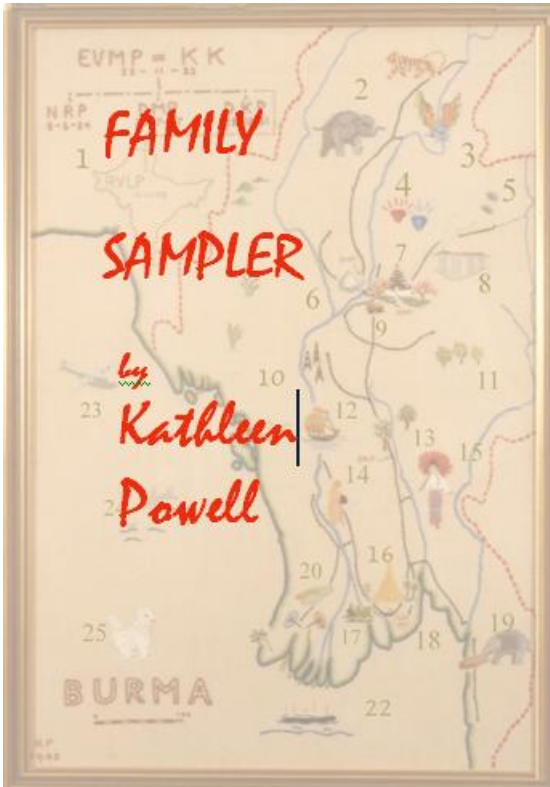


FAMILY SAMPLER

by
KATHLEEN POWELL



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FOREWORD

To write an account of a personal connection with Burma spanning the years from 1905-1948, and to cover all aspects of the subject, the history, geography, people and customs, would require talents I do not possess. Remembering how my literary efforts at school never achieved high marks I do not expect anything different now.

Nevertheless, I have a faint hope that these reminiscences, written from the heart, will prompt some generous soul to allow me "Three-out-of-ten-for-trying".

To Nancie, who encouraged me to record some of my memories.

To Daphne for the gift of the wallet she made for me, in which I kept Val's Burma letters that might not otherwise have survived.

To Dennis for his comments and, later, his work in word-processing the text; also for his yearly gifts of diaries, which have kept me writing, and

To Lyn for undertaking the considerable task of translating my scrawl into orderly typescript (before the days of word-processors!) and for providing a title.

My love and thanks to them for all their help in many ways. I hope that they will forgive me if what I have written does not coincide with what they remember.

Kathleen Powell
Lymington
18-1-1981

PART ONE - EARLY YEARS

CHAPTER ONE

Anything that happened before one was born always seems as remote as the Battle of Waterloo, at least when one is a child, but things that happened after one was born, and are only hearsay from what grown-ups have said, have a place in one's memories. I loved to hear my Father and Mother talking about how they first went to Burma. They were living in Hull, where my Father worked on the Hull & Barnsley Railway. He came home one day and said, "Would you like to go to Burma?" "Yes", said my Mother, "Where is it?"

As neither of them had been out of the country before, let alone to the East, they tried to find out what sort of country they were going to, and were given an introduction to someone who had been in Burma - the wife of a retired missionary, I believe. She told my parents that the climate was difficult. For six months of the year it rained heavily, everything was damp, shoes grew mould overnight - "but it's really very nice". And when the Rains are over, it's very hot and no one goes out in the middle of the day if they can avoid it - "but it's really very nice". It's so hot that you have to have servants to do the work, and you can't always trust them - "but it's really very nice". And so on, with the account of snakes and scorpions and insects - with the same refrain. Years later I realised what an accurate assessment it was, except that with the years refinements of comfort made life easier.

As I had, so I was told, my second birthday (2 January '05) off Gibraltar, we must have left England just after Christmas 1904 in SS Hazienda (Henderson Line). My brother Cyril was six months old, so it must have been a considerable experience for my parents, and their arrival in Rangoon was difficult. No one met them, they didn't know the language or the currency. We stayed for a time in Cheesers Hotel in Fytche Square, which must have been pretty primitive; the bedrooms were little more than cubicles, with wooden partitions up to door height. Mosquito nets there were but, as they had holes in them big enough for cockroaches to get through, there must have been some uncomfortable nights. Oil lamps, "pull punkahs" and primitive sanitation fitted in with the descriptions they had been given, but January is a pleasant month in Rangoon, so probably it was "really very nice".

After Cheesers Hotel, we lived at Drumtochty, Park Avenue and Surrey House, Churchill Road. Father had a "munshi" to teach him Hindustani and wanted to practise it with me, for, child like, I had picked up the language of the servants, but I would not co-operate and merely said, "Not nice, Father, not nice."

In the Cold Weather of 1905/06, the Prince and Princess of Wales (later King George V and Queen Mary) visited Burma, and my first memory is of this. We went to the station to see the departure of the Royal Train, and then to the Railway Refreshment Room for some sort of celebration. Being so near Christmas, on or about my third birthday on 2nd January 1906, we had crackers, and I cried because I got ear-rings in mine and thought I should have to have my ears pierced. In my memory the Royal Train was all white, including the

engine. When I went back to Burma and saw the Lieutenant Governor's train composed of white saloons but headed by a conventional black engine, I wondered whether my childish imagination had added a white engine to complete the picture. My Father told me my memory was correct. Not only had the engine been white, but every lump of coal had been white-washed in honour of royalty. I then said that Rangoon station didn't look as I remembered it, and Father said that this wasn't surprising as the station was re-built about 1910. "Did it look like Kemmendine station?" "Yes." So that seemed to confirm my memory.

