest friends.], whom I saw at Mentone. Then I paid a visit to Tennyson, who has had a lingering illness of six months, perhaps fatal, as he is eighty years of age. It was pleasing to see how he takes it, very patient and without fear of death, unlike his former state of mind. Though he is so sensitive, he seemed to me to bear his illness like a great man. He has a volume of poems waiting to come out—-some of them as good as he ever wrote. Was there ever an octogenarian poet before?

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Doctor Johnson used to say that he never in his life had eaten as much fruit as he desired. I think I never talked to you as much as I desired. You once told me that you would show me your novel. [Footnote: I began two, but they were not at all clever and have long since disappeared.] Is it a reality or a myth? I should be interested to see it if you like to send me that or any other writing of yours.

“Robert Elsmere,” as the authoress tells me, has sold 60,000 in England and 400,000 in America! It has considerable merit, but its success is really due to its saying what everybody is thinking. I am astonished at her knowing so much about German theology—she is a real scholar and takes up things of the right sort. I do not believe that Mrs. Ward ever said “she had pulverised Christianity.” These things are invented about people by the orthodox, i. e., the infidel world, in the hope that they will do them harm. What do you think of being “laughed to death”? It would be like being tickled to death.

Good-bye,

Ever yours truly,

B. *Jowett*.

Balliol college, May 22nd, 1891.

My dear Margaret,

It was very good of you to write me such a nice note. I hope you are better. I rather believe in people being able to cure themselves of many illnesses if they are tolerably prudent and have a great spirit.

I liked your two friends who visited me last Sunday, and shall hope to make them friends of mine. Asquith is a capital fellow, and has abilities which may rise to the highest things in the law and politics. He is also very pleasant socially. I like your lady friend. She has both “Sense and Sensibility,” and is free from “Pride and Prejudice.” She told me that she had been brought up by an Evangelical grandmother, and is none the worse for it.

I begin to think bed is a very nice place, and I see a great deal of it, not altogether from laziness, but because it is the only way in which I am able to work.

I have just read the life of Newman, who was a strange character. To me he seems to have been the most artificial man of our generation, full of ecclesiastical loves and hatred. Considering what he really was, it is wonderful what a space he has filled in the eyes of mankind. In speculation he was habitually untruthful and not much better in practice. His conscience had been taken out, and the Church put in its place. Yet he was a man of genius, and a good man in the sense of being disinterested. Truth is very often troublesome, but neither the world nor the individual can get on without it.

Here is the postman appearing at 12 o'clock, as disagreeable a figure as the tax-gatherer.

May you have good sleep and pleasant dreams. I shall still look forward to seeing you with Lady Wemyss.

Believe me always,

Yours affectionately,

B. *Jowett*.

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Balliol college, Sep. 8,1892.

My dear Margaret,

Your kind letter was a very sweet consolation to me. It was like you to think of a friend in trouble.

Poor Nettleship, whom we have lost, was a man who cannot be replaced—certainly not in Oxford. He was a very good man, and had a considerable touch of genius in him. He seems to have died bravely, telling the guides not to be cowards, but to save their lives. He also sang to them to keep them awake, saying (this was so like him) that he had no voice, but that he would do his best. He probably sang that song of Salvator Rosa's which we have so often heard from him. He was wonderfully beloved by the undergraduates, because they knew that he cared for them more than for anything else in the world.

Of his writings there is not much, except what you have read, and a long essay on Plato in a book called "Hellenism"—very good. He was beginning to write, and I think would have written well. He was also an excellent speaker and lecturer—Mr. Asquith would tell you about him.

I have received many letters about him—but none of them has touched me as much as yours. Thank you, dear.

I see that you are in earnest about writing—no slipshod or want of connection. Writing requires boundless leisure, and is an infinite labour, yet there is also a very great pleasure in it. I shall be delighted to read your sketches.

Balliol college, Dec. 27th, 1892.

My dear Margaret,

I have been reading Lady Jeune's two articles. I am glad that you did not write them and have never written anything of that sort. These criticisms on Society in which some of us "live and move and have our being" are mistaken. In the first place, the whole fabric of society is a great mystery, with which we ought not to take liberties, and which should be spoken of only in a whisper when we compare our experiences, whether in a walk or tete-a-tete, or "over the back hair" with a faithful, reserved confidante. And there is also a great deal that is painful in the absence of freedom in the division of ranks, and the rising or falling from one place in it to another. I am convinced that it is a thing not to be spoken of; what we can do to improve it or do it good— whether I, the head of a college at Oxford, or a young lady of fashion (I know that you don't like to be called that) —must be done quite silently.

Lady Jeune believes that all the world would go right, or at least be a great deal better, if it were not for the Nouveaux Riches. Some of the Eton masters talk to me in the same way. I agree with our dear friend, Lady Wemyss, that the truth is “the old poor are so jealous of them.” We must study the arts of uniting Society as a whole, not clinging to any one class of it—what is possible and desirable to what is impossible and undesirable.

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I hope you are none the worse for your great effort. You know it interests me to hear what you are about if you have time and inclination to write. I saw your friend, Mr. Asquith, last night: very nice and not at all puffed up with his great office [Footnote: The Home Office.]. The fortunes of the Ministry seem very doubtful. There is a tendency to follow Lord Rosebery in the Cabinet. Some think that the Home Rule Bill will be pushed to the second reading, then dropped, and a new shuffle of the cards will take place under Lord Rosebery: this seems to me very likely. The Ministry has very little to spare and they are not gaining ground, and the English are beginning to hate the Irish and the Priests.

I hope that all things go happily with you. Tell me some of your thoughts. I have been reading Mr. Milner's book with great satisfaction—most interesting and very important. I fear that I have written you a dull and meandering epistle.

Ever yours,

B. *Jowett*.

Balliol college, Feb. 13,1893. *My dear Margaret*,

I began at ten minutes to twelve last night to write to you, but as the postman appeared at five minutes to twelve, it was naturally cut short. May I begin where I left off? I should like to talk to you about many things. I hope you will not say, as Johnson says to Boswell, "Sir, you have only two subjects, yourself and me, and I am heartily sick of both."

I have been delighted with Mr. Asquith's success. He has the certainty of a great man in him—such strength and simplicity and independence and superiority to the world and the clubs. You seem to me very fortunate in having three such friends as Mr. Asquith, Mr. Milner and Mr. Balfour. I believe that you may do a great deal for them, and they are probably the first men of their time, or not very far short of it.

Mr. Balfour is not so good a leader of the House of Commons in opposition as he was when he was in office. He is too aggressive and not dignified enough. I fear that he will lose weight. He had better not coquette with the foolish and unpractical thing "Bimetallism," or write books on "Philosophic Doubt"; for there are many things which we must certainly believe, are there not? Quite enough either for the highest idealism or for ordinary life. He will probably, like Sir R. Peel, have to change many of his opinions in the course of the next thirty years and he should be on his guard about this, or he will commit himself in such a manner that he may have to withdraw from politics (about the currency, about the Church, about Socialism).

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Is this to be the last day of Gladstone's life in the House of Commons? It is very pathetic to think of the aged man making his last great display almost in opposition to the convictions of his whole life. I hope that he will acquit himself well and nobly, and then it does not much matter whether or no he dies like Lord Chatham a few days afterwards. It seems to me that his Ministry have not done badly during the last fortnight. They have, to a great extent, removed the impression they had created in England that they were the friends of disorder. Do you know, I cannot help feeling I have more of the Liberal element in me than of the Conservative? This rivalry between the parties, each surprising the other by their liberality, has done a great deal of good to the people of England.

Headington hill, near *Oxford*, July 30th, 1893.

My dear Margaret, Did you ever read these lines?—

> 'Tis said that marriages are made above—
> It may be so, some few, perhaps, for love.
> But from the smell of sulphur I should say
> They must be making *matches* here all day.

(Orpheus returning from the lower world in a farce called "The Olympic Devils," which used to be played when I was young.)

Miss Nightingale talks to me of "the feelings usually called love," but then she is a heroine, perhaps a goddess.

This love-making is a very serious business, though society makes fun of it, perhaps to test the truth and earnestness of the lovers.

Dear, I am an old man, what the poet calls "on the threshold of old age" (Homer), and I am not very romantic or sentimental about such things, but I would do anything I could to save any one who cares for me from making a mistake.

I think that you are quite right in not running the risk without a modest abode in the country.

The real doubt about the affair is the family; will you consider this and talk it over with your mother? The other day you were at a masqued ball, as you told me—a few months hence you will have, or rather may be having, the care of five children, with all the ailments and miseries and disagreeables of children (unlike the children of some of your friends) and not your own, although you will have to be a mother to them, and this state of things will last during the greatest part of your life. Is not the contrast more than human nature can endure? I know that it is, as you said, a nobler manner of living, but are you equal to such a struggle. If you are, I can only say, "God bless you, you are a

brave girl." But I would not have you disguise from yourself the nature of the trial. It is not possible to be a leader of fashion and to do your duty to the five children.

On the other hand, you have at your feet a man of outstanding ability and high character, and who has attained an extraordinary position—far better than any aristocratic lath or hop-pole; and you can render him the most material help by your abilities and knowledge of the world. Society will be gracious to you because you are a grata persona, and everybody will wish you well because you have made the sacrifice. You may lead a much higher life if you are yourself equal to it.

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To-day I read Hume's life—by himself—very striking. You will find it generally at the beginning of his History of England. There have been saints among infidels too, *e.g*., Hume and Spinoza, on behalf of whom I think it a duty to say something as the Church has devoted them to eternal flames. To use a German phrase, "They were 'Christians in unconsciousness.'" That describes a good many people. I believe that as Christians we should get rid of a good many doubtful phrases and speak only through our lives.

Believe me, my dear Margaret,

Yours truly and affectionately,

B. *Jowett*.

Balliol, Sunday. 1893.

My dear Margaret,

I quite agree with you that what we want most in life is rest and peace. To act up to our best lights, that is quite enough; there need be no trouble about dogmas, which are hardly intelligible to us, nor ought there to be any trouble about historical facts, including miracles, of which the view of the world has naturally altered in the course of ages. I include in this such questions as whether Our Lord rose from the dead in any natural sense of the words. It is quite a different question, whether we shall imitate Him in His life.

I am glad you think about these questions, and shall be pleased to talk to you about them. What I have to say about religion is contained in two words: Truth and Goodness, but I would not have one without the other, and if I had to choose between them, might be disposed to give Truth the first place. I think, also, that you might put religion in another way, as absolute resignation to the Will of God and the order of nature. There might be other definitions, equally true, but none suited better than another to the characters of men, such as the imitation of Christ, or the truth in all religions, which would be an adequate description of it. The Christian religion seems to me to extend to all the parts and modes of life, and then to come back to our hearts and conscience. I think that the best way of considering it, and the most interesting, is to view it as it may be seen in the lives of good men everywhere, whether Christians or so-called heathens— Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, St. Augustine, as well as in the lives of Christ, or Bunyan, or Spinoza. The study of religious biography seems to me one of the best modes of keeping up Christian feeling.

As to the question of Disestablishment, I am not like Mr. Balfour, I wobble rather, yet, on the whole, I agree with Mr. Gladstone, certainly about the Welsh Church. Churches are so worldly and so much allied to the interests of the higher classes. I think that a person who belongs to a Church should always endeavour to live above his Church, above the

sermon and a good part of the prayer, above the Athanasian Creed, and the form of Ordination, above the passions of party feelings and public meetings. The best individuals have always been better than Churches, though I do not go so far as a German professor, who thinks that people will never be religious until they leave off going to church, yet I am of opinion that in every congregation the hearers should attempt to raise themselves above the tone of the preacher and of the service.

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I am sorry to hear that Mr. Balfour, who has so much that is liberal in him, is of an extreme opposite opinion. But I feel that I have talked long enough on a subject which may not interest you, but of which I should like to talk to you again when we meet. It seems to me probable that the Church *will* be disestablished, because it has been so already in most countries of Europe, and because the school is everywhere taking its place.

I shall look forward to your coming to see me, if I am seriously ill—"Be with me when my light is low." But I don't think that this illness which I at present have is serious enough to make any of my friends anxious, and it would be rather awkward for my friends to come and take leave of me if I recovered, which I mean to do, for what I think a good reason—because I *still* have a good deal to do.

B. *Jowett*.

My beloved friend died in 1893.

The year before his death he had the dangerous illness to which he alludes in the above letter. Every one thought he would die. He dictated farewell letters to all his friends by his secretary and housekeeper, Miss Knight. On receiveing mine from him at Glen, I was so much annoyed at its tone that I wired:

Jowett Balliol College Oxford.

I refuse to accept this as your farewell letter to me you have been listening to some silly woman and believing what she says. Love. *Margot*.

This telegram had a magical effect: he got steadily better and wrote me a wonderful letter. I remember the reason that I was vexed was because he believed a report that I had knocked up against a foreign potentate in Rotten Row for a bet, which was not only untrue but ridiculous, and I was getting a little impatient of the cattishness and credulity of the West-end of London.

My week-ends at Balliol were different to my other visits. The Master took infinite trouble over them. Once on my arrival he asked me which of one or two men I would like to sit next to at dinner. I said I should prefer Mr. Huxley or Lord Bowen, to which he replied:

"I would like you to have on your other side, either to-night or to-morrow, my friend Lord Selborne:" [Footnote: The late Earl of Selborne.]

Margot (with surprise): "Since when is he your friend? I was under the impression you disliked him."

Jowett: "Your impression was right, but even the youngest of us are sometimes wrong, as Dr. Thompson said, and I look upon Lord Selborne now as a friend. I hope I said nothing against him."

Margot: "Oh dear no! You only said he was fond of hymns and had no sense of humour."

Jowett (snappishly): "If that is so, Margaret, I made an extremely foolish remark. I will put you between Lord Bowen and Sir Alfred Lyall. Was it not strange that you should have said of Lyall to Huxley that he reminded you of a faded Crusader and that you suspected him of wearing a coat of mail under his broadcloth, to which you will remember Huxley remarked, 'You mean a coating of female, without which no man is saved!' Your sister, Lady Ribblesdale, said the very same thing to me about him."

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This interested me, as Charty and I had not spoken to each other of Sir Alfred Lyall, who was a new acquaintance of ours.

Margot: "I am sure, Master, you did not give her the same answer as Mr. Huxley gave me; you don't think well of my sex, do you?"

Jowett: "You are not the person to reproach me, Margaret: only the other week I reproved you for saying women were often dull, sometimes dangerous and always dishonourable. I might have added they were rarely reasonable and always courageous. Would you agree to this?"

Margot: "Yes."

I sat between Sir Alfred Lyall and Lord Bowen that night at dinner. There was more bouquet than body about Sir Alfred and, to parody Gibbon, Lord Bowen's mind was not clouded by enthusiasm; but two more delightful men never existed. After dinner, Huxley came across the room to me and said that the Master had confessed he had done him out of sitting next to me, so would I talk to him? We sat down together and our conversation opened on religion.

There was not much juste milieu about Huxley. He began by saying God was only there because people believed in Him, and that the fastidious incognito, "I am that I am," was His idea of humour, *etc*., *etc*. He ended by saying he did not believe any man of action had ever been inspired by religion. I thought I would call in Lord Bowen, who was standing aimlessly in the middle of the room, to my assistance. He instantly responded and drew a chair up to us. I said to him:

"Mr. Huxley challenges me to produce any man of action who has been directly inspired by religion."

Bowen (*with* A *Sleek smile*): "Between us we should be able to answer him, Miss Tennant, I think. Who is your man?"

Every idea seemed to scatter out of my brain. I suggested at random:

"Gordon."

I might have been reading his thoughts, for it so happened that Huxley adored General Gordon.

Huxley: "Ah! There you rather have me!"

He had obviously had enough of me, for, changing the position of his chair, as if to engage Bowen in a tete-a-tete, he said:

"My dear Bowen, Gordon was the most remarkable man I ever met. I know him well; he was sincere and disinterested, quite incapable of saying anything he did not think. You will hardly believe me, but one day he said in tones of passionate conviction that, if he were to walk round the corner of the street and have his brains shot out, he would only be transferred to a wider sphere of government."

Bowen: "Would the absence of brains have been of any help to him?"

After this, our mutual good humour was restored and I only had time for a word with Mrs. Green before the evening was ruined by Jowett taking us across the quad to hear moderate music in the hideous Balliol hall. Of all the Master's women friends, I infinitely preferred Mrs. T. H. Green, John Addington Symonds' sister. She is among the rare women who have all the qualities which in moments of disillusion I deny to them.

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I spent my last week-end at Balliol when Jowett's health appeared to have completely recovered. On the Monday morning, after his guests had gone, I went as usual into his study to talk to him. My wire on receiving his death-bed letter had amused but distressed him; and on my arrival he pressed me to tell him what it was he had written that had offended me. I told him I was not offended, only hurt. He asked me what the difference was. I wish I could have given him the answer that my daughter Elizabeth gave Lord Grey [Footnote: Viscount Grey of Fallodon.] when he asked her the same question, walking in the garden at Fallodon on the occasion of her first countryhouse visit:

"The one touches your vanity and the other your heart."

I do not know what I said, but I told him I was quite unoffended and without touchiness, but that his letter had all the faults of a schoolmaster and a cleric in it and not the love of a friend. He listened to me with his usual patience and sweetness and expressed his regret.

On the Monday morning of which I am writing, and on which we had our last conversation, I had made up my mind that, as I had spoilt many good conversations by talking too much myself, I would hold my tongue and let the Master for once make the first move. I had not had much experience of his classical and devastating silences and had often defended him from the charge; but it was time to see what happened if I talked less.