Another memory that must have been visual, and not the result of hearing an incident described, was that of pi-dogs setting on a kitten and killing it. It was not till I got back to Burma and saw the mutti tennis courts with jafftree-work screens that I recognised the setting of this unpleasant incident.

I don't know exactly when Mother, Cyril and I left Rangoon because Cyril had been unwell, but it was before Father was due for leave. We sailed in S.S. Mandalay. Somewhere in the Indian Ocean I suffered tragedy. I had a little wicker-work pram and in it a celluloid doll. A strong wind was blowing and my doll was blown out of the pram and overboard into the blue, blue waters of the Indian Ocean. Cyril and I used to go to the little galley and were given biscuits with sugar icing on top by the native stewards. For puddings on board we used to have plain boiled rice with prunes and custard, which we thought vastly superior to the rice puddings that people in England appear to think the proper way to treat rice.

Mother rented an unfurnished house in Park Street, Hull, and furnished it for £100 and had a maid, Ada. Cyril and I wanted a photo of Father, so he sent one home with Ioti, the Boy, on one side of him and Abdul Rahman, his chuprassi, on the other. When Mother showed this to Ada she said, "Which one is Master, mum?" and Mother said, "Oh Ada! You didn't think he was a black man?" to which Ada replied, "Oh, I didn't know, mum."

I can clearly remember when Father arrived home. I'd been put to bed and had gone to sleep when Father and Mother came to see me. I woke up, and recognised Father, and he gave me his special cow-wow-wow kiss under the chin. In the morning I found he'd brought me a little set of doll's furniture made of cane (jail-made, as I learnt later) and a Burmese umbrella with elephants and tigers going round it, the like of which I never saw again. I don't know how long Father's leave was, but I know he was home for my fifth birthday. I had seen a cake in a confectioner's window which I dearly wanted. Father teased me by saying, "Why do you want a cake like that when Mother makes such lovely ones?" Mother must have known that it really meant something to me for I duly had it. I think it must have been a christening cake, for it was covered with white icing and on top was a little white bird sitting on a nest. I haven't a clue what the inside was like - that didn't matter and I have always been grateful to my Mother for letting me have it.

During the time we were in Park Street I went to a little kindergarten about which I remember practically nothing, except one incident in which Mother played a major part. We had what was known as an object lesson, the object being the making of butter. Our teacher told us that when we got home we should ask our mothers to get some cream, then

we were to put it in a bottle and shake it hard and butter would come. Mother got the cream, put it in a bottle and I suppose I shook it. That part I can't remember, but I do remember that when I was in bed Mother sat beside me and shook that bottle until the butter came, and then made it into a butter-pat with "butter-hands". Next morning Mother cut a thin slice of bread and buttered it with "my" butter which I took to school - I was the only one who had made butter!

Park Street was crossed by one of Hull's many level crossings and our house was very near it. Cyril was fascinated by the trains, particularly goods trains when they were shunting or "dungling" as he called it.¹

Just when in 1908 Father and Mother went back to Burma I don't know but it meant a big change in our lives, as Cyril and I were left with Miss Sara and Miss Nellie Gregory at 8 Richmond Road, Headingley, Leeds. Cyril and I used to look out of our window and see the sun shining on something gold which we called our pagoda. The Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon is such a landmark that it inevitably makes an impression on anyone who lives there, and I suppose we were trying to find something that would link us with our former life. I don't think we were actively unhappy. There were other children there whose parents were abroad - mostly missionaries. In fact, I think all of them were except ours. There were the Big boys, old enough to go to Leeds Grammar School - Lionel, Arthur and Harold Rigby, whose parents were in Ceylon. I think we all liked Arthur best, as he used to read Just So Stories and Uncle Remus to us. Then there were Alec and Hugh Anstey, whose parents were missionaries in the Nizam's Dominions and whose Uncle Narbeth was a naval architect, so they drew endless pictures of battleships. Bessie, Jinny and Mary Spensley were Big girls, old enough to go to Leeds Girls' High School, wearing green gym tunics which had to be two inches off the floor when the wearer was kneeling - considered rather outré,.

Geoffrey Pratt I remember chiefly as being the owner of weekly copies of the Scout. The Big boys had the Boys Own Paper. Theo and Alys Gregory were the nephew and niece of Auntie Sara and Auntie Nellie. Their father was a Wesleyan missionary in Fyzabad. Theo was a Big boy but Alys was my senior by only a year, so she, Cyril and I did things together - playing in the garden making mud pies if we got the chance, and finding sycamore leaves which we made into cones like pan leaves as we all remembered them. I was very easily teased and when it was discovered that I didn't like touching worms, the others used to put them in my dolls pram.

Christmas 1908 Cyril disgraced himself. He had wanted an engine - and he got one, but it wasn't the engine of his dreams but a large brightly painted wooden one which he thought was babyish and would have nothing to do with it. For this ingratitude it was taken from him and put on top of a tall cupboard. As it wasn't what he wanted this was no hardship to him and he made no lament. Poor lamb, he was only four and a half.

The incident above certainly happened in Leeds, but I'm not quite sure now whether it was 1908 or 1909, for one of those Christmases was spent at "Antigua", Alpraham near Tarporley in Cheshire, where Auntie Nem and Auntie Hattie, sisters of Auntie Sara and

Auntie Nellie lived with their mother, who was usually known as "Owd Mrs Gregory". Nem and Hattie ran what might be called the local "Dame School" in their house and sometimes took a weekly boarder so, during the school holidays, there was room for an influx from Leeds. Whether it was 1908 or 1909 it was certainly a white Christmas. We were surrounded by fields so it was probably my first introduction to real snow. While we there, a surprise parcel arrived from Burma, packed (as seemed to be the usual way from the East) sewn in glazed longcloth and reinforced with seals. It contained a marvellous brass engine for Cyril, but I can't remember his reaction to it, and two dolls in long clothes for me, which I called Ethel and Mary after my Mother.

Life hadn't many landmarks in the period between 1908 and Annus Mirabilis 1911 - not, that is, from a child's personal point of view, though the death of King Edward VII and Halley's comet I do remember, the latter chiefly because we were woken up after we had gone to bed in order that we might see it. But from a spectacular point of view it was a poor second to a minor comet which we saw on one of our weekly trips to a gym class; it looked as a comet should, with its fiery tail. Solemn music and picture postcards are virtually all I remember of the King's death. I think most of the summer holidays must have been spent at Alraham. It was quite an undertaking with a cab to the station, then a reserved compartment on the train, or possibly two. There always seemed to be a lot of talk about "via Stockport and Stalybridge" and an inevitable change at Crewe. We always counted slowly to see how long it would take us to get through the Diggle and Marsden tunnel, and we looked out for Mirfield. This was the scene of the runaway marriage of one of the Gregory forebears, where the irate father of the bride arrived and breathlessly said, "Am I in time?", to which the newly-married bridegroom replied, "You are just in time to be too late, sir!" From Calveley station we walked to Alraham. I presume there must have been a carrier who coped with the luggage. Certainly there were no cabs, no taxis, no buses, no cars.

Neither in Leeds nor Alraham did we have any external social life, but we were an assorted bunch of children so we probably did not feel the lack of it. The one exception was the weekly visit to the Gym, where we joined a class with other children. The Anstey boys shone at Gym. I did not, being rather plump and it being said, probably correctly, that I had no sense of time. One thing I have never forgotten: having marched and run, we were told, "Tripping - begin!". I looked with astonishment at the complicated movements of the other children and was baffled and couldn't imagine how they did it. Explanations and exhortations didn't help so, in desperation, I did what I often did when I felt happy, and everyone said, "Good, you've got it!" Just imagine, what I'd done without thinking was what these clever children had been doing!

We undoubtedly missed our parents but I don't suppose we were actively unhappy, though I must have been a misery at times, for I can recall being told not to whine. This didn't help much, as I didn't know what the word meant; many times I was told to stop crying or I would be given something to cry for. On the other hand, I was called "Cheshire Puss" because of my grin, so I can't have been whining all the time.

It was in Leeds at this period that I told my first lie. I was in the back garden and saw a mass of black cotton across a shabby bit of grass and in a helpful mood scooped it all up. Later, there was a hue and cry to find the naughty child who had deliberately thwarted the good work of the grown-up who had put black cotton down to deter the birds from getting the grass-seed they had sown. Being a "good" little girl, I was a long way down the list of suspects, so I had plenty of time to hear what an awful deed had been done so, when I was eventually asked whether I had done it, I said, "No." The evidence was apparently against me, for I was punished, not only for the deed, but for telling a lie. The punishment itself was nothing more dreadful than being told to sit still in a room by myself for a certain length of time, but I felt I'd been cast into outer darkness.

Auntie Sara and Auntie Nellie taught us themselves and ran the house with the aid of a maid, Chrissie, and a charwoman; from time to time there was a "mother's help", but I think only very occasionally. Auntie Sara looked after the household matters and did some of the teaching, but Auntie Nellie did most and was the better teacher, I think. Whether, in other circumstances, I might have enjoyed music lessons more, I don't know, but Auntie Sara started me off with "Lines and Spaces" for the notes of printed music, before I had learnt my alphabet, let alone learnt to read. We were taught to read phonetically, which was considered progressive in 1908. The first page of the First Book was, perhaps ironically, the Ass page - a-s-s=ass. French without Tears was a complete misnomer as far as I was concerned, and often accompanied by the statement that if I didn't stop crying I'd be given something to cry for. Learning the alphabet was fun, for we did it to music as a chorus for nursery rhymes, and counting was done to the kneading of dough. (Auntie Nellie made the bread for all of us.) We used to stand beside her while she was kneading in the big pancheon and count to a hundred; when we reached that, she would turn the dough over and we'd count again. The dough was left to rise in the big pancheon, covered with a piece of blanket, in front of the fire. Later it was divided into the bread tins, but always enough was left to make each of us a small "cob" for our tea, and sometimes a dough cake. This wasn't sweet, but a flat piece of dough which, when cooked, was split open, buttered and eaten hot - and there was no talk of the indigestibility of new bread!