When we got into the room and he had shut the door, I absently selected the only comfortable chair and we sat down next to each other. A long and quelling silence followed the lighting of my cigarette. Feeling rather at a loose end, I thought out a few stage directions—"here business with handkerchief, *etc*."—and adjusted the buckles on my shoes. I looked at some photographs and fingered a paper-knife and odds and ends on the table near me. The oppressive silence continued. I strolled to the book-shelves and, under cover of a copy of "Country Conversations," peeped at the Master. He appeared to be quite unaware of my existence.

"Nothing doing," said I to myself, putting back the book.

Something had switched him off as if he had been the electric light.

At last, breaking the silence with considerable impatience, I said:

"Really, Master, there is very little excuse for your silence! Surely you have something to say to me, something to tell me; you have had an experience since we talked to each other that I have never had: you have been near Death."

Jowett (not in any way put out): "I felt no rapture, no bliss." (Suddenly looking at me and taking my hand.) "My dear child, you must believe in God in spite of what the clergy say."

CHAPTER III

Fast and furious hunting in Leicestershire—country house party and A *new admirer—-friendship with lord and lady manners*

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My friendship with Lord and Lady Manners, [Footnote: Avon Tyrrell, Christchurch, Hants. Lady Manners was a Miss Fane.] of Avon Tyrrell, probably made more difference to the course of my life than anything that had happened in it.

Riding was what I knew and cared most about; and I dreamt of High Leicestershire. I had hunted in Cheshire, where you killed three foxes a day and found yourself either clattering among cottages and clothes-lines, or blocked by carriages and crowds; I knew the stiff plough and fine horses of Yorkshire and the rotten grass in the Bicester; I had struggled over the large fences and small enclosures of the Grafton and been a heroine in the select fields and large becks with the Burton; and the Beaufort had seen the dawn of my fox-hunting; but Melton was a name which brought the Hon. Crasher before me and opened a vista on my future of all that was fast, furious and fashionable.

When I was told that I was going to sit next to the Master of the Quorn at dinner, my excitement knew no bounds.

Gordon Cunard—whose brother Bache owned the famous hounds in Market Harborough—had insisted on my joining him at a country-house party given for a ball. On getting the invitation I had refused, as I hardly knew our hostess—the pretty Mrs. Farnham— but after receiving a spirited telegram from my new admirer—one of the best men to hounds in Leicestershire—I changed my mind. In consequence of this decision a double event took place. I fell in love with Peter Flower—a brother of the late Lord Battersea—and formed an attachment with a couple whose devotion and goodness to me for more than twenty years encouraged and embellished my glorious youth.

Lord Manners, or “Hoppy,” as we called him, was one of the few men I ever met whom the word “single-minded” described. His sense of honour was only equalled by his sense of humour; and a more original, tender, truthful, uncynical, real being never existed. He was a fine sportsman and had won the Grand Military when he was in the Grenadiers, riding one of his own hunters; he was also the second gentleman in England to win the Grand National in 1882, on a thoroughbred called Seaman, who was by no means every one’s horse. For other people he cared nothing. “Decidement je n’aime pas les autres,” he would have said, to quote my son-in-law, Antoine Bibesco.

His wife often said that, but for her, he would not have asked a creature inside the house; be this as it may, no host and hostess could have been more socially susceptible or given their guests a warmer welcome than Con and Hoppy Manners.

What I loved and admired in him was his keenness and his impeccable unworldliness. He was perfectly independent of public opinion and as free from rancour as he was from fear, malice or acerbity. He never said a stupid thing. Some people would say that this is not a compliment, but the amount of silly things that I have heard clever people say makes me often wonder what is left for the stupid.

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His wife was very different, though quite as free from rhetoric.

Under a becalmed exterior Con Manners was a little brittle and found it difficult to say she was in the wrong; this impenitence caused some of her lovers a suffering of which she was unconscious; it is a minor failing which strikes a dumb note in me, but which I have since discovered is not only common, but almost universal. I often warned people of Con's dangerous smile when I observed them blundering along; but though she was uneven in her powers of forgiveness, the serious quarrel of her life was made up ultimately without reserve. Lady Manners was clever, gracious, and understanding; she was more worldly, more adventurous and less deprecating than her husband; people meant a great deal to her; and the whole of London was at her feet, except those lonely men and women who specialise in collecting the famous as men collect centipedes.

To digress here. I asked my friend Mr. Birrell once how the juste milieu was to be found—for an enterprising person—between running after the great men of the day and missing them; and he said:

"I would advise you to live among your superiors, Margot, but to be of them."

Con was one of the few women of whom it could be said that she was in an equal degree a wonderful wife, mother, sister and friend. Her charm of manner and the tenderness of her regard gave her face beauty that was independent—almost a rival of fine features—and she was a saint of goodness.

Her love of flowers made every part of her home, inside and out, radiant; and her sense of humour and love of being entertained stimulated the witty and the lazy.

For nineteen years I watched her go about her daily duties with a quiet grace and serenity infinitely restful to live with, and when I was separated from her it nearly broke my heart. In connection with the love Con and I had for each other I will only add an old French quotation:

"Par grace infinie Dieu les mist au mande ensemble."

My dear friend, Mrs. Hamlyn, was the chatelaine of the famous Clovelly, in Devonshire, and was Con's sister. She had the spirit of eternal youth and was full of breathless admiration. I hardly ever met any one who derived so much pleasure and surprise out of ordinary life. She was as uncritical and tolerant of those she loved as she was narrow and vehement over those who had unaccountably offended her. She had an ebullient and voracious sense of humour and was baffled and eblouie by titled people, however vulgar and ridiculous they might be. By this I do not mean she was a snob—-on the contrary she made and kept friends among the frumps and the obscure, to whom she showed faithful hospitality; but she was old-fashioned and thought that all duchesses were ladies.

Christine Hamlyn was a character-part: but, if the machinery was not invented by which you could remove her prejudices, no tank could turn her from her friends. It was through the Souls and these friends whom I have endeavoured to describe that I entered into a new phase of my life.

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CHAPTER IV

Margot falls in love again—"Havoc" In the hunting field; A *fall and* A *Ducking—the famous Mrs. Bo*; *unheeded advice from* A *rival*—A *lovers' quarrel—Peter jumps in the window—the American trotter—another lover intervenes—Peter returns from India*; *illumination from* A *dark woman*

The first time I ever saw Peter Flower was at Ranelagh, where he had taken my sister Charty Ribblesdale to watch a polo-match. They were sitting together at an iron table, under a cedar tree, eating ices. I was wearing a grey muslin dress with a black sash and a black hat, with coral beads round my throat, and heard him say as I came up to them:

"Nineteen? Not possible! I should have said fifteen! Is that the one that rides so well?"

After shaking hands I sat down and looked about me.

I always notice what men wear; and Peter Flower was the best-dressed man I had ever seen. I do not know who could have worn his clothes when they were new; but certainly he never did. After his clothes, what I was most struck by was his peculiar, almost animal grace, powerful sloping shoulders, fascinating laugh and infectious vitality.

Laurence Oliphant once said to me, "I divide the world into life-givers and life-takers"; and I have often had reason to feel the truth of this, being as I am acutely sensitive to high spirits. On looking back along the gallery of my acquaintance, I can find not more than three or four people as tenacious of life as Peter was: Lady Desborough, Lady Cunard, my son Anthony and myself. There are various kinds of high spirits: some so crude and rough-tongued that they vitiate what they touch and estrange every one of sensibility and some so insistent that they tire and suffocate you; but Peter's vitality revived and restored every one he came in contact with; and, when I said good-bye to him that day at Ranelagh, although I cannot remember a single sentence of any interest spoken by him or by me, my mind was absorbed in thinking of when and how I could meet him again.

In the winter of that same year I went with the Ribblesdales to stay with Peter's brother, Lord Battersea, to have a hunt. I took with me the best of hats and habits and two leggy and faded hirelings, hoping to pick up a mount. Charty having twisted her knee the day after we arrived, this enabled me to ride the horse on which Peter was to have mounted her; and full of spirits we all went off to the meet of the Bicester hounds. I had hardly spoken three words to my benefactor, but Ribblesdale had rather unwisely told him that I was the best rider to hounds in England.

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At the meet I examined my mount closely while the man was lengthening my stirrup. Havoc, as he was called, was a dark chestnut, 16.1, with a coat like the back of a violin and a spiteful little head. He had an enormous bit on; and I was glad to see a leather strap under the curb-chain.

When I was mounted, Peter kept close to my side and said:

“You’re on a topper! Take him where you like, but ride your own line.”

To which I replied:

“Why? Does he rush? I had thought of following you.”

Peter: “Not at all, but he may pull you a bit, so keep away from the field; the fence isn’t made that he can’t jump; and as for water, he’s a swallow! I wish I could say the same of mine! We’ve got a brook round about here with rotten banks, it will catch the best! But, if we are near each other, you must come alongside and go first and mine will very likely follow you. I don’t want to spend the night in that beastly brook.”

It was a good scenting day and we did not take long to find. I stuck to Peter Flower while the Bicester hounds raced across the heavy grass towards a hairy-looking ugly double. In spite of the ironmonger’s shop in Havoc’s mouth, I had not the faintest control over him, so I said to Peter:

“You know, Mr. Flower, I can’t stop your horse!”

He looked at me with a charming smile and said:

“But why should you? Hounds are running!”

Margot: “But I can’t turn him!”

Peter: “It doesn’t matter! They are running straight. Hullo!
Lookout! Look out for Hydy!”

We were going great guns. I saw a man in front of me slowing up to the double, so shouted at him:

“Get out of my way! Get out of my way!”

I was certain that at the pace he was going he would take a heavy fall and I should be on the top of him. While in the act of turning round to see who it was that was shouting, his willing horse paused and I shot past him, taking away his spur in my habit skirt. I heard a volley of oaths as I jumped into the jungle. Havoc, however, did not like the brambles and, steadying himself as he landed, arched with the activity of a cat over a

high rail on the other side of the double; I turned round and saw Peter's horse close behind me hit the rail and peck heavily upon landing, at which Peter gave him one down the shoulder and looked furious.

I had no illusions! I was on a horse that nothing could stop! Seeing a line of willows in front of me, I shouted to Peter to come along, as I thought if the brook was ahead of us I could not possibly keep close to him, going at that pace. To my surprise and delight, as we approached the willows Peter passed me and the water widened out in front of us; I saw by his set face that it was neck or nothing with him. Havoc was going well within himself, but his stable-companion was precipitate and flurried; and before I knew what

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had happened Peter was in the middle of the brook and I was jumping over his head. On landing I made a large circle round the field away from hounds, trying to pull up; and when I could turn round I found myself facing the brook again, with Peter dripping on the bank nearest to me. Havoc pricked his ears, passed him like a flash and jumped the brook again; but the bank on landing was boggy and while we were floundering I got a pull at him by putting the curb-rein under my pommel and, exhausted and distressed, I jumped off. Peter burst out laughing.

"We seem to be separated for life," he said. "Do look at my damned horse!"

I looked down the water and saw the animal standing knee-deep, nibbling grass and mud off the bank with perfect composure.

Margot: "I really believe Havoc would jump this brook for a third time and then I should be by your side. What luck that you aren't soaked to the skin; hadn't I better look out for the second horsemen? Hounds by now will be at the sea and I confess I can't ride your horse: does he always pull like this?"

Peter: "Yes, he catches hold a bit, but what do you mean? You rode him beautifully. Hullo! What is that spur doing in your skirt?"

Margot: "I took it off the man that you call 'Hydy,' who was going so sticky at the double when we started."

Peter: "Poor old Clarendon! I advise you to keep his spur, he'll never guess who took it; and, if I know anything about him, there will be no love lost between you even if you do return it to him!"

I was longing for another horse, as I could not bear the idea of going home. At that moment a single file of second horse-men came in sight; and Peter's well-trained servant, on a thoroughbred grey, rode up to us at the conventional trot. Peter lit a cigar and, pointing to the brook, said to his man:

"Go off and get a rope and hang that brute! Or haul him out, will you? And give me my lunch."

We were miles away from any human habitation and I felt depressed.

"Perhaps I had better ride home with your man," said I, looking tentatively at Peter.

"Home! What for?" said he.

Margot: "Are you sure Havoc is not tired?"

Peter: “I wish to God he was! But I daresay this infernal Bicester grass, which is heavier than anything I saw in Yorkshire, has steadied him a bit; you’ll see he’ll go far better with you this afternoon. I’m awfully sorry and would put you on my second horse, but it isn’t mine and I’m told it’s got a bit of a temper; if you go through that gate we’ll have our lunch together. ...Have a cigarette?”

I smiled and shook my head; my mouth was as dry as a Japanese toy and I felt shattered with fatigue. The ground on which I was standing was deep and I was afraid of walking in case I should leave my boots in it, so I tapped the back of Havoc’s fetlocks till I got him stretched and with great skill mounted myself. This filled Peter with admiration; and, lifting his hat, he said:

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“Well! You are the very first woman I ever saw mount herself without two men and a boy hanging on to the horse’s head.”

I rode towards the gate and Peter joined me a few minutes later on his second horse. He praised my riding and promised he would mount me any day in the week if I could only get some one to ask me down to Brackley where he kept his horses; he said the Grafton was the country to hunt in and that, though Tom Firr, the huntsman of the Quorn, was the greatest man in England, Frank Beers was hard to beat. I felt pleased at his admiration for my riding, but I knew Havoc had not turned a hair and that, if I went on hunting, I should kill either myself, Peter or some one else.

“Aren’t you nervous when you see a helpless woman riding one of your horses?” I said to him.

Peter: “No, I am only afraid she’ll hurt my horse! I take her off pretty quick, I can tell you, if I think she’s going to spoil my sale; but I never mount a woman. Your sister is a magnificent rider, or I would never have put her on that horse. Now come along and with any luck you will be alone with hounds this afternoon and Havoc will be knocked down at Tattersalls for five hundred guineas.”

Margot: “You are sure you want me to go on?”

Peter: “You think I want you to go home? Very well! If you go..._I_ go!”

I longed to have the courage to say, “Let us both go home,” but I knew he would think that I was funking and it was still early in the day. He looked at me steadily and said:

“I will do exactly what you like.”

I looked at him, but at that moment the hounds came in sight and my last chance was gone. We shogged along to the next cover, Havoc as mild as milk. I was amazed at Peter’s nerve: if any horse of mine had taken such complete charge of its rider, I should have been in a state of anguish till I had separated them; but he was riding along talking and laughing in front of me in the highest of spirits. This lack of sensitiveness irritated me and my heart sank. Before reaching the cover, Peter came up to me and suggested that we should change Havoc’s bit. I then perceived he was not quite so happy as I thought; and this determined me to stick it out. I thanked him demurely and added, with a slight and smiling shrug:

“I fear no bit can save me to-day, thank you.”

At which Peter said with visible irritability:

“Oh, for God’s sake then don’t let us go on! If you hate my horse I vote we go no farther!”

“What a cross man!” I said to myself, seeing him flushed and snappy; but a ringing “Halloa!” brought our deliberations to an abrupt end.

Havoc and I shot down the road, passing the blustering field; and, hopping over a gap, we found ourselves close to the hounds, who were running hell-for-leather towards a handsome country seat perched upon a hill. A park is what I hate most out hunting: hounds invariably lose the line, the field loses its way and I lose my temper.

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I looked round to see if my benefactor was near me, but he was nowhere to be seen. Eight or ten hard riders were behind me; they shouted:

“Don’t go into the wood! Turn to your left! Don’t go into the wood!”

I saw a fancy gate of yellow polished oak in front of me, at the end of one of the grass rides in the wood, and what looked like lawns beyond. I was unable to turn to the left with my companions, but plunged into the trees where the hounds paused: not so Havoc, who, in spite of the deep ground, was still going great guns. A lady behind me, guessing what had happened, left her companions and managed somehow or other to pass me in the ride; and, as I approached the yellow gate, she was holding it open for me. I shouted my thanks to her and she shouted back:

“Get off when you stop!”

This was my fixed determination, as I had observed that Havoc’s tongue was over the bit and he was not aware that any one was on his back, nor was he the least tired and no doubt would have jumped the yellow gate with ease.

After leaving my saviour I was joined by my former companions. The hounds had picked up again and we left the gate, the wood and the country seat behind us. Still going very strong, we all turned into a chalk field with a white road sunk between two high banks leading down to a ford. I kept on the top of the bank, as I was afraid of splashing people in the water, if not knocking them down. Two men were standing by the fence ahead, which separated me from what appeared to be a river; and I knew there must be a considerable drop in front of me. They held their hands up in warning as I came galloping up; I took my foot out of the stirrup and dropping my reins gave myself up for lost, but in spite of Havoc slowing up he was going too fast to stop or turn. He made a magnificent effort, but I saw the water twinkling below me; and after that I knew no more.

When I came to, I was lying on a box bed in a cottage, with Peter and the lady who had held the yellow gate kneeling by my side.

“I think you are mad to put any one on that horse!” I heard her say indignantly. “You know how often it has changed hands; and you yourself can hardly ride it.”

Havoc had tried to scramble down the bank, which luckily for me had not been immediately under the fence, but it could not be done, so we took a somersault into the brook, most alarming for the people in the ford to see. However, as the water was deep where I landed, I was not hurt, but had fainted from fear and exhaustion.