Sundays for us were much as they were for other people, I suppose, which meant clean clothes, which were nearly always either starchy or prickly or both, then a walk to the Wesleyan chapel. Oddly enough, the only part of the service I remember is the Te Deum. Otherwise, chapel meant "being good", which meant sitting still, not fidgeting, not turning round and not talking. Only "Sunday" games were allowed and "Sunday" books, but these included the Children's Encyclopaedia. Sunday's pudding was nearly always chocolate blancmange made, I think, with water, which sounds odd, but served with cream or more probably "top of the milk", and to my mind better than when made with milk.

"Mail Day" was important to all of us, being our only contact with our parents. I think Cyril and I were the only brother and sister to receive individual letters in separate envelopes, whereas the others got joint letters, and it was something we valued a great deal. That was incoming mail day that was looked forward to. The outgoing mail was hard work. Writing was difficult and I, for one, did not know how to express myself. The usual formula was:

"Dear Father and Mother,

"Thank you for your letter. On Monday we went... On Tuesday... etc.

"Love from Kathleen."

Once, when I had learnt to write a little on my own, I added on my own initiative, "Please give my love to Boy." This was cut off as it was not considered seemly that I should send a message to a native servant. It was many a long year before I recovered from the shock of this treatment of my attempt to express myself.

In 1910 we had the thrill of receiving a cable which said, "Your baby sister arrived on 25th Oct", but it was six months before we saw her.

End of Chapter 1.

CHAPTER TWO

1911 - Annus Mirabilis. Father and Mother arrived home on leave round about Easter, which was 16th April that year. While they were on their way we sang "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" every Sunday evening, as was the custom when any parents were travelling. Father came to collect Cyril and me, and I can remember how we stood at the window waiting for him to come, and the thrill as we saw him at the gate and he raised his hat to us. Presumably he had come from Hornsea by train and by tram from the station in Leeds and had walked down Richmond Road. I have no recollection of leaving the Gregorys' and only a feeling of bliss on arriving at 4 Grosvenor Terrace, Hornsea and being with Mother again. Margaret was sweet and bouncy and we loved watching her have her bath.

On their way home, Father and Mother had called at Marseilles and had bought some French chocolate - a large chocolate scallop shell filled with chocolate fishes, an idea which seemed unusual and splendid to me.

It is difficult to describe why this year seemed so truly wonderful. Just being with Father and Mother made it so but, as an added bonus, there was one of the most glorious summers. We were close to the beach and Cyril and I would go there on our own. Then there was the Coronation of King George V - flags and bunting and lamp posts painted red, white and blue. We were given a small second-hand bike which we rode together, one on the saddle and steering, and the other on the handlebars, facing backwards and peddling - and the roads were safe enough to do so. With the exception of a trip with Father from Hull to Spurn Point on a paddle-steamer, I can't recall any particular jaunts or treats but the year as a whole is surrounded with a golden haze of happiness

One of the differences was that discipline was unobtrusive; there wasn't the constant emphasis on "being good", and such ordinary matters as the way in which one's hair was done were not treated as moral problems. At Leeds, our hair was scragged back from our faces, possibly because it was easier to keep it tidy like this, but there was always the feeling that the Devil was lying in wait and that we might be tempted to be vain - save the mark - if a more becoming style were allowed. Mother did my hair as she had done before, with a side parting and the hair tied on top with a bow. It's odd that such a happy time contains so few landmarks. Possibly that's why some people remember so little of their childhood. I recall now sitting in the garden with Father. Margaret was on a rug on the grass and Cyril and I were playing with her, holding out some toy and withdrawing it before she could hold it, and Father said we mustn't tantalise her. As far as I can remember I had never heard the word before, and he had to explain what it meant.

Watching Margaret learn to crawl and then to walk was a thrill. When we went for a walk with Mother, and Margaret was in her pram, Cyril and I walked beside her to restrain her bouncings, for shoulder harnesses certainly were not general and even the waist-strap that Margaret had was considered new-fashioned. Most prams had only a strap going from one side to the other and not round the child's waist.

Inevitably the time came when we realised that the golden age was coming to an end. Father and Mother and Margaret were going back to Rangoon, and we were going back to Leeds. I remember Father taking us on his knees, with tears in his eyes, the night before we parted, but of the actual departure from Hornsea and arrival in Leeds I have no recollection at all.

It was the spring of 1912. The Spensley girls were no longer there, but Kathleen and Eric Price were; Kathy, as she was usually known, and Eric a month or so younger than I was. There was also Eric Nairn Kerr, so we had two Kathleens and two Erics, who became Big Kay and Little Kay, and Big Eric (Price) and Little Eric (Kerr). The Rigby boys were still based on the Gregorys, and so were Alec and Hugh Anstey, though they sometimes spent holidays with relatives in the South, which was considered decadent and not a patch on the hardy North.

I don't know why we were moved permanently to Alpraham. Perhaps the Gregorys weren't able to renew the lease on 8 Richmond Road. Or it may have been because "Owd Mrs Gregory" broke her thigh and it would be easier for all the sisters if they were together to help their mother. Whatever the reason, we moved lock, stock and barrel to Alpraham - Mrs Gregory now in a "spinal carriage" rather than the Bath chair we had helped to push earlier.

Auntie Sara was the eldest sister, Nem came next, Nellie next and Hattie was the youngest. Auntie Nem, by virtue of being the resident incumbent, so to speak, continued to control the house-keeping, which was not a good thing from our point of view. She was not a good cook, and prided herself on it. Auntie Nellie would have liked to continue to make bread, but she was told that the oven was quite unsuitable and she wasn't to see for herself.

Alpraham had three shops - a Post Office and general stores combined, a draper plus general store, and corn merchant plus baker and grocer. There was no butcher and no fishmonger. Once a week we used to take a post card to be posted, addressed to Cowap, the butcher in Tarporley, three miles away, for "15 lbs rump steak". This we had roast on Saturday, cold on Sunday and on Monday, cold on Tuesday, hash on Wednesday, re-hash on Thursday, re-re-hash on Friday, roast on Saturday, etc., etc., etc. Fortunately we had plenty of good Cheshire cheese and, once a week, when "Miss Adams The Post Office" was making pork pies and sausages, we each had a twopenny pork pie for breakfast and these were really good, as were the sausages when we were lucky enough to have them. There was one good thing about the rump steak. The fat made delicious "scraps" and dripping, which we had for breakfast. Fruit and vegetables we rarely saw except when parents of day-school children gave Nem and Hattie apples and damsons. About once a holidays we were taken to Chester for clothes shopping and then we had a real treat, fried fish for lunch, followed by bananas and cream. On these occasions too, we always went to Evensong at the Cathedral, which some people find hard to believe of such a staunchly nonconformist Wesleyan family as the Gregorys, with at least two Presidents of the Conference in the family, and three brothers in the ministry

We Leeds children continued to have our lessons with Sara and Nellie, while the local day children had theirs with Nem and Hattie, though we played together during "break". The favourite game was "Catcher round the Bike House". The bike house stood free so that we could dodge round it. Anyone caught was shut in the bike house and the pin inserted in the hasp and staple. The opposing side then tried to pull out the pin and release the captive. There was also a see-saw which seemed to me to be enormously big and of which I was terrified - I think I must have been easily frightened. Kathy, Alys and I felt that we girls were not fairly treated, for one of the phrases we frequently heard was, "Well, the fact of the matter is, I don't for a moment suppose the poor boy meant to do it", but never did we hear it in the feminine gender. Perhaps it was really a compliment, indicating that girls were superior beings who knew how to behave, but boys, poor things, had to have allowances made for them because they didn't know how.

Alraham itself consisted of a few small houses and cottages on the main road between Tarporley and Nantwich, and was always referred to as Highwayside, with large farms around it. There was no church, but a Primitive Methodist chapel in the village itself and, some distance away in the direction of Tarporley, was the Wesleyan Methodist chapel, built, so we were told, opposite the walnut tree under which John Wesley had preached. There services were held on Sunday afternoons, conducted by a series of lay preachers. There was a small organ, pumped by hand, and the hymns were played so slowly that we used to sing a whole verse under our breath while the congregation sang the first line of "As pants the hart for cooling stream"!

Once a quarter the Minister in charge of the circuit would take the service, and come to tea at Antigua. This was an occasion in which we all joined, the chief features of the meal being tinned salmon and boiled eggs.

Bunbury church was quite near and, from time to time, we were taken to services there. We also went to Bunbury to collect medicine for Owd Mrs Gregory, from the doctor who lived next door to the church. We liked this walk because the road crossed the Shropshire Union Canal and there was a depot where cheeses used to be loaded on to the narrow boats. When we went to Beeston Castle we walked on the road as far as the bridge, then along the canal bank as far as Beeston Castle station, and then across the fields to the Castle itself. It was a lovely place for a picnic and our favourite spot was under a silver birch tree on a high spot overlooking the winding track to the top of the hill. We bought lemonade and ginger beer in "cod" 1a bottles from the little shop in the gatehouse.

The time from 1912 to 1915 is something of a blur, with the shock of the outbreak of war in August 1914 being the only real event I can place. It was a hot summer, like that of 1911, and we spent most of our lives out of doors. The war itself didn't make much difference to our lives at that stage, but 1915 brought many changes. It seemed that everybody's parents were coming home on leave. Father was due on leave, but wasn't allowed to take it as there was no replacement and, by 1916, women and children weren't allowed to travel, so Cyril and I were left, as it were, high and dry at Alraham. I've said that the outbreak of war was the only real event I could recall but, though I cannot remember actually getting the news, my sister Winifred was born on 20th October 1913.

When Father and Mother went back to Burma in 1912, leaving us in Leeds, they almost certainly anticipated that Cyril and I would go to Leeds Grammar School and High School for Girls, respectively, when the time came, and that they would be able to review the situation when Father's leave was due in 1915. Now everything was altered. There was, of course, no airmail and letters took three weeks each way, if nothing went wrong, but monsoons and war conditions meant delays and sometimes loss of letters. At this time I did not appreciate the quandary my parents must have been in. When the time came for Alys to move on to a boarding school I think her parents were at Home and arranged for her to go to Kent College, Folkestone, spend the holidays at Alpraham, when they went back to India. It was eventually decided that I should go there too. I remember talk about possible schools for Cyril, but Father obviously had ideas about that, for Cyril was sent to Hymers College, Hull, boarding with one of the masters.