Peter’s misery was profound; ice-white and in an agony of fear, he was warming my feet with both his hands while I watched him quietly. I was taken home in a brougham by my

kind friend, who turned out to be Mrs. Bunbury, a sister of John Watson, the Master of the Meath hounds, and the daughter of old Mr. Watson, the Master of the Carlow and the finest rider to hounds in England.

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This was how Peter and I first came really to know each other; and after that it was only a question of time when our friendship developed into a serious love-affair. I stayed with Mrs. Bunbury in the Grafton country that winter for several weeks and was mounted by every one.

As Peter was a kind of hero in the hunting field and had never been known to mount a woman, I was the object of much jealousy. The first scene in my life occurred at Brackley, where he and a friend of his, called Hatfield Harter, shared a hunting box together.

There was a lady of charm and beauty in the vicinity who went by the name of Mrs. Bo. They said she had gone well to hounds in her youth, but I had never observed her jump a twig. She often joined us when Peter and I were changing horses and once or twice had ridden home with us. Peter did not appear to like her much, but I was too busy to notice this one way or the other. One day I said to him I thought he was rather snubby to her and added:

“After all, she must have been a very pretty woman when she was young and I don’t think it’s nice of you to show such irritation when she joins us.”

Peter: “Do you call her old?”

Margot: “Well, oldish I should say. She must be over thirty, isn’t she?”

Peter: “Do you call that old?”

Margot: “I don’t know! How old are you, Peter?”

Peter: “I shan’t tell you.”

One day I rode back from hunting, having got wet to the skin. I had left the Bunbury brougham in Peter’s stables but I did not like to go back in wet clothes; so, after seeing my horse comfortably gruelled, I walked up to the charming lady’s house to borrow dry clothes. She was out, but her maid gave me a coat and skirt, which—though much too big—served my purpose.

After having tea with Peter, who was ill in bed, I drove up to thank the lady for her clothes. She was lying on a long, thickly pillowed couch, smoking a cigarette in a boudoir that smelt of violets. She greeted me coldly; and I was just going away when she threw her cigarette into the fire and, suddenly sitting very erect, said:

“Wait! I have something to say to you.”

I saw by the expression on her face that I had no chance of getting away, though I was tired and felt at a strange disadvantage in my flowing skirts.

Mrs. *Bo*: "Does it not strike you that going to tea with a man who is in bed is a thing no one can do?"

Margot: "Going to see a man who is ill? No, certainly not!"

Mrs. *Bo*: "Well, then let me tell you for your own information how it will strike other people. I am a much older woman than you and I warn you, you can't go on doing this sort of thing! Why should you come down here among all of us who are friends and make mischief and create talk?"

I felt chilled to the bone and, getting up, said:

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“I think I had better leave you now, as I am tired and you are angry.”

Mrs. *Bo* (standing up and coming very close to me): “Do you not know that I would nurse Peter Flower through yellow fever! But, though I have lived next door to him these last three years, I would never dream of doing what you have done to-day.”

The expression on her face was so intense that I felt sorry for her and said as gently as I could:

“I do not see why you shouldn’t! Especially if you are all such friends down here as you say you are. However, every one has a different idea of what is right and wrong. ...I must go now!”

I was determined not to stay a moment longer and walked to the door, but she had lost her head and said in a hard, bitter voice:

“You say every one has a different idea of right and wrong, but I should say you have none!”

At this I left the room.

When I told Mrs. Bunbury what had happened, all she said was:

“Cat! She’s jealous! Before you came down here, Peter Flower was in love with her.”

This was a great shock to me and I determined I would leave the Grafton country, as I had already been away far too long from my own people; so I wrote to Peter saying I was sorry not to say good-bye to him, but that I had to go home. The next day was Sunday. I got my usual love-letter from Peter—who, whether I saw him or not, wrote daily—telling me that his temperature had gone up again and that he would give me his two best horses on Monday, as he was not allowed to leave his room. After we had finished lunch, Peter turned up, looking ill and furious. Mrs. Bunbury greeted him sweetly and said:

“You ought to be in bed, you know; but, since you *are* here, I’ll leave Margot to look after you while Jacky and I go round the stables.”

When we were left to ourselves, Peter, looking at me, said:

“Well! I’ve got your letter! What is all this about? Don’t you know there are two horses coming over from Ireland this week which I want you particularly to ride for me?”

I saw that he was thoroughly upset and told him that I was going home, as I had been already too long away.

“Have your people written to you?” he said.

Margot: “They always write. ...”

Peter: (seeing the evasion): “What’s wrong?”

Margot: “What do you mean?”

Peter: “You know quite well that no one has asked you to go home. Something has happened; some one has said something to you; you’ve been put out. After all it was only yesterday that we were discussing every meet; and you promised to give me a lurcher. What has happened since to change you?”

Margot: “Oh, what does it matter? I can always come down here again later on.”

Peter: “How wanting in candour you are! You are not a bit like what I thought you were!”

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Margot (sweetly): "No ...?"

Peter: "Not a bit! You are a regular woman. I thought differently of you somehow!"

Margot: "You thought I was a dog-fancier or a rough-rider, did you, with a good thick skin?"

Peter: "I fail to understand you! Are you alluding to the manners of my horses?"

Margot: "No, to your friends."

Peter: "Ah! Ah! Nous y sommes! ... How can you be so childish!
What did Mrs. Bo say to you?"

Margot: "Oh, spare me from going into your friends' affairs!"

Peter (flushed with temper, but trying to control himself): "What does it matter what an old woman says whose nose has been put out of joint in the hunting-field?"

Margot: "You told me she was young."

Peter: "What an awful lie! You said she was pretty and I disagreed with you." Silence. "What did she say to you? I tell you she is jealous of you in the hunting-field!"

Margot: "No, she's not; she's jealous of me in your bedroom and says I don't know right from wrong."

Peter (startled at first and then bursting out laughing): "There's nothing very original about that!"

Margot (indignantly): "Do you mean to say that it's a platitude? And that I *don't* know right from wrong?"

Peter (taking my hands and kissing them with a sigh of intense relief): "I wonder!"

Margot (getting up): "Well, after that, nothing will induce me to stay down here or ride any of your horses ever again! No regiment of soldiers will keep me!"

Peter: "Really, darling, how can you be so foolish! Who would ever think it wrong to go and see a poor devil ill in bed! You had to ride my horse back to its stable and it was your duty to come and ask after me and thank me for all my kindness to you and the good horses I've put you on!"

Margot: "Evidently in this country I am not wanted, Mrs. Bo said so; and you ought to have warned me you were in love with her. You said I was not the woman you thought I was: well, I can say the same of you!"

At this Peter got up and all his laughter disappeared.

"Do you mean what you say? Is this the impression you got from talking to Mrs. Bo?"

Margot: "Yes."

Peter: "In that case I will go and see her and ask her which of the two of you is lying! If it's you, you needn't bother yourself to leave this country, for I shall sell my horses. ...I wish to God I had never met you!"

I felt very uncomfortable and unhappy, as in my heart I knew that Mrs. Bo had never said Peter was in love with her; she had not alluded to his feelings for her at all. I got up to stop him leaving the room and put myself in front of the door.

Margot: "Really, why make scenes! There is nothing so tiring; and you know quite well you are ill and ought to go to bed. Is there any object in going round the country discussing me?"

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Peter: "Just go away, will you? I'm ill and want to get off."

I did not move; I saw he was white with rage. The idea of going round the country talking about me was more than he could bear; so I said, trying to mollify him:

"If you want to discuss me, I am always willing to listen; there is nothing I enjoy so much as talking about myself."

It was too late. All he said to me was:

"Do you mind leaving that door? You tire me and it's getting dark."

Margot: "I will let you go, but promise me you won't go to Mrs. Bo to-day; or, if you *do*, tell me what you are going to say to her first."

Peter: "You've never told me yet what she said to you, except that I was in love with her, so why should I tell you what I propose saying to her! For once you cannot have it all your own way. You are *so* spoilt since you've been down here that..."

I flung the door wide open and, before he could finish his sentence, ran up to my room.

Peter was curiously upsetting to the feminine sense; he wanted to conceal it and to expose it at the same time, under the impression it might arouse my jealousy. He was specially angry with me for dancing with King Edward, then the Prince of Wales. I told him that if he would learn to waltz instead of prance I would dance with him, but till he did I should choose my own partners. Over this we had a great row; and, after sitting out two dances with the Prince, I put on my cloak and walked round to 40 Grosvenor Square without saying good night to Peter. I was in my dressing-gown, with my hair—-my one claim to beauty—standing out all round my head, when I heard a noise in the street and, looking down, I saw Peter standing on the wall of our porch gazing across an angle of the area into the open window of our library, contemplating, I presumed, jumping into it; I raced downstairs to stop this dangerous folly, but I was too late and, as I opened the library-door, he had given a cat-like spring, knocking a flower-pot down into the area, and was by my side. I lit two candles on the writing-table and scolded him for his recklessness. He told me had made a great deal of money by jumping from a stand on to tables and things and once he had won L500 by jumping on to a mantelpiece when the fire was burning. As we were talking I heard voices in the area; Peter, with the instinct of a burglar, instantly lay flat on the floor behind the sofa, his head under the valance of the chintz, and I remained at the writing-table, smoking my cigarette; this was all done in a second. The door opened; I looked round and was blinded by the blaze of a bull's-eye lantern. When it was removed from my face, I saw two policemen, an inspector and my father's servant. I got up slowly and, with my head in the air, sat upon the arm of the sofa, blocking the only possibility of Peter's full length being seen.

Margot (with great dignity): “Is this a practical joke?”

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Inspector (coolly): "Not at all, madam, but it is only right to tell you a hansom cabman informed us that, as he was passing this house a few minutes ago, he saw a man jump into that window."

He walked away from me and, holding his lantern over the area, peered down and saw the broken flower-pot. I knew lying was more than useless and, as the truth had always served me well, I said, giving my father's servant, who looked sleepy, a heavy kick on the instep:

"That is quite true; a friend of mine *did* jump in at that window, about a quarter of an hour ago; but (looking down with a sweet an modest smile) he was not a burglar ..."

Henry hill (my father's servant): "How often I've told you, miss, that, as long as Master Edward loses his latch-keys, there is nothing to be done and something is bound to happen! One day he will not only lose the latch-key, but his life."

Inspector: "I'm sorry to have frightened you, madam, I will now take down your names ..."

Margot (anxiously): "Oh, I see, you have to report it in the police news, have you? Has the cabman given you his name? He ought to be rewarded, he might have saved us all!"

I felt that I could have strangled the cabman, but, collecting myself, took one candle off the writing-table and, blowing the other out, led the way to the library-door, saying slowly:

"Margaret... Emma... Alice Tennant. Do I have to add my occupation?"

Inspector (busily writing in a small note-book): "No, thank you." (Turning to Hill) "Your name, please."

My father's servant was thoroughly roused and I regretted my kick when in a voice of thunder he said:

"Henry Hastings Appleby Hill."

I felt quite sure that my father would appear over the top of the stair and then all would be over; but, by the fortune that follows the brave, perfect silence reigned throughout the house. I walked slowly away, while Hill led the three policemen into the hall. When the front door had been barred and bolted, I ran down the back stairs and said, smiling brightly:

"I shall tell my father all about this! You did very well; good night, Hill."

When the coast was clear, I returned to the library with my heart beating and shut the door. Peter had disentangled himself from the sofa and was taking fluff off his coat with an air of happy disengagement; I told him with emphasis that I was done for, that my name would be ringing in the police news next day and that I was quite sure by the inspector's face that he knew exactly what had happened; that all this came from Peter's infernal temper, idiotic jealousy and complete want of self-control. Agitated and eloquent, I was good for another ten minutes' abuse; but he interrupted me by saying, in his most caressing manner:

"The inspector is all right, my dear! He is a friend of mine! I wouldn't have missed this for the whole world: you were magnificent! Which shall we reward, the policeman, the cabman or Hill?"

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Margot: "Don't be ridiculous! What do you propose doing?"

Peter (trying to kiss my hands which I had purposely put behind my back): "I propose having a chat with Inspector Wood and then with Hastings Appleby."

Margot: "How do you know Inspector Wood, as you call him?"

Peter: "He did a friend of mine a very good turn once."

Margot: "What sort of turn?"

Peter: "Sugar Candy insulted me at the Turf and I was knocking him into a jelly in Brick Street, when Wood intervened and saved his life. I can assure you he would do anything in the world for me and I'll make it all right! He shall have a handsome present."

Margot: "How vulgar! Having a brawl in Brick Street! How did you come to be in the East-end?"

Peter: "East-end! Why, it's next to Down Street, out of Piccadilly."

Margot: "It's very wrong to bribe the police, Peter!"

Peter: "I'm not going to bribe him, governess! I'm going to give him my Airedale terrier."

Margot: "What! That brute that killed the lady's lap-dog?"

Peter: "The very same!"

Margot: "God help poor Wood!"

Peter was so elated with this shattering escapade that a week after—on the occasion of another row, in which I pointed out that he was the most selfish man in the world—I heard him whistling under my bedroom window at midnight. Afraid lest he should wake my parents, I ran down in my dressing-gown to open the front door, but nothing would induce the chain to move. It was a newly acquired habit of the servants, started by Henry Hill from the night he had barred out the police. Being a hopeless mechanic and particularly weak in my fingers, I gave it up and went to the open window in the library. I begged him to go away, as nothing would induce me to forgive him, and I told him that my papa had only just retired to bed.

Peter, unmoved, ordered me to take the flower-pots off the window-sill, or he would knock them down and make a horrible noise, which would wake the whole house. After I had refused to do this, he said he would very likely break his neck when he jumped, as clearing the pots would mean hitting his head against the window frame. Fearing an

explosion of temper, I weakly removed the flower-pots and watched his acrobatic feat with delight.

We had not been talking on the sofa for more than five minutes when I heard a shuffle of feet outside the library-door. I got up with lightning rapidity and put out the two candles on the writing-table with the palms of my hands, returning noiselessly to Peter's side on the sofa, where we sat in black darkness, The door opened and my father came in holding a bedroom candle in his hand; he proceeded to walk stealthily round the room, looking at his pictures. The sofa on which we were sitting was in the window and

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had nothing behind it but tile curtains. He held his candle high and close to every picture in turn and, putting his head forward, scanned them with tenderness and love. I saw Peter's idiotic hat and stick under the Gainsborough and could not resist nudging him as "The Ladies Erne and Dillon" were slowly approached. A candle held near one's face is the most blinding of all things and, after inspecting the sloping shoulders and anaemic features of the Gainsborough ladies, my father, quietly humming to himself, returned to his bed.

Things did not always go so smoothly with us. One night Peter suggested that I should walk away with him from the ball and try an American trotter which had been lent to him by a friend. As it was a glorious night, I thought it might be rather fun, so we walked down Grosvenor Street into Park Lane; and there stood the buggy under a lamp. American trotters always appear to be misshapen; they are like coloured prints that are not quite in drawing and have never attracted me.

After we had placed ourselves firmly in the rickety buggy, Peter said to the man as he took the reins:

"Let him go, please!"

And go he did, with a curious rapid, swaying waddle. There was no traffic and we turned into the Edgware Road towards Hendon at a great pace, but Peter was a bad driver and after a little time said his arms ached and he thought it was time the "damned" horse was made to stop.

"I'm told the only way to stop an American trotter," said he, "is to hit him over the head." At this I took the whip out of the socket and threw it into the road.

Peter, maddened by my action, shoved the reins into my hands, saying he would jump out. I did not take the smallest notice of this threat, but slackened the reins, after which we went quite slowly. I need hardly say Peter did not jump out, but suggested with severity that we should go back and look for the whip.

This was the last thing I intended to do, so when we turned I leant back in my seat and tugged at the trotter with all my might, and we flew home without uttering a single word.

I was an excellent driver, but that night had taxed all my powers and, when we pulled up at the corner of Grosvenor Square, I ached in every limb. We were not in the habit of arriving together at the front door; and after he had handed me down to the pavement I felt rather awkward: I had no desire to break the silence, but neither did I want to take away Peter's coat, which I was wearing, so I said tentatively:

"Shall I give you your covert-coat?"

Peter: “Don’t be childish! How can you walk back to the front door in your ball-dress? If any one happened to be looking out of the window, what would they think?”

This was really more than I could bear. I wrenched off his coat and placing it firmly on his arm, said:

“Most people, if they are sensible, are sound asleep at this time of the night, but I thank you all the same for your consideration.”

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We turned testily away from each other and I walked home alone. When I reached our front door my father opened it and, seeing me in my white tulle dress, was beside himself with rage. He asked me if I would kindly explain what I was doing, walking in the streets in my ball-dress at two in the morning. I told him exactly what had happened and warned him soothingly never to buy an American trotter; he told me that my reputation was ruined, that his was also and that my behaviour would kill my mother; I put my arms round his neck, told him soothingly that I had not really enjoyed myself *at all* and promised him that I would never do it again. By this time my mother had come out of her bedroom and was leaning over the staircase in her dressing-gown. She said in a pleading voice:

"Pray do not agitate yourself, Charlie. You've done a very wrong action, Margot! You really ought to have more consideration for your father: no one knows how impressionable he is. ... Please tell Mr. Flower that we do not approve of him at all! ..."

Margot: "You are absolutely right, dear mamma, and that is exactly what I have said to him more than once. But you need not worry, for no one saw us. Let's go to bed, darling, I'm dog-tired!"

Peter was thoroughly inconsequent about money and a great gambler; he told me one day in sorrow that his only chance of economising was to sell his horses and go to India to shoot big game, incidentally escaping his creditors.