Before this there were summer holidays , with the house packed with Rigbys, Gregorys, including assorted cousins, Prices and Ansteys "home" for the holidays from school or university, possibly not all at once but, with the Big and Little Schoolrooms not in use for the day-children, it was amazing how many could be packed in. After 1915, life was quieter and more restricted. Auntie Sara and Auntie Nellie were conscious of this I am sure, and took us to Sutton-on-Sea, where we stayed, as we also did in Ilkley, where we had long walks on the Moors, and went to Bolton Abbey, and the Strid on the Wharfe. We were told cautionary tales about this narrow passage of the river, where young people had been known to jump across it. This was comparatively easy from the high side to the lower one but, in the reverse direction, it was more difficult, and more than one life had been lost in the attempt.

End of Chapter 2

CHAPTER THREE

It was on the 6th May 1916 that I first went to KC. I was in a bedroom with two other girls. There seemed to be a lot of things to learn, apart from lessons, many of them concerned with where one might or might not talk. Other people seemed to know by instinct, but no one bothered to tell a new girl. The first morning I was woken up by a noise that sounded like the end of the world, but it was only the getting-up gong. I wasn't homesick - not more than usual - for being at KC was any harder to bear than being at Alpraham, whereas the other girls were away from their real homes. KC didn't make much impression on me and I made less on KC. I was always on the edge of things, never at the centre. "BO" was partly to blame, and I found this hard, because no one would believe I washed properly, and I did. Auntie Sara had taken me to the doctor about this particular problem. His advice was well-meaning but not effective. He prescribed Roget et Galet's "Savon ... la violette", probably thinking that a little luxury would tempt me to wash, which I always had done anyway. No one at that time had heard of deodorants or depilatories for young girls, so the effect of thick woollen underwear was pretty awful. Other people could get away from me, but I couldn't get away from my own BO.

I couldn't understand why some girls made such a fuss about boys. Having lived in the same house with assorted boys aged from five years to undergraduates at Oxford, and shared lessons with some of them, I thought no more about them than I did about girls.

We felt close to the War in Folkestone. We could hear the guns across the Channel and, promenading on the Leas, were men in every variety of uniform and of many different nationalities, but the most moving sight was the departure of the cross-Channel ferries, packed with khaki figures, and the knowledge that so few of them would come back. Of the few that did, most were in Hospital Blue. I was not surprised when I went back after the War to see that the long steep hill to the harbour had been re-named The Hill of Remembrance. No one who had seen those long lines of troops marching down there, knowing where they were going, could forget it.

We used to see the search lights playing around the sky at night and, when air-raid warning sounded, we had to put on our dressing-gowns, take a pillow and blanket and go into the dining room, which was a semi-basement and presumably considered comparatively safe. A roll-call was taken on each wing and each floor, and again in the dining room. On one occasion it was alleged that I answered to my name on my landing but was not present in the dining room. The search party found me fast asleep in bed. Apparently, my propensity for sleep had overtaken me after answering to my name. On another occasion, when we were assembled in the dining room preparing to "doss down", Miss Brunyate, The Headmistress, told me to lie down near her - "Your comfortable snoring reassures me so".

The first daylight raid occurred when we were having a special Girl Guide service in the Gym. We heard the warning and ack-ack fire and unidentified noises. Just as we finished the service, Miss Brunyate came in. "There is an air raid in progress. You must stay where you are. You may make as much noise as you like." The last statement we had

never expected to hear! Miss Brunyate must have told the senior girls to get us round the piano and sing as lustily as we could and play noisy games. The raid did not last long but bombs had dropped quite near, though fortunately in gardens where they did little damage. Mr Harlow, the Wesleyan minister of Grace Hill chapel who had been taking the service, wrote a letter to The Times, headed "Girl Guides under Fire" and describing our "bravery". It was said that when he died someone would write "The Life and Letters of the Rev J. Edward Harlow, chiefly Letters", as he was well known as a writer of letters to the papers. As a result of this letter, reporters asked Miss Brunyate for photos of the girls. She told us that she couldn't consider this, and added for our benefit that there would have to be a companion picture of the same girls during a thunderstorm, when their courage was not conspicuous!

In the holidays, when Cyril and I met at Alpraham, we compared notes about air-raids, a moonlit night being a likely one for a Zeppelin raid on Hull, a moonless one for a plane raid on Folkestone.

Sunday morning walks after Chapel were usually along the Leas, where fashionable Folkestone disported itself. We were all in crocodile, of course, but it was pleasant to see other people who weren't. In fact, if there had been any form of even slightly unruly behaviour, the punishment was to deprive us of our walk along the Leas. Games figured little in our lives, partly because no men were available to look after the playing fields. There were six grass tennis courts which, at the beginning of the season, we had to mow and mark. Then a knock-out tournament was arranged. To those knocked out fell the job of cutting and marking. Never having played tennis before, I was an immediate member of the cutting and marking team.