When Peter went to India I was very unhappy, but to please my people I told them I would say good-bye and not write to him for a year, a promise which was faithfully kept.

While he was away, a young man of rank and fortune fell in love with me out hunting. He never proposed, he only declared himself. I liked him particularly, but his attention sat lightly on me; this rather nettled him and he told me one day riding home in the dark, that he was sure I must be in love with somebody else. I said that it did not at all follow and that, if he were wise he would stop talking about love and go and buy himself some good horses for Leicestershire, where I was going in a week to hunt with Lord Manners. We were staying together at Cholmondeley Castle, in Cheshire, with my beloved friend, Winifred Cholmondeley, [Footnote: The Marchioness of Cholmondeley.] then Lady Rocksavage. My new young man took my advice and went up to London, promising he would lend me "two of the best that money could buy" to take to Melton, where he proposed shortly to follow me.

When he arrived at Tattersalls there were several studs of well-known horses being sold: Jack Trotter's, Sir William Eden's and Lord Lonsdale's. Among the latter was a famous hunter, called Jack Madden, which had once belonged to Peter Flower; and my friend determined he would buy it for me. Some one said to him:

"I don't advise you to buy that horse, as you won't be able to ride it!"

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(The fellow who related this to me added, “As you know, Miss Tennant, this is the only certain way by which you can sell any horse.”)

Another man said: “I don’t agree with you, the horse is all right; when it belonged to Flower I saw Miss Margot going like a bird on it. ...”

My friend: “Did Miss Tennant ride Flower’s horses?”

At this the other fellow said:

“Why, my dear man, where *have* you lived! ...”

Some months after I had ridden Jack Madden and my own horses over high Leicestershire, my friend came to see me and asked me to swear on my Bible oath that I would not give him away over a secret which he intended to tell me.

After I had taken my solemn oath he said: “Your friend Peter Flower in India was going to be put in the bankruptcy court and turned out of every club in London; so I went to Sam Lewis and paid his debt, but I don’t want him to know about it and he never need, unless you tell him.”

Margot: “What does he owe? And whom does he owe it to?”

My friend: “He owes ten thousand pounds, but I’m not at liberty to tell you who it’s to; he is a friend of mine and a very good fellow. I can assure you that he has waited longer than most people would for Flower to pay him and I think he’s done the right thing.”

Margot: “Is Peter Flower a friend of yours?”

My friend: “I don’t know him by sight and have never spoken to him in my life, but he’s the man you’re in love with and that is enough for me.”

. . . . . .

When the year was up and Peter—for all I knew—was still in India, I had made up my mind that, come what might, I would never, under any circumstances, renew my relations with him.

That winter I was staying with the Manners, as usual, and finding myself late for a near meet cut across country. Larking is always a stupid thing to do; horses that have never put a foot wrong generally refuse the smallest fence and rather than upset them at the

beginning of the day you end by going through the gate, which you had better have done at first.

I had a mare called Molly Bawn, given to me by my fiance, who was the finest timber-jumper in Leicestershire, and, seeing the people at the meet watching me as I approached, I could not resist, out of pure swagger, jumping an enormous gate. I said to myself how disgusted Peter would have been at my vulgarity! But at the same time it put me in good spirits. Something, however, made me turn round; I saw a man behind me, jumping the fence beside my gate; and there was Peter Flower! He was in tearing spirits and told me with eagerness how completely he had turned over a new leaf and never intended doing this, that or the other again, as far the most wonderful thing had happened to him that ever happened to any one.

"I'm under a lucky star, Margie! By heavens I am! And the joy of seeing you is *so great* that I won't allude to the gate, or Molly Bawn, or you, or any thing ugly! Let us enjoy ourselves for once; and for God's sake don't scold me. Are you glad to see me? Let me look at you! Which do you love best, Molly Bawn or me? Don't answer but listen."

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He then proceeded to tell me how his debts had been paid by Sam Lewis—the money-lender—through an unknown benefactor and how he had begged Lewis to tell who it was, but that he had refused, having taken his oath never to reveal the name. My heart beat and I said a remarkably stupid thing:

“How wonderful! But you’ll have to pay him back, Peter, won’t you?”

Peter: “Oh, indeed! Then perhaps you can tell me who it is ...”

Margot: “How can I?”

Peter: “Do you know who it is?”

Margot: “I do not.”

I felt the cock ought to have crowed, but I said nothing; and Peter was so busy greeting his friends in the field that I prayed he had not observed my guilty face.

Some days after this there was a race meeting at Leicester. Lord Lonsdale took a special at Oakham for the occasion and the Manners, Peter and I all went to the races. When I walked into the paddock, I saw my new friend—the owner of Jack Madden—-talking to the Prince of Wales. When we joined them, the Prince suggested that we should go and see Mrs. Langtry’s horse start, as it was a great rogue and difficult to mount.

As we approached the Langtry horse, the crowd made way for us and I found my friend next to me; on his other side was Peter Flower and then the Prince. The horse had his eyes bandaged and one of his forelegs was being held by a stable-boy. When the jockey was up and the bandage removed, it jumped into the air and gave an extended and violent buck. I was standing so near that I felt the draught of its kick on my hair. At this my friend gave a slight scream and, putting his arm round me, pulled me back towards him. A miss is as good as a mile, so after thanking him for his protection I chatted cheerfully to the Prince of Wales.

There is nothing so tiring as racing and we all sat in perfect silence going home in the special that evening.

Neither at dinner nor after had I any opportunity of speaking to Peter, but I observed a singularly impassive expression on his face. The next day—being Sunday—I asked him to go round the stables with me after church; he refused, so I went alone. After dinner I tried again to talk to him, but he would not answer; he did not look angry, but he appeared to be profoundly sad, which depressed me. He told Hoppy Manners he was not going to hunt that week as he feared he would have to be in London. My heart sank. We all went to our rooms early and Peter remained downstairs reading. As he never read in winter I knew there was something seriously wrong, so I went down in my

tea-gown to see him. It was nearly midnight. The room was empty and we were alone. He never looked up.

Margot: "Peter, you've not spoken to me once since the races. What can have happened?"

Peter: "I would rather you left me, *please*. ... Pray go back to your room."

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Margot (sitting on the sofa beside him): "Won't you speak to me and tell me all about it?"

Peter put down his book, and looking at me steadily, said very slowly:

"I'd rather not speak to a liar!"

I stood up as if I had been shot and said:

"How dare you say such a thing!"

Peter: "You lied to me."

Margot: "When?"

Peter: "You know perfectly well! And you are in love! You know you are. Will you deny it?"

"Oh! it's this that worries you, is it?" said I sweetly. "What would you say if I told you I was *not*?"

Peter: "I would say you were lying again."

Margot: "Have I ever lied to you, Peter?"

Peter: "How can I tell? (*Shrugging his shoulders*) You have lied twice, so I presume since I've been away you've got into the habit of it."

Margot: "Peter!"

Peter: "A man doesn't scream and put his arm round a woman, as D— ly did at the races to-day, unless he is in love. Will you tell me who paid my debt, please?"

Margot: "No, I won't."

Peter: "Was it D—ly?"

Margot: "I shan't tell you. I'm not Sam Lewis; and, since I'm such a liar, is it worth while asking me these stupid questions?"

Peter: "Ah, Margot, this is the worst blow of my life! I see you are deceiving me. I know who paid my debt now."

Margot: "Then why ask *me*? ..."

Peter: "When I went to India I had never spoken to D—ly in my life. Why should he have paid my debts for me? You had much better tell me the simple truth and get it over: it's all settled and you're going to marry him."

Margot: "Since I've got into the way of lying, you might spare yourself and me these vulgar questions."

Peter (*seizing my hands in anguish*): "Say you aren't going to marry him ... tell me, tell me it's *not* true."

Margot: "Why should I? He has never asked me to."

After this the question of matrimony was bound to come up between us. The first time it was talked of, I was filled with anxiety. It seemed to put a finish to the radiance of our friendship and, worse than that, it brought me up against my father, who had often said to me: "You will never marry Flower; you must marry your superior."

Peter himself, in a subconscious way, had become aware of the situation. One evening, riding home, he said:

"Margie, do you see that?"

He pointed to the spire of the Melton Church and added:

"That is what you are in my life. I am not worth the button on your boot!"

To which I replied:

"I would not say that, but I cannot find goodness for two."

I was profundly unhappy. To live for ever with a man who was incapable of loving any one but himself and me, who was without any kind of moral ambition and chronically indifferent to politics and religion, was a nightmare.

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I said to him:

“I will marry you if you get some serious occupation, Peter, but I won’t marry an idle man; you think of nothing but yourself and me.”

Peter: “What in the name of goodness would you have me think of? Geography?”

Margot: “You know exactly what I mean. Your power lies in love-making, not in loving; you don’t love any one but yourself.”

At this, Peter moved away from me as if I had struck him and said in a low tense voice:

“I am glad I did not say that. I would not care to have said such a cat-cruel thing; but I pity the man who marries you! He will think—as I did—that you are impulsively, throbbingly warm and kind and gentle; and he will find that he has married a governess and a prig; and a woman whose fire—of which she boasts so much— blasts his soul.”

I listened to a Peter I had never heard before, His face frightened me. It indicated suffering. I put my head against his and said:

“How can I make an honest man of you, my dearest?”

I was getting quite clever about people, as the Mrs. Bo episode had taught me a lot.

A short time after this conversation, I observed a dark, good-looking woman pursuing Peter Flower at every ball and party. He told me when I teased him that she failed to arrest his attention and that, for the first time in my life, I flattered him by my jealousy. I persisted and said that I did not know if it was jealousy but that I was convinced she was a bad friend for him.

Peter: “I’ve always noticed you think things bad when they don’t suit you, but why should I give up my life to you? What do you give me in return? I’m the laughing-stock of London! But, if it is any satisfaction to you, I will tell you I don’t care for the black lady, as you call her, and I never see her except at parties.”

I knew Peter as well as a cat knows its way in the dark and I felt the truth of his remark: what did I give him? But I was not in a humour to argue.

The lady often asked me to go and see her, but I shrank from it and had never been inside her house.

One day I told Peter I would meet him at the Soane Collection in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. To my surprise he said he had engaged himself to see his sister, who had been ill, and pointed out with a laugh that my governessing was taking root. He added:

“I don’t mind giving it up if you can spend the whole afternoon with me.”

I told him I would not have him give up going to see his sister for the world.

Finding myself at a loose end, I thought I would pay a visit to the black lady, as it was unworthy of me to have such a prejudice against some one whom I did not know. It was a hot London day; pale colours, thin stuffs, naked throats and large hats were strewn about the parks and streets.

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When I arrived, the lady's bell was answered by a hall-boy and, hearing the piano, I told him he need not announce me. When I opened the door, I saw Peter and the dark lady sharing the same seat in front of the open piano. She wore a black satin sleeveless tea-gown, cut low at the throat, with a coral ribbon round her waist, and she had stuck a white rose in her rather dishevelled Carmen hair. I stood still, startled by her beauty and stunned by Peter's face. She got up, charmed to see me, and expressed her joy at the amazing luck which had brought me there that very afternoon, as she had a wonderful Spaniard coming to play to her after tea and she had often been told by Peter how musical I was, *etc*., *etc*. She hoped I was not shocked by her appearance, but she has just come back from a studio and it was too hot to expect people to get into decent clothes. She was perfectly at her ease and more than welcoming; before I could answer, she rallied Peter and said she pleaded guilty of having lured him away from the path of duty that afternoon, ending with a slight twinkle:

"From what I'm told, Miss Margot, you would *never* have done anything so wicked? ..."

I felt ice in my blood and said:

"You needn't believe that! I've lured him away from the path of duty for the last eight years, haven't I, Peter?"

There was an uncomfortable silence and I looked about for a means of escape, but it took me some little time to find one.

I said good-bye and left the house.

When I was alone I locked the door, flung myself on my sofa, and was blinded by tears. Peter was right; he had said, "Why should I give up my life to you?" Why indeed! And yet, after eight years, this seemed a terrible ending to me.

"What do you give me in return?" What indeed? What claim had I to his fidelity? I thought I was giving gold for silver, but the dark lady would have called it copper for gold. Was she prepared to give everything for nothing? Why should I call it nothing? What did I know of Peter's love for her? All I knew was she had taught him to lie; and he must love her very much to do that: he had never lied to me before.

I went to the opera that night with my father and mother. Peter came into our box in a state of intense misery; I could hardly look at him. He put his hand out toward me under the programme and I took it.

At that moment the servant brought me a note and asked me to give her the answer. I opened it and this was what I read:

"If you want to do a very kind thing come and see me after the opera to-night. Don't say no."

I showed it to Peter, and he said, “Go.” It was from the dark lady; I asked him what she wanted me for and he said she was terribly unhappy.

“Ah, Peter,” said I, “what *have* you done? ...”

Peter: “I know ... it’s quite true; but I’ve broken it off for ever with her.”

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Nothing he could have said then would have lightened my heart.

I scribbled, “Yes,” on the same paper and gave it back to the girl.

When I said good night to my mother that night after the opera, I told her where I was going. Peter was standing in the front hall and took me in a hansom to the lady’s house, saying he would wait for me round the corner while I had my interview with her.

It was past midnight and I felt overpoweringly tired. My beautiful rival opened the front door to me and I followed her silently up to her bedroom. She took off my opera-cloak and we sat down facing each other. The room was large and dark but for a row of candles on the mantel-piece and two high church-lights each side of a silver pier-glass. There was a table near my chair with odds and ends on it and a general smell of scent and flowers. I looked at her in her blue satin nightgown and saw that she had been crying.

“It is kind of you to have come,” she said, “and I daresay you know why I wanted to see you to-night.”

Margot: “No, I don’t; I haven’t the faintest idea!”

The lady (*looking rather embarrassed*, *but after* A *moment’s pause*):
“I want you to tell me about yourself.”

I felt this to be a wrong entry: she had sent for me to tell her about Peter Flower and not myself; but why should I tell her about either of us? I had never spoken of my love-affairs excepting to my mother and my three friends—Con Manners, Frances Horner, and Etty Desborough—and people had ceased speaking to me about them; why should I sit up with a stranger and discuss myself at this time of night? I said there was nothing to tell. She answered by saying she had met so many people who cared for me that she felt she almost knew me, to which I replied:

“In that case, why talk about me?”

The lady: “But some people care for both of us.”

Margot (*rather coldly*): “I daresay.”

The lady: “Don’t be hard, I want to know if you love Peter Flower . ... Do you intend to marry him?”

The question had come then: this terrible question which my mother had never asked and which I had always evaded! Had it got to be answered now ... and to a stranger?

With a determined effort to control myself I said:

"You mean, am I engaged to be married?"

The lady: "I mean what I say; are you going to marry Peter?"

Margot: "I have never told him I would."

The lady (*very slowly*): "Remember, my life is bound up in your answer ..."

Her words seemed to burn and I felt a kind of pity for her. She was leaning forward with her eyes fastened on mine and her hands clasped between her knees.

"If you don't love him enough to marry him, why don't you leave him alone?" she said. "Why do you keep him bound to you? Why don't you set him free?"

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Margot: "He is free to love whom he likes; I don't keep him, but I won't share him."

The lady: "You don't love him, but you want to keep him; that is pure selfishness and vanity."

Margot: "Not at all! I would give him up to-morrow and have told him so a thousand times, if he would marry; but he is not in a position to marry any one."

The lady: "How can you say such a thing! His debts have just been paid by God knows who—some woman, I suppose!—and you are rich yourself. What is there to hinder you from marrying him?"

Margot: "That was not what I was thinking about. I don't believe you would understand even if I were to explain it to you."

The lady: "If you were really in love you could not be so critical and censorious."

Margot: "Oh, yes, I could! You don't know me."

The lady: "I love him in a way you would never understand. There is nothing in the world I would not do for him! No pain I would not suffer and no sacrifice I would not make."

Margot: "What could you do for him that would help him?"

The lady: "I would leave my husband and my children and go right away with him."

I felt as if she had stabbed me.

"Leave your children! and your husband!" I said. "But how can ruining them and yourself help Peter Flower? I don't believe for a moment he would ever do anything so vile."

The lady: "You think he loves you too much to run away with me, do you?"

Margot (with indignation): "Perhaps I hope he cares too much for you."

The lady (not listening and getting up excitedly): "What do you know about love? I have had a hundred lovers, but Peter Flower is the only man I have ever really cared for; and my life is at an end if you will not give him up."

Margot: "There is no question of my giving him up; he is free, I tell you ..."

The lady: "I tell you he is not! He doesn't consider himself free, he said as much to me this afternoon ... when he wanted to break it all off."

Margot: "What do you wish me to do then? ..."

The lady: "Tell Peter you don't love him in the right way, that you don't intend to marry him; and then leave him alone."

Margot: "Do you mean I am to leave him to you? ... Do you love him in the right way?"

The lady: "Don't ask stupid questions . ... I shall kill myself if he gives me up."

After this, I felt there was nothing more to be said. I told her that Peter had a perfect right to do what he liked and that I had neither the will nor the power to influence his decision; that I was going abroad with my sister Lucy to Italy and would in any case not see him for several weeks; but I added that all my influence over him for years had been directed into making him the right sort of man to marry and that all hers would of necessity lie in the opposite direction. Not knowing quite how to say good-bye, I began to finger my cloak; seeing my intention, she said:

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“Just wait one moment, will you? I want to know if you are as good as Peter always tells me you are; don’t answer till I see your eyes ...”

She took two candles off the chimneypiece and placed them on the table near me, a little in front of my face, and then knelt upon the ground; I looked at her wonderful wild eyes and stretched out my hands towards her.

“Nonsense!” I said. “I am not in the least good! Get up! When I see you kneeling at my feet, I feel sorry for you.”

The lady (getting up abruptly): “For God’s sake don’t pity me!”

Thinking over the situation in the calm of my room, I had no qualms as to either the elopement or the suicide, hut I felt a revulsion of feeling towards Peter. His lack of moral indignation and purpose, his intractability in all that was serious and his incapacity to improve had been cutting a deep though unconscious division between us for years; and I determined at whatever cost, after this, that I would say good-bye to him.

A few days later, Lord Dufferin came to see me in Grosvenor Square.

“Margot,” he said, “why don’t you marry? You are twenty-seven; and life won’t go on treating you so well if you go on treating it like this. As an old friend who loves you, let me give you one word of advice. You should marry in spite of being in love, but never because of it.”

Before I went away to Italy, Peter and I, with passion-lit eyes and throbbing hearts, had said goodbye to each other for ever.

The relief of our friends at our parting was so suffocating that I clung to the shelter of my new friend, the stranger of that House of Commons dinner.

CHAPTER V

The Asquith family tree—Herbert H. ASQUITH’s *mother—Asquith’s first marriage*; *meets Margot Tennant for first time—talk till dawn on house of Commons*’ *Terrace*; *other meetings—engagement* A *London sensation—marriage an event*

My husband’s father was Joseph Dixon Asquith, a cloth-merchant, in Morley, at that time a small town outside Leeds. He was a man of high character who held Bible classes for young men. He married a daughter of William Willans, of Huddersfield, who sprang of an old Yorkshire Puritan stock.

He died when he was thirty-five, leaving four children: William Willans, Herbert Henry, Emily Evelyn and Lilian Josephine. They were brought up by their mother, who was a woman of genius. I named my only daughter [Footnote: Princess Bibesco.] after Goethe's mother, but was glad when I found out that her grandmother Willans had been called Elizabeth.

William Willans—who is dead—was the eldest of the family and a clever little man. He taught at Clifton College for over thirty years.

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Lilian Josephine died when she was a baby; and Evelyn—one of the best of women—is the only near relation of my husband still living.

My husband's mother, old Mrs. Asquith, I never knew; my friend Mark Napier told me that she was a brilliantly clever woman but an invalid. She had delicate lungs, which obliged her to live on the South coast; and, when her two sons went to the City of London School, they lived alone together in lodgings in Islington and were both poor and industrious.

Although Henry's mother was an invalid she had a moral, religious and intellectual influence over her family that cannot be exaggerated. She was a profound reader and a brilliant talker and belonged to what was in those days called orthodox nonconformity, or Congregationalists.

After my husband's first marriage he made money by writing, lecturing and examining at Oxford. When he was called to the Bar success did not come to him at once.

He had no rich patron and no one to push him forward. He had made for himself a great Oxford reputation: he was a fine scholar and lawyer, but socially was not known by many people.

It was said that Gladstone only promoted men by seniority and never before knowing with precision what they were like, but in my husband's case it was not so.

Lord James of Hereford, then Sir Henry James, was Attorney General, overburdened with a large private practice at the Bar; and, when the great Bradlaugh case came on, in 1883, it was suggested to him that a young man living on the same staircase might devil the Affirmation Bill for him. This was the beginning of Asquith's career: When Gladstone saw the brief for his speech, he noted the fine handwriting and asked who had written it. Sir Henry James, the kindest and most generous of men, was delighted at Gladstone's observation and brought the young man to him. From that moment both the Attorney General and the Prime Minister marked him out for distinction; he rose without any intermediary step of an under-secretaryship from a back-bencher to a Cabinet Minister; and when we married in 1894 he was Home Secretary. In 1890 I cut and kept out of some newspapers this prophecy, little thinking that I would marry one of the "New English Party."

A NEW ENGLISH PARTY

Amid all the worry and turmoil and ambition of Irish politics, there is steadily growing up a little English party, of which more will be heard in the days that are to come. This is a band of philosophico-social Radicals—not the *old* type of laissez-faire politician, but quite otherwise. In other words, what I may call practical Socialism has caught on

afresh with a knot of clever, youngish members of Parliament who sit below the gangway on the Radical side. This little group includes clever, learned, metaphysical Mr. Haldane, one of the rising lawyers of his day; young Sir Edward Grey, sincere, enthusiastic, with a certain gift for oratory, and helped by a beautiful and clever wife; Mr. Sidney Buxton, who has perhaps the most distinct genius for practical work; and finally, though in rather loose attachment to the rest, Mr. Asquith, brilliant, cynical, cold, clear, but with his eye on the future. The dominant ideas of this little band tend in the direction of moderate Collectivism—i.e., of municipal Socialism.

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I met my husband for the first time in 1891, at a dinner given by Peter Flower's brother Cyril. [Footnote: The late Lord Battersea.] I had never heard of him in my life, which gives some indication of how I was wasting my time on two worlds: I do not mean this and the next, but the sporting and dramatic, Melton in the winter and the Lyceum in the summer. My Coquelin coachings and my dancing-lessons had led me to rehearsals both of the ballet and the drama; and for a short time I was at the feet of Ellen Terry and Irving. I say "short" advisedly, for then as now I found Bohemian society duller than any English watering-place. Every one has a different conception of Hell and few of us connect it with flames; but stage suppers are my idea of Hell and, with the exception of Irving and Coquelin, Ellen Terry and Sarah Bernhardt, I have never met the hero or heroine off the stage that was not ultimately dull.

The dinner where I was introduced to Henry was in the House of Commons and I sat next to him. I was tremendously impressed by his conversation and his clean Cromwellian face. He was different from the others and, although abominably dressed, had so much personality that I made up my mind at once that here was a man who could help me and would understand everything. It never crossed my brain that he was married, nor would that have mattered; I had always been more anxious that Peter Flower should marry than myself, because he was thirteen years older than I was, but matrimony was not the austere purpose of either of our lives.

After dinner we all walked on the Terrace and I was flattered to find my new friend by my side. Lord Battersea chaffed me in his noisy, flamboyant manner, trying to separate us; but with tact and determination this frontal attack was resisted and my new friend and I retired to the darkest part of the Terrace, where, leaning over the parapet, we gazed into the river and talked far into the night.

Our host and his party—thinking that I had gone home and that Mr. Asquith had returned to the House when the division bell rang—had disappeared; and when we finished our conversation the Terrace was deserted and the sky light.

We met a few days later dining with Sir Algernon West—a very dear and early friend of mine—and after this we saw each other constantly. I found out from something he said to me that he was married and lived at Hampstead and that his days were divided between 1 Paper Buildings and the House of Commons. He told me that he had always been a shy man and in some ways this is true of him even now; but I am glad that I did not observe it at the time, as shy people disconcerted me: I liked modesty, I pitied timidity, but I was embarrassed by shyness.

I cannot truly say, however, that the word shy described my husband at any time: he was a little gauche in movement and blushed when he was praised, but I have never seen him nervous with any one or embarrassed by any social dilemma. His unerring instinct into all sorts of people and affairs—quite apart from his intellectual temperament and learning—and his incredible lack of vanity struck me at once. The art of making

every man better pleased with himself he had in a high degree; and he retains to this day an incurable modesty.

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When I discovered that he was married, I asked him to bring his wife to dinner, which he did, and directy I saw her I said:

“I do hope, Mrs. Asquith, you have not minded your husband dining here without you, but I rather gathered Hampstead was too far away for him to get back to you from the House of Commons. You must always let me know and come with him whenever it suits you.”

In making this profound and attaching friendship with the stranger of that House of Commons dinner, I had placed myself in a difficult position when Helen Asquith died. To be a stepwife and a stepmother was unthinkable, but at the same time the moment had arrived when a decision—involving a great change in my life—had become inevitable. I had written to Peter Flower before we parted every day for nine years—with the exception of the months he had spent flying from his creditors in India—and I had prayed for him every night, but it had not brought more than happiness to both of us; and when I deliberately said good-bye to him I shut down a page of my life which, even if I had wished to, I could never have reopened. When Henry told me he cared for me, that unstifled inner voice which we all of us hear more or less indistinctly told me I would be untrue to myself and quite unworthy of life if, when such a man came knocking at the door, I did not fling it wide open. The rumour that we were engaged to be married caused alarm amounting to consternation in certain circles. Both Lord Rosebery and Lord Randolph Churchill, without impugning me in any way, deplored the marriage, nor were they by any means alone in thinking such a union might ruin the life of a promising politician. Some of my own friends were equally apprehensive from another point of view; to start my new life charged with a ready-made family of children brought up very differently from myself, with a man who played no games and cared for no sport, in London instead of in the country, with no money except what he could make at the Bar, was, they thought, taking too many risks.

My Melton friends said it was a terrible waste that I was not marrying a sporting man and told me afterwards that they nearly signed a round-robin to implore me never to give up hunting, but feared I might think it impertinent.

The rumour of my engagement caused a sensation in the East-end of London as well as the West. The following was posted to me by an anonymous well-wisher:

At the meeting of the “unemployed” held on Tower Hill yesterday afternoon, John E. Williams, the organiser appointed by the Social Democratic Federation, said that on the previous day they had gone through the West-end squares and had let the “loafers” living there know that they were alive. On the previous evening he had seen an announcement which, at first sight, had caused tears to run down his face, for he had thought it read, “Mr. Asquith going to be murdered.” However, it turned out that Mr. Asquith was going to be married, and he accordingly

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proposed that the unemployed, following the example of the people in the West-end, should forward the right hon. gentleman a congratulatory message. He moved: "That this mass meeting of the unemployed held on Tower Hill, hearing that Mr. Asquith is about to enter the holy bonds of matrimony, and knowing he has no sympathy for the unemployed, and that he has lately used his position in the House of Commons to insult the unemployed, trusts that his partner will be one of the worst tartars it is possible for a man to have, and that his family troubles will compel him to retire from political life, for which he is so unfit." The reading of the resolution was followed by loud laughter and cheers. Mr. Crouch (National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives) seconded the motion, which was supported by a large number of other speakers and adopted.

I was much more afraid of spoiling Henry's life than my own, and what with old ties and bothers, and new ties and stepchildren, I deliberated a long time before the final fixing of my wedding-day.

I had never met any of his children except little Violet when I became engaged and he only took me to see them once before we were married, as they lived in a villa at Redhill under the charge of a kind and careful governess; he never spoke of them except one day when, after my asking him if he thought they would hate me and cataloguing my grave imperfections and moderate qualifications for the part, he stopped me and said that his eldest son, Raymond, was remarkably clever and would be devoted to me, adding thoughtfully:

"I think—and hope—he is ambitious."

This was a new idea to me: we had always been told what a wicked thing ambition was; but we were a fighting family of high spirits and not temper, so we had acquiesced, without conforming to the nursery dictum. The remark profoundly impressed me and I pondered it over in my heart. I do not think, by the way, that it turned out to be a true prophecy, but Raymond Asquith had such unusual intellectual gifts that no one could have convicted him of lack of ambition. To win without work, to score without an effort and to delight without premeditation is given to few.

One night after our engagement we were dining with Sir Henry and Lady Campbell-Bannerman. While the women were talking and the men drinking, dear old Mrs. Gladstone and other elderly ladies and political wives took me on as to the duties of the spouse of a possible Prime Minister; they were so eloquent and severe that at the end of it my nerves were racing round like a squirrel in a cage.

When Mr. Gladstone came into the drawing-room I felt depressed and, clinging to his arm, I switched him into a corner and said I feared the ladies took me for a jockey or a ballet-girl, as I had been adjured to give up, among other things, dancing, riding and

acting. He patted my hand, said he knew no one better fitted to be the wife of a great politician than myself and ended by saying that, while I was entitled to discard exaggeration in rebuke, it was a great mistake not to take criticism wisely and in a spirit which might turn it to good account.

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I have often thought of this when I see how brittle and egotistical people are at the smallest disapprobation. I never get over my surprise, old as I am, at the surly moral manners, the lack of humbleness and the colossal personal vanity that are the bed-rock of people's incapacity to take criticism well. There is no greater test of size than this; but, judged by this test, most of us are dwarfs.

Disapproving of long engagements and wishing to escape the cataract of advice by which my friends thought to secure both my husband's and my own matrimonial bliss, I hurried on my marriage. My friends and advisers made me unhappy at this time, but fortunately for me Henry Asquith is a compelling person and, in spite of the anxiety of the friends and relations, we were married at St. George's, Hanover Square, on May the 10th, 1894. I doubt if any bride ever received so many strange letters as I did. There was one which I kept in front of me when I felt discouraged. I shall not say who it is from, as the writer is alive:

My dear Margot,

You are not different to other people except in this respect—you have a clear, cold head, and a hot, keen heart, and you won't find *everything*; so choose what lasts, and with luck and with pluck, marrying as you are from the highest motives, you will be repaid. Asquith is far too good for you. He is not conventional, and will give you a great deal of freedom. He worships you, and understands you, and is bent on making the best of you and the life together. You are marrying a very uncommon man—not so much intellectually— but he is uncommon from his Determination, Reality and concentrated power of love. Don't pity yourself—you would not wish to have loved Peter less—though you might wish you had never seen him—but you must know you have allowed too much love in your life, and must bear the consequences. Deep down in your heart you must feel that you ought to put a stop to your present life, and to the temptation of making people love you. Depend upon it with your rich and warm nature you need not be afraid of not loving Asquith intensely. By marrying him you will prove yourself to be a woman of courage and nobility, instead of a woman who is talked about and who is in reality self-indulgent. You are lucky after your rather dangerous life to have found such a haven and should bless God for it.

In those days it was less common for people to collect in the streets to see a wedding. The first marriage I ever saw which collected a crowd was Lady Crewe's, but her father, Lord Rosebery, was a Derby winner and Prime Minister and she was married in Westminster Abbey. From Grosvenor Square to St. George's, Hanover Square, is a short distance, but from our front door to the church the pavements were blocked with excited and enthusiastic people.

An old nurse of my sister Charlotte's, Jerusha Taylor, told me that a gentleman outside St. George's had said to her, "I will give you L10 for that ticket of yours!" and when she

refused he said, “I will give you *anything you like*! I must see Margot Tennant married!” I asked her what sort of a man he was. She answered,

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“Oh! he was a real gentleman, ma’am! I know a gentleman when I see him; he had a gardenia in his buttonhole, but he didn’t get my ticket!”

Our register was signed by four Prime Ministers: Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, Arthur Balfour and my husband. We spent the first part of our honeymoon at Mells Park, Frome, lent to us by Sir John and Lady Horner, and the second at Clovelly Court with our friend and hostess, Mrs. Hamlyn.

CHAPTER VI

The Asquith children by the first marriage—MARGOT’S *stepdaughter violet—memory of the first Mrs*. *Asquith—Raymond’s brilliant career—Arthur’s heroism in the war*

I do not think if you had ransacked the world you could have found natures so opposite in temper, temperament and outlook as myself and my stepchildren when I first knew them.

If there was a difference between the Tennants and Lytteltons of laughter, there was a difference between the Tennants and Asquiths of tears. Tennants believed in appealing to the hearts of men, firing their imagination and penetrating and vivifying their inmost lives. They had a little loose love to give the whole world. The Asquiths—without mental flurry and with perfect self-mastery—believed in the free application of intellect to every human emotion; no event could have given heightened expression to their feelings. Shy, self-engaged, critical and controversial, nothing surprised them and nothing upset them. We were as zealous and vital as they were detached and as cocky and passionate as they were modest and emotionless.

They rarely looked at you and never got up when any one came into the room. If you had appeared downstairs in a ball-dress or a bathing-gown they would not have observed it and would certainly never have commented upon it if they had. Whether they were glowing with joy at the sight of you or thrilled at receiving a friend, their welcome was equally composed. They were devoted to one another and never quarrelled; they were seldom wild and never naughty. Perfectly self-contained, truthful and deliberate, I never saw them lose themselves in my life and I have hardly ever seen the saint or hero that excited their disinterested emotion.

When I thought of the storms of revolt, the rage, the despair, the wild enthusiasms and reckless adventures, the disputes that finished not merely with fights, but with fists in our nursery and schoolroom, I was stunned by the steadiness of the Asquith temper.

Let it not be inferred that I am criticising them as they now are, or that their attitude towards myself was at any time lacking in sympathy. Blindness of heart does not imply hardness; and expression is a matter of temperament or impulse; hut it was their

attitude towards life that was different from my own. They over-valued brains, which was a strange fault, as they were all remarkably clever. Hardly any Prime Minister has had famous children, but the Asquiths were all conspicuous in their different ways: Raymond and Violet the most striking, Arthur the most capable, Herbert a poet and Cyril the shyest and the rarest.

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Cys Asquith, who was the youngest of the family, combined what was best in all of them morally and intellectually and possessed what was finer than brains.

He was two, when his mother died, and a clumsy ugly little boy with a certain amount of graceless obstinacy, with which both Tennants and Asquiths were equally endowed. To the casual observer he would have appeared less like me than any of my step-family, but as a matter of fact he and I had the most in common; we shared a certain spiritual foundation and moral aspiration that solder people together through life.

It is not because I took charge of him at an early age that I say he is more my own than the others, but because, although he did not always agree with me, he never misunderstood me. He said at Murren one day, when he was seventeen and we had been talking together on life and religion:

“It must be curious for you, Margot, seeing all of us laughing at things that make you cry.”

This showed remarkable insight for a schoolboy. When I look at his wonderful face now and think of his appearance at the time of our marriage, I am reminded of the Hans Andersen toad with the jewel in its head, but the toad is no longer there.