The winter of 1917 was a misery. The boiler for the central heating failed and no one could be found to repair it. The only fireplaces in the building were in the Headmistress's drawing room, the girls' drawing room and common room. No classrooms had fireplaces, no dormitories or cubicles, nor the dining room or gym. Nor was there hot water for baths. We were restricted to one bucketful of hot water per week. Small portable oil stoves did their best, but their effect was negligible and I had a prize crop of chilblains. Many a time I was like poor little Phyllis in "Cider with Rosie", who "sat rocking in her chair, nursing her chilblains like a handful of bees."

Once a week there was a function known as Miss Brunyate's Social. The basic idea, I suppose, was to teach us some of the social graces, but it was a nerve-wracking affair for some of us. We went, a form at a time, to Miss Brunyate's drawing room, where the older girls sat on chairs and the rest of us sat on the floor as elegantly as we could. Conversation was supposed to be general and each girl was expected to make at least one contribution to this, and an answer to a question was not considered adequate. The terrifying thing was that Miss Brunyate always knew who had not volunteered a remark and, if the school bell had rung to mark the end of a period, all the form had to remain until the silent one had produced a remark. I remember in particular two such occasions. One ash-blond girl, whose blushes could be seen through her voile blouse, eventually managed to say, "I did enjoy my bath this week!" which eased the tension as everybody laughed - this being in

the one bucket of hot water per bath per week period. The other girl, who had suffered much in attempts to cope with quadratic equations in Miss Brunyate's class, blurted out, "I believe I'm beginning to like algebra." I doubt whether she was speaking the truth.

At the end of the summer term in 1918 I left KC. At the beginning of term when, presumably, a term's notice must have been given, there was no clear indication that the War would be coming to an end in the autumn, and I suppose Father and Mother felt that Folkestone was very vulnerable. So I was sent to the Girls' High School in Leeds, which was primarily a day-school, but a few girls went as boarders to Rose Court in the school grounds. I cannot recall that I learnt anything there and, looking back, I seem to have been in a state of suspended animation. Along with a large proportion of the country I had "Spanish 'flu'", which was unpleasant but left no lasting ill effects. Christmas 1918 was spent at Alpraham, and my sixteenth birthday was a dreary one - no letter had arrived and no one else remembered it.

Part of the Easter holidays we spent in Leeds, and I shouldn't even remember this if Alys, Cyril and I hadn't gone to Bolton Abbey. It wasn't until we were crammed into a compartment on the train that we realised it was a Bank Holiday. We knew it was Easter Monday but, in the sort of life we had led, Bank Holidays made no impact. When we made our way back to the station at Ilkley we found a seething mass of people all along the platform and packed solid to the width of the platform. Luckily we were in front and managed to get on the train, but what we three babes-in-the-wood would have done if we hadn't I don't know, for it was the last train - or we thought it was.

It is odd how some things remain crystal-clear in one's mind and others are completely overlaid. I should have expected to remember exactly when and where we heard that Father and Mother were coming Home, but I don't. What I do remember is that Auntie Sara, Auntie Nellie, Cyril and I went to "rooms" in Thornton-le-Dale for the rest of the Easter holidays. Whether Alys was with us I don't know. I do know that by that time excitement was boiling up. The Gregorys were trying to keep us in bounds by saying that conditions had been difficult in Amritsa in India, when Father and Mother were crossing to catch SS Ormonde from Bombay, and that Egypt was in a state of turmoil and they might be held up in the Suez Canal. I vividly remember my exultation the first night in Thornton-le-Dale when, unpacking my clothes and putting them away in a drawer, my eye caught the word "Ormonde". Our landlady had lined the drawers with recent copies of The Times or Telegraph and I was seeing the Shipping Intelligence for the first time. And there it was: "SS Ormonde left Port Said homeward 19th April."

So they were actually on their way! More blanks in the memory, culminating with a scene at St Pancras Station, where I was met by Father, Mother, Margaret and Winifred - I don't know, but I think Auntie Sara must have been with me. I recognised Father and Mother before they recognised me, which isn't surprising. I was nine when they saw me last, and now I was sixteen. Had I travelled from Thornton-le-Dale on my own? I don't know.

We all stayed with Grannie Lambert in Lupton Street², London NW, until we went north to Hornsea. Poor Cyril - where was he? Presumably at Hymers, where Father probably saw

him when he went to find somewhere to live in Hornsea. I wasn't consciously jealous of Margot and Winikin (as we called them) but I envied them the ease and naturalness with which they talked to Mother. If I had any opinions I didn't know how to express them, willing to help, but having no idea how to do so. It was lovely to be with the family again but I was gauche and awkward, and knew it.

My clothes must have been a trial to Mother. The Gregorys had no clothes sense and mine was a minus quantity. My one or two attempts at Alpraham to improve my appearance had been met with acid remarks about trying to make myself look pretty, so I had just withdrawn. Grey union-flannel petticoats, with plenty of room for growth, hadn't helped an already plump figure.