I have a dear friend called Bogie Harris,[Footnote: Mr. H. Harris, of Bedford Square.] who told me that, at a ball given by Con and Hoppy Manners, he had seen a young man whose face had struck him so much that he looked about for some one in the room to tell him who it was. That young man was Cyril Asquith.

One night when he was a little boy, after I had heard him say his prayers he asked me to read the General Confession out of his Prayer Book to him. It was such an unusual request that I said:

“Very well, darling, I will, but first of all I must read you what I love best in the Prayer Book.”

To which he answered:

“Oh, do! I should like that.”

I put a cushion behind my head and, lying down beside him, read:

“Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of Thine only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”

After this I read him the General Confession, opening, “We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep,” and ending, “that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life.” When I had finished I said to him:

“What do you take sober to mean here, darling?”

Cys (looking furtively at me with his little green eyes): “It does not mean drunkenness.” (A slight pause and then reflectively): “I should say moderate living.”

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I told the children one day to collect some of their toys and that I would take them to the hospital, where they could give them away themselves. I purposely did not say broken toys; and a few days afterwards I was invited to the nursery. On arriving upstairs I saw that Cys's eyes were scarlet; and set out in pathetic array round the room was a large family of monkeys christened by him "the Thumblekins." They were what he loved best in the world. I observed that they were the only unbroken toys that were brought to me; and he was eyeing his treasures with anguish in his soul. I was so touched that I could hardly speak; and, when I put my arms round his neck, he burst into sobs:

"May I keep one monkey ... only one, Margot? ... *Please*? ...*Please*, Margot? ..."

This was the window in his soul that has never been closed to me. For many years during a distinguished college career he was delicate, but since his marriage to Miss Ann Pollock—a daylight creature of charm, beauty and goodness—he has been happy and strong.

My stepdaughter Violet—now Lady Bonham Carter—though intensely feminine, would have made a remarkable man. I do not believe there is any examination she could not have passed either at a public school or a university. Born without shyness or trepidation, from her youth upwards she had perfect self-possession and patience. She loved dialectics and could put her case logically, plausibly and eloquently; and, although quite as unemotional as her brothers, she had more enterprise and indignation. In her youth she was delicate, and what the French call tres personelle; and this prevented her going through the mill of rivalry and criticism which had been the daily bread of my girlhood.

She had the same penetrating sense of humour as her brother Raymond and quite as much presence of mind in retort. Her gift of expression was amazing and her memory unrivalled. My daughter Elizabeth and she were the only girls except myself that I ever met who were real politicians, not interested merely in the personal side—whether Mr. B. or C. spoke well or was likely to get promoted—but in the legislation and administration of Parliament; they followed and knew what was going on at home and abroad and enjoyed friendships with most of the young and famous men of the day. Violet Bonham Carter has, I think, a great political future in the country if not in the Commons. She is a natural speaker, easy, eloquent, witty, short and of imperturbable sang-froid.

Life in the House is neither healthy, useful nor appropriate for a woman; and the functions of a mother and a member of Parliament are not compatible. This was one of the reasons why my husband and I were against giving the franchise to women. Violet is a real mother and feels the problem acutely, but she is a real Liberal also and, with gifts as conspicuous as hers, she must inevitably exercise a wide-spread political influence. Her speeches in her father's election at Paisley, in February of this year, brought her before a general as well as intellectual audience from which she can never

retire; and, whenever she appears on a platform, the public shout from every part of the hall calling on her to speak.

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Raymond Asquith was born on the 6th of November, 1878, and was killed fighting against the Germans before his regiment had been in action ten minutes, on the 15th of September, 1916.

He was intellectually one of the most distinguished young men of his day and beautiful to look at, added to which he was light in hand, brilliant in answer and interested in affairs. When he went to Balliol he cultivated a kind of cynicism which was an endless source of delight to the young people around him; in a good-humoured way he made a butt of God and smiled at man. If he had been really keen about any one thing—law or literature—he would have made the world ring with his name, but he lacked temperament and a certain sort of imagination and was without ambition of any kind.

His education was started by a woman in a day-school at Hampstead; from there he took a Winchester scholarship and he became a scholar of Balliol. At Oxford he went from triumph to triumph. He took a first in classical moderations in 1899; first-class literae humaniores in 1901; first-class jurisprudence in 1902. He won the Craven, Ireland, Derby and Eldon scholarships. He was President of the Union and became a Fellow of All Souls in 1902; and after he left Oxford he was called to the Bar in 1904.

In spite of this record, a more modest fellow about his own achievements never lived.

Raymond was charming and good-tempered from his boyhood and I only remember him once in his life getting angry with me. He had been urged to go into politics by both his wife and his father and had been invited by the Liberal Association of a northern town to become their candidate. He was complaining about it one day to me, saying how dull, how stupid, how boring the average constituents of all electorates were; I told him I thought a closer contact with common people would turn out not only more interesting and delightful than he imagined, but that it would be the making of him. He flared up at once and made me appear infinitely ridiculous, but being on sure ground I listened with amusement and indifference; the discussion ended amicably, neither of us having deviated by a hair's breath from our original positions. He and I seldom got on each other's nerves, though two more different beings never lived. His arctic analysis of what he looked upon as "cant" always stirred his listeners to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

One day when he was at home for his holidays and we were all having tea together, to amuse the children I began asking riddles. I told them that I had only guessed one in my life, but it had taken me three days. They asked me what it was, and I said:

"What is it that God has never seen, that kings see seldom and that we see every day?"

Raymond instantly answered:

"A joke."

I felt that the real answer, which was “an equal,” was very tepid after this.

In 1907 he married, from 10 Downing Street, Katherine Horner, a beautiful creature of character and intellect, as lacking in fire and incense as himself. Their devotion to each other and happiness was a perpetual joy to me, as I felt that in some ways I had contributed to it. Katherine was the daughter of Laura’s greatest friend, Frances Horner, and he met her through me.

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Raymond found in both his mother-in-law and Sir John Horner friends capable of appreciating his fine flavour. He wrote with ease and brilliance both prose and poetry. I will quote two of his poems:

In praise of young girls

Attend, my Muse, and, if you can, approve
While I proclaim the “speeding up” of Love;
For Love and Commerce hold a common creed—
The scale of business varies with the speed;
For Queen of Beauty or for Sausage King
The Customer is always on the wing—
Then praise the nymph who regularly earns
Small profits (if you please) but quick returns.
Our modish Venus is a bustling minx,
But who can spare the time to woo a Sphinx?
When Mona Lisa posed with rustic guile
The stale enigma of her simple smile,
Her leisure lovers raised a pious cheer
While the slow mischief crept from ear to ear.
Poor listless Lombard, you would ne’er engage
The brisker beaux of our mercurial age
Whose lively mettle can as easy brook
An epic poem as a lingering look—
Our modern maiden smears the twig with lime
For twice as many hearts in half the time.
Long ere the circle of that staid grimace
Has wheeled your weary dimples into place,
Our little Chloe (mark the nimble fiend!)
Has raised a laugh against her bosom friend,
Melted a marquis, mollified a Jew,
Kissed every member of the Eton crew,
Ogled a Bishop, quizzed an aged peer,
Has danced a Tango and has dropped a tear.
Fresh from the schoolroom, pink and plump and pert,
Bedizened, bouncing, artful and alert,
No victim she of vapours and of moods
Though the sky falls she’s “ready with the goods”—
Will suit each client, tickle every taste
Polite or gothic, libertine or chaste,
Supply a waspish tongue, a waspish waist,
Astarte’s breast or Atalanta’s leg,
Love ready-made or glamour off the peg—
Do you prefer “a thing of dew and air”?

Or is your type Poppaea or Polaire?
The crystal casket of a maiden's dreams,
Or the last fancy in cosmetic creams?
The dark and tender or the fierce and bright,
Youth's rosy blush or Passion's pearly bite?
You hardly know perhaps; but Chloe knows,
And pours you out the necessary dose,
Meticulously measuring to scale,
The cup of Circe or the Holy Grail—
An actress she at home in every role,
Can flout or flatter, bully or cajole,
And on occasion by a stretch of art
Can even speak the language of the heart,
Can lisp and sigh and make confused replies,
With baby lips and complicated eyes,
Indifferently apt to weep or wink,
Primly pursue, provocatively shrink,
Brazen or bashful, as the

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case require,
Coax the faint baron, curb the bold esquire,
Deride restraint, but deprecate desire,
Unbridled yet unloving, loose but limp,
Voluptuary, virgin, prude and pimp.

Lines to A *young viscount*, *who died at Oxford*, *on the morrow of* A *Bump supper* (by the President of his College)

Dear Viscount, in whose ancient blood
The blueness of the bird of March,
The vermeil of the tufted larch,
Are fused in one magenta flood.

Dear Viscount—ah! to me how dear,
Who even in thy frolic mood
Discerned (or sometimes thought I could)
The pure proud purpose of a peer!

So on the last sad night of all
Erect among the reeling rout
You beat your tangled music out
Lofty, aloof, viscontial.

You struck a bootbath with a can,
And with the can you struck the bath,
There on the yellow gravel path,
As gentleman to gentleman.

We met, we stood, we faced, we talked
While those of baser birth withdrew;
I told you of an Earl I knew;
You said you thought the wine was corked;

And so we parted—on my lips
A light farewell, but in my soul
The image of a perfect whole,
A Viscount to the finger tips—

An image—Yes; but thou art gone;
For nature red in tooth and claw

Subsumes under an equal law
Viscount and Iguanodon.

Yet we who know the Larger Love,
Which separates the sheep and goats
And segregates Scolecobrots, [1]
Believing where we cannot prove,

Deem that in His mysterious Day
God puts the Peers upon His right,
And hides the poor in endless night,
For thou, my Lord, art more than they.

[Footnote 1: A word from the Greek Testament meaning people who are eaten by worms.]

It is a commonplace to say after a man is dead that he could have done anything he liked in life: it is nearly always exaggerated; but of Raymond Asquith the phrase would have been true.

His oldest friend was Harold Baker,[Footnote: The Rt. Hon. Harold Baker.] a man whose academic career was as fine as his own and whose changeless affection and intimacy we have long valued; but Raymond had many friends as well as admirers. His death was the first great sorrow in my stepchildren's lives and an anguish to his father and me. The news of it came as a terrible shock to every one. My husband's natural pride and interest in him had always been intense and we were never tired of discussing him when we were alone: his personal charm and wit, his little faults and above all the success which so certainly awaited him. Henry's grief darkened the waters in Downing Street at a time when, had they been clear, certain events could never have taken place.

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When Raymond was dying on the battle-field he gave the doctor his flask to give to his father; it was placed by the side of his bed and never moved till we left Whitehall.

I had not realised before how powerless a step-wife is when her husband is mourning the death of his child; and not for the first time I profoundly wished that Raymond had been my son.

Among the many letters we received, this one from Sir Edward Grey, the present Lord Grey of Fallodon, gave my husband the most comfort:

33 *Eccleston square*, S.W. Sept. 18, 1916.

My dear Asquith,

A generation has passed since Raymond's mother died and the years that have gone make me feel for and with you even more than I would then. Raymond has had a brilliant and unblemished life; he chose with courage the heroic part in this war and he has died as a hero.

If this life be all, it matters not whether its years be few or many, but if it be not all, then Raymond's life is part of something that is not made less by his death, but is made greater and ennobled by the quality and merit of his life and death.

I would fain believe that those who die do not suffer in the separation from those they love here; that time is not to them what it is to us, and that to them the years of separation be they few or many will be but as yesterday.

If so then only for us, who are left here, is the pain of suffering and the weariness of waiting and enduring; the one beloved is spared that. There is some comfort in thinking that it is we, not the loved one, that have the harder part.

I grieve especially for Raymond's wife, whose suffering I fear must be what is unbearable. I hope the knowledge of how the feelings of your friends and the whole nation, and not of this nation only, for you is quickened and goes out to you will help you to continue the public work, which is now more than ever necessary, and will give you strength. Your courage I know never fails.

Yours affectionately,

Edward grey.

Raymond Asquith was the bravest of the brave, nor did he ever complain of anything that fell to his lot while he was soldiering.

It might have been written of him:

He died
As one that had been studied in his death
To throw away the dearest thing he own'd.
As 'twere a careless trifle.
—MACBETH, Act I., sc. iv.

Our second son, Herbert, began his career as a lawyer. He had a sweet and gentle nature and much originality. He was a poet and wrote the following some years before the Great War of 1914, through which he served from the first day to the last:

THE VOLUNTEER

[Footnote: Reprinted from The Volunteer and other Poems, by kind permission of Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson.]

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Here lies a clerk who half his life had spent
Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,
Thinking that so his days would drift away
With no lance broken in life's tournament;
Yet ever 'twixt the book and his bright eyes
The gleaming eagles of the legions came,
And horsemen, charging under phantom skies,
Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied,
From twilight to the halls of dawn he went;
His lance is broken—but he lies content
With that high hour, he wants no recompense,
Who found his battle in the last resort,
Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence,
Who goes to join the men at Agincourt.

He wrote this when he was in Flanders in the war:

The fallen spire (A Flemish Village)

[Footnote: Reprinted from The Volunteer and other Poems, by kind permission of Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson.]

That spire is gone that slept for centuries,
  Mirrored among the lilies, calm and low;
And now the water holds but empty skies
  Through which the rivers of the thunder flow.

The church lies broken near the fallen spire,
  For here, among these old and human things,
Death sweeps along the street with feet of fire,
  And goes upon his way with moaning wings.

On pavements by the kneeling herdsmen worn
  The drifting fleeces of the shells are rolled;
Above the Saints a village Christ forlorn,
  Wounded again, looks down upon His fold.

And silence follows fast: no evening peace,
  But leaden stillness, when the thunder wanes,
Haunting the slender branches of the trees,
  And settling low upon the listless plains.

“Beb,” as we called him, married Lady Cynthia Charteris, a lovely niece of Lady de Vesci and daughter of another beloved and interesting friend of mine, the present Countess of Wemyss.

Our third son, Arthur Asquith, was one of the great soldiers of the war. He married Betty, the daughter of my greatest friend, Lady Manners, a woman who has never failed me in affection and loyalty.

Arthur Asquith joined the Royal Naval Division on its formation in September, 1914, and was attached at first to the “Anson,” and during the greater part of his service to the “Hood” Battalion. In the early days of October, 1914, he took part in the operations at Antwerp and, after further training at home in the camp at Blandford, went in February, 1915, with his battalion to the Dardanelles, where they formed part of the Second Naval Brigade. He was in all the fighting on the Gallipoli peninsula and was wounded, but returned to duty and was one of the last to embark on the final evacuation of Helles, in January, 1916.

In the following May the Naval Division joined the army in France, becoming the 63rd Division, and the “Hood” Battalion (now commanded by Commander Freyberg, V. C.) formed part of the 189th Brigade.

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In the Battle of the Ancre (February, 1917) Arthur Asquith was severely wounded and was awarded the D.S.O.

In the following April, Commander Freyberg having been promoted to be a Brigadier, Arthur Asquith took over the command of the “Hood” Battalion and played a leading part in the operations against Gavrelle, taking the mayor’s house (which was the key to the position) by assault and capturing the German garrison. It was largely due to him that Gavrelle was taken; and he was awarded a bar to his D.S.O.

In October, 1917, in the Battle of Passchendaele the Naval Division were heavily engaged. The following account of what happened near Poelcappelle (October 26th) is taken from the “History of the Royal Naval Division,” by Sub-Lieutenants Fry and McMillan:

On account of the serious losses in officers, the four battalions were getting out of hand when Commander Asquith, like the born fighter that he is, came forward and saved the situation. He placed his battalion in the most advantageous positions to meet any counter-attacks that might develop. That done, in spite of heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, he passed from end to end of the line we were holding and superintended the consolidation of our gains. In addition, he established liaison with the Canadians on our right, and thus closed a breach which might have caused us infinite trouble and been the source of our undoing.

Arthur Asquith was recommended for the V.C. (he, in fact, received a second bar to his D.S.O.); and these are the terms of the official recommendation:

Near Poelcappelle, during the operations of October 26th-27th, 1917, Commander Asquith displayed the greatest bravery, initiative and splendid leadership, and by his reconnaissance of the front line made under heavy fire, contributed much valuable information which made the successful continuance of the operations possible. During the morning of the 26th, when no news was forthcoming of the position of the attacking troops, Commander Asquith went forward, through heavy fire, round the front positions, and heedless of personal danger, found out our dispositions, got into touch with the troops on the right, and returned after some hours with most valuable information. On the night of the same day, he went forward alone in bright moonlight and explored the ground in the vicinity of Varlet Farm, where the situation was not clear. He was observed by the enemy, but, in spite of heavy rifle and machine-gun fire directed at him, and the fact that the going was necessarily slow, owing to the awful state of the ground, he approached Varlet Farm then reported to be in the hands of the enemy. Entering a concrete building alone he found it occupied by a small British garrison, who were exhausted and almost without ammunition and the most of them wounded. After investigating the ground thoroughly he returned and led up three platoons of a company of this battalion and relieved the garrison. He superintended the

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disposal of the troops, putting one platoon in the building as garrison and placing the other two platoons on each flank. A very important position was therefore kept entirely in our hands, owing to magnificent bravery, leadership and utter disregard of his own personal safety. This example of bravery and cool courage displayed throughout the operations by Commander Asquith encouraged the men to greater efforts, and kept up their moral. His valuable reconnaissance, the manner in which he led his men and his determination to hold the ground gained, contributed very largely to the success of the operations.

On December 16th, 1917, he was appointed Brigadier to command the 189th Brigade; and a few days later, in reconnoitring the position, he was again severely wounded. His leg had to be amputated and he was disabled from further active service in the war. I never saw Arthur Asquith lose his temper or think of himself in my life.

. . . . . .

I look around to see what child of which friend is left to become the wife of my son Anthony; and I wonder whether she will be as virtuous, loving and good-looking as my other daughters-in-law.

We were all wonderfully happy together, but, looking back, I think I was far from clever with my stepchildren; they grew up good and successful independently of me.

In consequence of our unpopularity in Peebles-shire, I had no opportunity of meeting other young people in their homes; and I knew no family except my own. The wealth of art and music, the luxury of flowers and colour, the stretches of wild country both in Scotland and high Leicestershire, which had made up my life till I married, had not qualified me to understand children reared in different circumstances. I would not perhaps have noticed many trifles in my step-family, had I not been so much made of, so overloved, caressed and independent before my marriage.

Every gardener prunes the roots of a tree before it is transplanted, but no one had ever pruned me. If you have been sunned through and through like an apricot on a wall from your earliest days, you are over-sensitive to any withdrawal of heat. This had been clearly foreseen by my friends and they were genuinely anxious about the happiness and future of my stepchildren. I do not know which of us had been considered the boldest in our marriage, my husband or myself; and no doubt step-relationships should not be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, but reverently, discreetly, and soberly. In every one of the letters congratulating me there had been a note of warning.

Mr. Gladstone wrote:

May 5*th*, 1894.

You have a great and noble work to perform. It is a work far beyond human strength. May the strength which is more than human be abundantly granted you.

Ever yours, W. E. G.

I remember, on receiving this, saying to my beloved friend, Con Manners:

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“Gladstone thinks my fitness to be Henry’s wife should be prayed for like the clergy: ’Almighty and Everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels . ...’”

John Morley wrote:

95 *Elm park gardens*, *South Kensington*, S.W. *March* 7,1894. *My dear miss Margot*,

Now that the whirl of congratulations must be ceasing, here are mine, the latest but not the least warm of them all. You are going to marry one of the finest men in all the world, with a great store of sterling gifts both of head and heart, and with a life before him of the highest interest, importance and power. Such a man is a companion that any woman might envy you. I daresay you know this without my telling you. On the other part, I will not add myself to those impertinents who—as I understand you to report—-wish you “to improve.” I very respectfully wish nothing of the sort. Few qualities are better worth leaving as they are than vivacity, wit, freshness of mind, gaiety and pluck. Pray keep them all. Don’t improve by an atom.

Circumstances may have a lesson or two to teach you, but ’tis only the dull who don’t learn, and I have no fear but that such a pair have happy years in front of them.

You ask for my blessing and you have it. Be sure that I wish you as unclouded a life as can be the lot of woman, and I hope you will always let me count myself your friend. I possess some aphorisms on the married state—but they will keep. I only let them out as occasion comes. Always yours sincerely, *John Morley*.

Looking back now on the first years of my marriage, I cannot exaggerate the gratitude which I feel for the tolerance, patience and loyalty that my stepchildren extended to a stranger; for, although I introduced an enormous amount of fun, beauty and movement into their lives, I could not replace what they had lost.

Henry’s first wife, Helen Asquith, was an exceptionally pretty, refined woman; never dull, never artificial, and of single-minded goodness; she was a wonderful wife and a devoted mother, but was without illusions and even less adventurous than her children. She told me in one of our talks how much she regretted that her husband had taken silk and was in the House of Commons, at which I said in a glow of surprise:

“But surely, Mrs. Asquith, you are ambitious for your husband! Why, he’s a *wonderful* man!”

This conversation took place in Grosvenor Square the second time that we met, when she brought her little girl to see me. Violet was aged four and a self-possessed, plump, clever little creature, with lovely hair hanging in Victorian ringlets down her back.

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The children were not like Helen Asquith in appearance, except Raymond, who had her beautiful eyes and brow; but, just as they had none of their father's emotion and some of his intellect, they all inherited their mother's temperament, with the exception of Violet, who was more susceptible to the new environment than her brothers. The greatest compliment that was ever paid to my appearance—and one that helped me most when I felt discouraged in my early married life—was what Helen Asquith said to my husband and he repeated to me: "There is something a little noble about Margot Tennant's expression."

If my stepchildren were patient with me, I dare not say what their father was: there are some reservations the boldest biographer has a right to claim; and I shall only write of my husband's character—his loyalty, lack of vanity, freedom from self, warmth and width of sympathy—in connection with politics and not with myself; but since I have touched on this subject I will give one illustration of his nature.

When the full meaning of the disreputable General Election of 1918, with its promises and pretensions and all its silly and false cries, was burnt into me at Paisley in this year of 1920 by our Coalition opponent re-repeating them, I said to Henry:

"Oh, if I had only quietly dropped all my friends of German name when the war broke out and never gone to say good-bye to those poor Lichnowskys, these ridiculous lies propagated entirely for political purposes would never have been told; and this criminal pro-German stunt could not have been started."

To which he replied:

"God forbid! I would rather ten thousand times be out of public life for ever."

CHAPTER VII

Visit to woman's prison—interview there with Mrs. Maybrick—scene in A LIFER'S *cell*; *the husband who never knew thought wife made money sewing*—MARGOT'S *plea that failed*

My husband was Home Secretary when we married, and took a serious interest in our prison system, which he found far from satisfactory. He thought that it would be a good thing, before we were known by sight, to pay a surprise visit to the convict— prisons and that, if I could see the women convicts and he could see the men privately, he would be able to examine the conditions under which they served their sentences better than if we were to go officially.

I was expecting my baby in about three months when we made this expedition.

Wormwood Scrubs was the promising, almost Dickens-like name of one of our convict-prisons and, at that time, took in both men and women.

The governor scrutinised Henry's fine writing on our permits; he received us dryly, but without suspicion; and we divided off, having settled to meet at the front door after an hour and a half's inspection.

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The matron who accompanied me was a powerful, intelligent-looking woman of hard countenance and short speech. I put a few stupid questions to her about the prison: how many convicts they had, if the food was good, *etc*.

She asked me if I would care to see Mrs. Maybrick, an American criminal, who had been charged with murder, but sentenced for manslaughter. This woman had poisoned her husband with mild insistence by arsenic, but, as he was taking this for his health at the time of his death, the evidence was conflicting as to where he stopped and she began. She had the reputation of being a lady and beautiful; and petitions for her reprieve were sent to us signed by every kind of person from the United States. I told the matron I would see her and was shown into her cell, where I found her sitting on a stool against a bleak desk, at which she was reading. I noted her fine eyes and common mouth and, apologising, said:

"I hope you will not mind a stranger coming to enquire how you are getting on," adding, "Have you any complaints to make of the prison?"

The matron had left me and, the doors being thick, I felt pretty sure she could not hear what we were saying.

Mrs. *Maybrick* (*shrugging her shoulders*): "The butter here is abominable and we are only given two books—*the pilgrim's progress* and the Bible—and what do you say to our looking-glasses?" (*Pointing to* A *little glass*, *four Inches big*, *in* A *deep thick frame hanging on* A *peg*). "Do you know why it is so small?"

Margot: "No."

Mrs. *Maybrick*: "Because the women who want to kill themselves can't get their heels in to break the glass; if they could they would cut their throats. The men don't have looking-glasses at all."

Margot: "Do you think they would like to have them?"

Mrs. *Maybrick* (*shrugging her shoulders again and fingering her blue cotton blouse*): "I don't suppose they care! I'm sure no one could wish to see themselves with cropped hair and in these hideous clothes."

Margot: "I think that I could get you every kind of book, if you like reading, and will tell me what you want."

Mrs. *Maybrick* (with a sudden laugh and looking at me with a contemptuous expression which made my heart ache): "Oh, no, you couldn't! Never mind me! But you might tell them about the butter."

I did not find Mrs. Maybrick sympathique and shortly after this rejoined the matron. It was the first time I had seen a prison and my heart and mind were moved as we went from cell to cell nodding to the grey occupants.

“Have you any very bad cases?” I asked. “I mean any woman who is difficult and unhappy?”

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Matron: "Yes, there is one woman here who has been sitting on the floor for the last three days and, except a little water, I don't think she has swallowed a mouthful of food since she came in. She is a violent person and uses foul language. I do not think you had better see her."

Margot: "Thank you, I am not at all afraid. Please take me to her cell."

Matron (still reluctant and eyeing my figure): "She may not speak to you, but if she does it might give you a shock. Do you think you are wise to go in your present condition?"

Margot: "Oh, that's all right, thanks! I am not easily shocked."

When we came to the cell, I took the precaution of telling the matron she could leave me, as after this visit I should have to join my husband and I could find my way to the front hall by myself. She opened the door in silence and let me in.

Crouching on the stone floor, in an animal attitude, I saw a woman. She did not look up when I went in nor turn when I shut the door. Her eyebrows almost joined above a square-tipped nose; and her eyes, shaded by long black lashes, were fixed upon the ground. Her hair grew well, out of a beautiful forehead, and the red curve of her mouth gave expression to a wax-like face. I had never seen a more striking-looking creature.

After my usual apology and a gentle recitative of why I had come, she turned what little I could see of her face away from me and whatever I suggested after that was greeted with impenetrable silence.

At last I said to her:

"It is so difficult for me to stand and talk while you are sitting on the ground. Won't you get up?"

No answer. At this—being an active woman—I sat down beside her on the stone floor and took her hand in both of mine. She did not withdraw it, but lifted her lashes to look at me. I noted the sullen, exhausted expression in her grey eyes; my heart beat at the beauty of her face.

"Why don't you speak to me?" I said. "I might, for all you know, be able to do a great deal for you."

This was greeted by a faint gleam and a prolonged shake of the head.

Margot: "You look very young. What is it you did, that brought you into this prison,"

My question seemed to surprise her and after a moment's silence she said:

"Don't you know why I am sentenced?"

Margot: "No; and you need not tell me if you don't want to. How long are you here for?"

The woman (in a penetrating voice): "Life!"

Margot: "That's impossible; no one is punished for life unless they commit murder; and even then the sentence is always shortened."

The woman: "Shortened in time for what? For your death and burial? Perhaps you don't know how kind they are to us here! No one is allowed to die in prison! But by the time your health is gone, your hair white and your friends are dead, your family do not need you and all that can be done for you is done by charity. You die and your eyes are closed by your landlady."

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Margot: "Tell me what you did."

The woman: "Only what all you fashionable women do every day ..."

Margot: "What?"

The woman: "I helped those who were in trouble to get rid of their babies."

Margot: "Did you take money for it?"

The woman: "Sometimes I did it for nothing."

Margot: "What sort of women did you help?"

The woman: "Oh, quite poor women!"

Margot: "When you charged them, how much money did you ask for?"

The woman: "Four or five pounds and often less."

Margot: "Was your husband a respectable man and did he know anything about it?"

The woman: "My husband was highly respected. He was a stone-mason, and well to do, and knew nothing at all till I was arrested. ... He thought I made money sewing."

Margot: "Poor man, how tragic!"

After this rather stupid ejaculation of mine, she relapsed into a frozen silence and I got up off the ground and asked her if she liked books. No answer. If the food was good? No answer. If her bed was clean and comfortable? But all my questions were in vain. At last she broke the silence by saying:

"You said just now that you might be able to help me. There is only one thing in the world that I want, and you could not help to get it . ... No one can help me ..."

Margot: "Tell me what you want. How can I or any one else help you while you sit on the ground, neither speaking nor eating? Get up and I will listen to you; otherwise I shall go away."

After this she got up stiffly and lifted her arms in a stretch above her head, showing the outline of her fine bust. I said to her:

"I would like to help you."

The woman: "I want to see one person and only one. I think of nothing else and wonder night and day how it could be managed."

Margot: "Tell me who it is, this one person, that you think of and want so much to see."

The woman: "I want to see Mrs. Asquith."

Margot (dumb with surprise): "Why?"

The woman: "Because she is only just married and will never again have as much influence over her husband as she has now; and I am told she is kind ..."

Margot (moving towards her): "I am Mrs. Asquith."

At this the woman gave a sort of howl and, shivering, with her teeth set, flung herself at my feet and clasped my ankles with an iron clutch. I should have fallen, but, loosening her hold with great rapidity, she stood up and, facing me, held me by my shoulders. The door opened and the matron appeared, at which the woman sprang at her with a tornado of oaths, using strange words that I had never heard before. I tried to silence her, but in vain, so I told the matron that she might go and find out if my husband was ready for me. She did not move and seemed put out by my request.

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“I really think,” she said, “that you are extremely foolish risking anything with this woman.’

The woman (in a penetrating voice): “You clear out and go to hell with you! This person is a Christian, and you are not! You are a— ——!”

I put my hand over her mouth and said I would leave her for ever if she did not stop swearing. She sat down. I turned to the matron and said:

“You need not fear for me, thank you; we prefer being left alone.”

When the matron had shut the door, the woman sprang up and, hanging it with her back, remained with arms akimbo and her legs apart, looking at me in defiance. I thought to myself, as I watched her resolute face and strong, young figure, that, if she wanted to prevent me getting out of that room alive, she could easily do so.

The woman: “You heard what I said, that you would never have as much influence with your husband as you have now, so just listen. He’s all-powerful and, if he looks into my case, he will see that I am innocent and ought to be let out. The last Home Secretary was not married and never took any interest in us poor women.”

Hearing the matron tapping at the door and feeling rather anxious to get out, I said:

“I give you my word of honour that I will make my husband read up all your case. The matron will give me your name and details, but I must go now.”

The woman (with a sinister look): “Oh, no, you don’t! You stay here till I give you the details: what does a woman like that care for a woman like me?” (throwing her thumb over her shoulder towards the matron behind the door). “What does she know about life?”

Margot: “You must let me open the door and get a pencil and paper.”

The woman: “The old lady will do it for you while I give you the details of my case. You have only got to give her your orders. Does she know who you are?”

Margot: “No; and you must not tell her, please. If you will trust me with your secret, I will trust you with mine; but you must let me out first if I am to help you.”

With a lofty wave of my hand, but without taking one step forward, I made her move away from the door, which I opened with a feeling of relief. The matron was in the passage and, while she was fetching a pencil, the woman, standing in the doorway of her cell, told me in lowered tones how cruelly unlucky she had been in life; what worthless, careless girls had passed through her hands; and how they had died from no fault of hers, but through their own ignorance. She ended by saying:

“There is no gratitude in this world ...”

When the matron came back, she was much shocked at seeing me kiss the convict.

I said, “Good-bye,” and never saw her again.

My husband looked carefully into her case, but found that she was a professional abortionist of the most hopeless type.

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CHAPTER VIII

MARGOT'S *first baby and its loss—dangerous illness—letter from Queen Victoria—sir William Harcourt's* PLEASANTRIES—*Asquith ministry falls—visit from duchess* D'AOSTA

Sir John Williams [Footnote: Sir John Williams, of Aberystwyth, Wales.] was my doctor and would have been a remarkable man in any country, but in Wales he was unique. He was a man of heart without hysteria and both loyal and truthful.

On the 18th of May, 1895, my sisters Charlotte and Lucy were sitting with me in my bedroom. I will quote from my diary the account of my first confinement and how I got to know him:

"I began to feel ill. My Gamp, an angular-faced, admirable old woman called Jerusha Taylor—'out of the Book of Kings'—was bustling about preparing for the doctor. Henry was holding my hands and I was sobbing in an arm-chair, feeling the panic of pain and fear which no one can realise who has not had a baby.

"When Williams arrived, I felt as if salvation must be near; my whole soul and every beat of my heart went out in dumb appeal to him, and his tenderness on that occasion bred in me a love and gratitude which never faded, but was intensified by all I saw of him afterwards. He seemed to think a narcotic would calm my nerves, but the sleeping-draught might have been water for all the effect it had upon me, so he gave me chloroform. The room grew dark; grey poppies appeared to be nodding at me—and I gasped:

"'Oh, doctor, *dear* doctor, stay with me to-night, just *this* one night, and I will stay with you whenever you like!'

"But Williams was too anxious, my nurse told me, to hear a word I said.

"At four o'clock in the morning, Henry went to fetch the anaesthetist and in his absence Williams took me out of chloroform. Then I seemed to have a glimpse of a different world: if *pain* is evil, then it was *hell*; if not, I expect I got nearer Heaven than I have ever been before . ...

"I saw Dr. Bailey at the foot of the bed, with a bag in his hand, and Charty's outline against the lamp; then my head was placed on the pillow and a black thing came between me and the light and closed over my mouth, a slight beating of carpets sounded in my brain and I knew no more . ...

"When I came to consciousness about twelve the next morning, I saw Charty looking at me and I said to her in a strange voice:

"'I can't have any more pain, it's no use.'

"*Charty*: 'No, no, darling, you won't have any more.' (*Silence*.)

"*Margot*: 'But you don't mean it's all over?'

"*Charty* (soothingly): 'Go to sleep, dearest.'

"I was so dazed by chloroform that I could hardly speak. Later on the nurse told me that the doctor had had to sacrifice my baby and that I ought to be grateful for being spared, as I had had a very dangerous confinement.

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“When Sir John Williams came to see me, he looked white and tired and, finding my temperature was normal, he said fervently:

“‘Thank you, Mrs. Asquith.’

“I was too weak and uncomfortable to realise all that had happened; and what I suffered from the smallest noise I can hardly describe. I would watch nurse slowly approaching and burst into a perspiration when her cotton dress crinkled against the chintz of my bed. I shivered with fear when the blinds were drawn up or the shutters unfastened; and any one moving up or down stairs, placing a tumbler on the marble wash-hand-stand or reading a newspaper would bring tears into my eyes.”

In connection with what I have quoted out of my diary here it is not inappropriate to add that I lost my babies in three out of my five confinements. These poignant and secret griefs have no place on the high-road of life; but, just as Henry and I will stand sometimes side by side near those little graves unseen by strangers, so he and I in unobserved moments will touch with one heart an unforgotten sorrow.

Out of the many letters which I received, this from our intimate and affectionate friend, Lord Haldane, was the one I liked best:

My dear friend,

I cannot easily tell you how much touched I was in the few minutes I spent talking to you this afternoon, by what I saw and what you told me. I left with the sense of witnessing triumph in failure and life come through death. The strength that is given at such times arises not from ignoring loss, or persuading oneself that the thing is not that *is*; but from the resolute setting of the face to the East and the taking of one step onwards. It is the quality we touch—it may be but for a moment—not the quantity we have, that counts. “All I could never be, all that was lost in me is yet there—in His hand who planned the perfect whole.” That was what Browning saw vividly when he wrote his Rabbi Ben Ezra. You have lost a great joy. But in the deepening and strengthening the love you two have for each other you have gained what is rarer and better; it is well worth the pain and grief—the grief you have borne in common—and you will rise stronger and freer.

We all of us are parting from youth, and the horizon is narrowing, but I do not feel any loss that is not compensated by gain, and I do not think that you do either. Anything that detaches one, that makes one turn from the past and look simply at what one has to do, brings with it new strength and new intensity of interest. I have no fear for you when I see what is absolutely and unmistakably good and noble obliterating every other thought as I saw it this afternoon. I went away with strengthened faith in what human nature was capable of.

May all that is highest and best lie before you both.

Your affec. friend,

R. B. *Haldane*.

I was gradually recovering my health when on May the 21st, 1895, after an agonising night, Sir John Williams and Henry came into my bedroom between five and six in the morning and I was told that I should have to lie on my back till August, as I was suffering from phlebitis; but I was too unhappy and disappointed to mind. It was then that my doctor, Sir John Williams, became my friend as well as my nurse, and his nobility of character made him a powerful influence in my life.

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To return to my diary:

“Queen Victoria took a great interest in my confinement, and wrote Henry a charming letter. She sent messengers constantly to ask after me and I answered her myself once, in pencil, when Henry was at the Home Office.

“I was convalescing one day, lying as usual on my bed, my mind a blank, when Sir William Harcourt’s card was sent up to me and my door was darkened by his huge form.

I had seen most of my political and other friends while I was convalescing: Mr. Gladstone, Lord Haldane, Mr. Birrell, Lord Spencer, Lord Rosebery, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Morley, Arthur Balfour, Sir Alfred Lyall and Admiral Maxse; and I was delighted to see Sir William Harcourt. When he came into my room, he observed my hunting-crops hanging on the wall from a rack, and said:

“I am glad to see those whips! Asquith will be able to beat you if you play fast and loose with him. That little tight mouth of his convinces me he has the capacity to do it.

“After my nurse had left the room, he expressed surprise that I should have an ugly woman near me, however good she might be, and told me that his son, Bobby, had been in love with his nurse and wrote to her for several years. He added, in his best Hanoverian vein:

“’I encourage my boys all I can in this line; it promises well for their future.’”

“After some talk, Mr. John Morley’s card was brought up and, seeing Sir William look rather subdued, I told the servant to ask him to wait in my boudoir for a few minutes and assured my guest that I was in no hurry for him to go; but Harcourt began to fidget about and after a little he insisted on John Morley coming up. We had a good talk a trots, starting by abusing men who minded other people’s opinion or what the newspapers said of them. Knowing, as I did, that both of them were highly sensitive to the Press, I encouraged the conversation.

“*John Morley*: ’I can only say I agree with what Joe once said to me, “I would rather the newspapers were for than against me."’

“*Sir William*: ’My dear chap, you would surely not rather have the *daily chronicle* on your side. Why, bless my soul, our party has had more harm done it through the *daily chronicle* than anything else!’

“*Margot*: Do you think so? I think its screams, though pitched a little high, are effective!’

“*John Morley*: ’Oh, you like Massingham, of course, because your husband is one of his heroes.’

"*Sir William*: 'Well, all I can say is he always abuses me and I am glad of it.'

"*John Morley*: 'He abuses me, too, though not, perhaps, quite so often as you!'

"*Margot*: 'I would like him to praise me. I think his descriptions of the House of Commons debates are not only true and brilliant but fine literature; there is both style and edge in his writing and I rather like that bitter-almond flavour! How strangely the paper changed over to Lord Rosebery, didn't it?'

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“Feeling this was ticklish ground, as Harcourt thought that he and not Rosebery should have been Prime Minister, I turned the talk on to Goschen.

“*Sir William*: ’It is sad to see the way Goschen has lost his hold in the country; he has not been at all well treated by his colleagues.’

“This seemed to me to be also rather risky, so I said boldly that I thought Goschen had done wonders in the House and country, considering he had a poor voice and was naturally cautious. I told them I loved him personally and that Jowett at whose house I first met him shared my feeling in valuing his friendship. After this he took his departure, promising to bring me roses from Malwood.

“John Morley—the most fastidious and fascinating of men—stayed on with me and suggested quite seriously that, when we went out of office (which might happen any day), he and I should write a novel together. He said that, if I would write the plot and do the female characters, he would manage the men and politics.

I asked if he wanted the old Wilkie Collins idea of a plot with a hundred threads drawn into one woof, or did he prefer modern nothingness, a shred of a story attached to unending analysis and the infinitely little commented upon with elaborate and pretentious humour. He scorned the latter.

I asked him if he did not want to go permanently away from politics to literature and discussed all his wonderful books and writings. I chaffed him about the way he had spoken of me before our marriage, in spite of the charming letter he had written, how it had been repeated to me that he had said my light-hearted indiscretions would ruin Henry’s career; and I asked him what I had done since to merit his renewed confidence.

“He did not deny having criticised me, for although ‘Honest John’ —the name by which he went among the Radicals—was singularly ill-chosen, I never heard of Morley telling a lie. He was quite impenitent and I admired his courage.

“After an engrossing conversation, every moment of which I loved, he said good-bye to me and I leant back against the pillow and gazed at the pattern on the wall.

“Henry came into my room shortly after this and told me the Government had been beaten by seven in a vote of censure passed on Campbell-Bannerman in Supply, in connection with small arms ammunition. I looked at him wonderingly and said:

“‘Are you sad, darling, that we are out?’

“To which he replied:

“’Only for one reason. I wish I had completed my prison reforms. I have, however, appointed the best committee ever seen, who will go on with my work. Ruggles-Brise, the head of it, is a splendid little fellow!’

“At that moment he received a note to say he was wanted in the House of Commons immediately, as Lord Rosebery had been sent for by the Queen. This excited us much and, before he could finish telling me what had happened, he went straight down to Westminster . ... John Morley had missed this fateful division, as he was sitting with me, and Harcourt had only just arrived at the House in time to vote.

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“Henry returned at 1 a.m. and came to say good night to me: he generally said his prayers by my bedside. He told me that St. John Brodrick’s motion to reduce C. B.’s salary by L100 had turned the Government out; that Rosebery had resigned and gone straight down to Windsor; that Campbell-Bannerman was indignant and hurt; that few of our men were in the House; and that Akers Douglas, the Tory Whip, could not believe his eyes when he handed the figures to Tom Ellis, our chief Whip, who returned them to him in silence.

“The next morning St. John Brodrick came to see me, full of excitement and sympathy. He was anxious to know if we minded his being instrumental in our downfall; but I am so fond of him that, of course, I told him that I did not mind, as a week sooner or later makes no difference and St. John’s division was only one out of many indications in the House and the country that our time was up. Henry came back from the Cabinet in the middle of our talk and shook his fist in fun at ‘our enemy.’ He was tired, but good-humoured as ever.

“At 3:30 Princess Helene d’Orleans came to see me and told me of her engagement to the Due d’Aosta. She looked tall, black and distinguished. She spoke of Prince Eddy to me with great frankness. I told her I had sometimes wondered at her devotion to one less clever than herself. At this her eyes filled with tears and she explained to me how much she had been in love and the sweetness and nobility of his character. I had reason to know the truth of what she said when one day Queen Alexandra, after talking to me in moving terms of her dead son, wrote in my Prayer Book:

“Man looketh upon the countenance, but God upon the heart.

“Helene adores the Princess of Wales [Footnote: Queen Alexandra.] but not the Prince! [Footnote: King Edward VII.] and says the latter’s rudeness to her brother, the Duc d’Orleans, is terrible. I said nothing, as I am devoted to the Prince and think her brother deserves any ill-treatment he gets. I asked her if she was afraid of the future: a new country and the prospect of babies, *etc*. She answered that d’Aosta was so genuinely devoted that it would make everything easy for her.

“‘What would you do if he were unfaithful to you?’ I asked.

“*Princess Helene*: ’Oh! I told Emanuel. ... I said, “You see? I leave you ... If you are not true to me, I instantly leave you,” and I should do so at once.’

“She begged me never to forget her, but always to pray for her.

“‘I love you,’ she said, ‘as every one else does’; and with a warm embrace she left the room.

“She came of a handsome family: Blowitz’s famous description,’de loin on dirait un Prussien, de pres un imbecile,’ was made of a near relation of the Duchesse d’Aosta.”

With the fall of the Government my diary of that year ceases to have the smallest interest.

CHAPTER IX

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Margot in 1906 *sums up her life*; A *lot of love-making*, A *little fame and more abuse*—A *real man and great happiness*

I will finish with a character-sketch of myself copied out of my diary, written nine weeks before the birth of my fifth and last baby in 1906, and like everything else that I have quoted never intended for the public eye:

“I am not pretty, and I do not know anything about my expression, although I observe it is this that is particularly dwelt upon if one is sufficiently plain; but I hope, when you feel as kindly towards your fellow-creatures as I do, that some of that warmth may modify an otherwise bright and rather knifey *contour*.

“My figure has remained as it was: slight, well-balanced and active. Being socially courageous and not at all shy, I think I can come into a room as well as many people of more appearance and prestige. I do not propose to treat myself like Mr. Bernard Shaw in this account. I shall neither excuse myself from praise, nor shield myself from blame, but put down the figures as accurately as I can and leave others to add them up.

“I think I have imagination, born not of fancy, but of feeling; a conception of the beautiful, not merely in poetry, music, art and nature, but in human beings. I have insight into human nature, derived not only from a courageous experience, but also from imagination; and I have a clear though distant vision, down dark, long and often divergent avenues, of the ordered meaning of God. I take this opportunity of saying my religion is a vibrating reality never away from me; and this is all I shall write upon the subject.

“It is difficult to describe what one means by imagination, but I think it is more than inventiveness, or fancy. I remember discussing the question with John Addington Symonds and, to give him a hasty illustration of what I meant, I said I thought naming a Highland regiment ‘The Black Watch’ showed a *high* degree of imagination. He was pleased with this; and as a personal testimonial I may add that both he and Jowett told me that no one could be as good a judge of character as I was who was without imagination. In an early love-letter to me, Henry wrote:

“Imaginative insight you have more than any one I have ever met!

“I think I am deficient in one form of imagination; and Henry will agree with this. I have a great longing to help those I love: this leads me to intrepid personal criticism; and I do not always know what hurts my friends’ feelings. I do not think I should mind anything that I have said to others being said to me, but one never can tell; I have a good, sound digestion and personally prefer knowing the truth; I have taken adverse criticism pretty well all my life and had a lot of it; but by some gap I have not succeeded in making my friends take it well.

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I am not vain or touchy; it takes a lot to offend me; but when I am hurt the scar remains. I feel differently about people who have hurt me; my confidence has been shaken; I hope I am not ungenerous, but I fear I am not really forgiving. Worldly people say that explanations are a mistake; but having it out is the only chance any one can ever have of retaining my love; and those who have neither the courage, candour nor humbleness to say they are wrong are not worth loving. I am not afraid of suffering too much in life, but much more afraid of feeling too little; and quarrels make me profoundly unhappy. One of my complaints against the shortness of life is that there is not time enough to feel pity and love for enough people. I am infinitely compassionate and moved to my foundations by the misfortunes of other people.

"As I said in my 1888 character-sketch, truthfulness with me is hardly a virtue, but I cannot discriminate between truths that need and those that need not be told. Want of courage is what makes so many people lie. It would be difficult for me to say exactly what I am afraid of. Physically and socially not much; morally, I am afraid of a good many things: reprimanding servants, bargaining in shops; or to turn to more serious matters, the loss of my health, the children's or Henry's. Against these last possibilities I pray in every recess of my thoughts.

"With becoming modesty I have said that I am imaginative, loving and brave! What then are my faults?

"I am fundamentally nervous, impatient, irritable and restless. These may sound slight shortcomings, but they go to the foundation of my nature, crippling my activity, lessening my influence and preventing my achieving anything remarkable. I wear myself out in a hundred unnecessary ways, regretting the trifles I have not done, arranging and re-arranging what I have got to do and what every one else is going to do, till I can hardly eat or sleep. To be in one position for long at a time, or sit through bad plays, to listen to moderate music or moderate conversation is a positive punishment to me. I am energetic and industrious, but I am a little too quick; I am *driven* along by my temperament till I tire myself and every one else.

"I did not marry till I was thirty. This luckily gave me time to read; and I collected nearly a thousand books of my own before I married. If I had had real application—as all the Asquiths have— I should by now be a well-educated woman; but this I never had. I am not at all dull, and never stale, but I don't seem to be able to grind at uncongenial things. I have a good memory for books and conversations, but bad for poetry and dates; wonderful for faces and pitiful for names.

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“Physically I have done pretty well for myself. I ride better than most people and have spent or wasted more time on it than any woman of intellect ought to. I have broken both collar-bones, all my ribs and my knee-cap; dislocated my jaw, fractured my skull, gashed my nose and had five concussions of the brain; but—though my horses are to be sold next week [Footnote: My horses were sold at Tattersalls, June 11th, 1906.]—I have not lost my nerve. I dance, drive and skate well; I don’t skate very well, but I dance really well. I have a talent for drawing and am intensely musical, playing the piano with a touch of the real thing, but have neglected both these accomplishments. I may say here in self-defence that marriage and five babies, five step-children and a husband in high politics have all contributed to this neglect, but the root of the matter lies deeper: I am restless.

“After riding, what I have enjoyed doing most in my life is writing. I have written a great deal, but do not fancy publishing my exercises. I have always kept a diary and commonplace books and for many years I wrote criticisms of everything I read. It is rather difficult for me to say what I think of my own writing. Arthur Balfour once said that I was the best letter-writer he knew; Henry tells me I write well; and Symonds said I had l’oreille juste; but writing of the kind that I like reading I cannot do: it is a long apprenticeship. Possibly, if I had had this apprenticeship forced upon me by circumstances, I should have done it better than anything else. I am a careful critic of all I read and I do not take my opinions of books from other people; I have not got ‘a lending-library mind’ as Henry well described that of a friend of ours. I do not take my opinions upon anything from other people; from this point of view—not a very high one—I might be called original.

“When I read Arthur Balfour’s books and essays, I realised before I had heard them discussed what a beautiful style he wrote. Raymond, whose intellectual taste is as fine as his father’s, wrote in a paper for his All Souls Fellowship that Arthur had the finest style of any living writer; and Raymond and Henry often justify my literary verdicts.

“From my earliest age I have been a collector: not of anything particularly valuable, but of letters, old photographs of the family, famous people and odds and ends. I do not lose things. Our cigarette ash-trays are plates from my dolls’ dinner-service; I have got china, books, whips, knives, match-boxes and clocks given me since I was a small child. I have kept our early copy-books, with all the family signatures in them, and many trifling landmarks of nursery life. I am painfully punctual, tidy and methodical, detesting indecision, change of plans and the egotism that they involve. I am a little stern and severe except with children: for these I have endless elasticity and patience. Many of my faults are physical. If I could have chosen my own life— more in the hills and less in the traffic—I should have slept better and might have been less overwrought and disturbable. But after all I may improve, for I am on a man-of-war, as a friend once said to me, which is better than being on a pirate-ship and is a profession in itself.

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“Well, I have finished; I have tried to relate of my manners, morals, talents, defects, temptations, and appearance as faithfully as I can; and I think there is nothing more to be said. If I had to confess and expose one opinon of myself which might differentiate me a little from other people, I should say it was my power of love coupled with my power of criticism, but what I lack most is what Henry possesses above all men: equanimity, moderation, self-control and the authority that comes from a perfect sense of proportion. I can only pray that I am not too old or too stationary to acquire these.

Margot Asquith.

“P.S. This is my second attempt to write about myself and I am not at all sure that my old character-sketch of 1888 is not the better of the two—it is more external—but, after all, what can one say of one’s inner self that corresponds with what one really is or what one’s friends think one is? Just now I am within a few weeks of my baby’s birth and am tempted to take a gloomy view. I am inclined to sum up my life in this way:

“’An unfettered childhood and triumphant youth; a lot of love-making and a little abuse; a little fame and more abuse; a real man and great happiness; the love of children and seventh heaven; an early death and a crowded memorial service.’

“But perhaps I shall not die, but live to write another volume of this diary and a better description of an improved self.”

The end of book two