One way and another, 1919 must have been a difficult year for Father and Mother, though this didn't overshadow our lives. Being so near the sands, we spent a lot of time there, and a favourite walk was along the cliffs to Atwick Gap, a cleft in the cliffs, at the bottom of which a small stream ran into the sea. It was on one of these walks that Winifred said, "Mummy, may I take off my shoes?" When Mother asked her why she wanted to, she replied, "My shoes are too tired of carrying my feet." We always looked out for the coastguard. Whether we actually saw the spot where two coastguards met and, having exchanged news, reversed and walked back the way they came, I'm not sure, but can imagine that we did, for Father had told us that was what happened all round the coast. From our bedroom windows we could see Flamborough Lighthouse and watched its beam which, in those days, had one red flash and then two white ones, I think. Since then, I believe it has been changed and has no red flash.

To return to Father's and Mother's problems: what were they to do with all of us? Cyril was to stay on at Hymers, and Margaret, then aged nine, and Winifred were to go to the Gregorys. (This I must verify, for I've lost bits of the jig-saw. They did go, but something happened and they went to Mr and Mrs Adams, also in Alpraham, before going to Auntie Kit, Mother's sister, whose children were much about M's and W's ages. KP) I was so conditioned to being move around like a parcel that I don't think I thought much about the problem. It was so wonderful to be with the family I didn't think about the future.

Some might say that Mother should have stayed in England and made a home for us, but I remember Mother telling me much later how, in her early days in Burma, some woman had said to her, "You can get someone else to look after your children, or let someone else look after your husband - if you want to." In these days of air travel and air mail, it is difficult to realise the magnitude of the problem that faced parents in the East in earlier days. The only thing I can say with absolute confidence is that never once, between 1908 and 1919, did it ever occur to me that Mother should have left Father in order to look after Cyril and me.

Eventually it was decided that I should go back to Rangoon with Father and Mother, and I was thrilled. I remember Father asking me if I'd like to go and, when I said "Yes", he tried to give me some idea of the life. Perhaps he thought I was full of romantic ideas, for I felt

he was trying to bring me down to earth, and Mother said they wouldn't be doing any special entertaining for me, only what they would have done had I not been there. "Entertaining" was something about which I knew absolutely nothing. The nearest the Gregorys ever got to entertaining was having the "preacher" to tea once a quarter. So the idea that no special entertaining would be done for me didn't worry me in the slightest.

Having faced a similar situation from a parent's point of view, I realise how busy the last part of their leave must have been for Mother; seeing that Cyril was fitted out to go back to Hymers, making clothes for Margaret and Winifred and for me. It's true we were in "rooms" and Mother did not have to do the cooking, but she did have to buy the food and cope with Mrs Hairsine, the landlady. But how this was accomplished I have now no recollection. I only know that we sailed from Birkenhead in the Bibby Liner SS Gloucestershire at the end of November.

End of Chapter 3

PART TWO - BURMA AGAIN

CHAPTER FOUR

Rangoon - Christmas Eve 1919 - very much the beginning of a new life in every way but, at the same time, a feeling of coming home in more ways than one. There was plenty to wonder at, to be interested in, without a feeling of strangeness. Perhaps that should be qualified. Strangeness there must have been, but the feeling "I have been here before" countered that. One of the things that did strike me as odd was an invitation, before we had even landed, given to Mother for me, to a party that afternoon. Perhaps that was the "entertaining" Father had been talking about. Fortunately Mother declined, to my great relief, as we did not then know where we should be sleeping that night.

In the friendly way that things happened on the Burma Railways, we were put up by Mr and Mrs Hicks at 5 Hume Road, while Father and Mother arranged about furniture for their house, 4 Hume Road, as they had sold up everything before going Home on leave. When the basics of beds and mosquito nets had been acquired, plus cooking pots, &c., and servants engaged, we moved in and lived picnic-fashion until more things had been bought or unpacked.

While we were with the Hickses we had one of the very best curries I have ever eaten, though I did have one shock. Among the toli-moli was a dish of grated coconut with little green bits in it. "Your friend appears to have bitten on a bee", as Eeyore might have said, for I had chewed a sizable piece of fresh green chilli!

Meal times seemed odd: breakfast with fish or chops or steak followed by fruit at 9 o'clock, then nothing till 8 o'clock (or later) dinner, except afternoon tea at 4 o'clock. Father went to the office as soon as breakfast was finished and, when the servants had finished the housework, they were free to go to their own quarters until it was time to bring the hot water, in large kerosene tins, for our baths.

But now I shall have to make up my mind whether I am going to give an overall picture of the years, or deal with the minutiae of living as they came. Maybe I shall just have to write as the spirit moves me, and leave Norman's "scissors and paste" technique to unscramble me. One difficulty is that I can see the setting in my mind's eye but haven't the skill to bring it to life for someone else.

4 Hume Road was one of seven Railway houses adjacent to Hume Road railway station, and the railway, in a shallow cutting, ran along one side of No 4's garden. The houses, though not all of the same pattern, were alike in being brick downstairs and all wood upstairs, which made for comfort. The brick took longer to get hot, so remained comparatively cool during the day, and the wood cooled more quickly in the evening. In the garden there were flowering bushes of hibiscus and ixora and, on stands by the front porch, there were pots of maidenhair ferns and a variety of crotons. There was a big mango tree on one lawn and a jack-fruit tree at the other end of the garden. My Father's

pride and joy was the magnificent ixora hedge which ran along the frontage of the garden, which was considerable. During the rains it was a blaze of scarlet flowers which attracted hundreds of butterflies

Looking back, I wonder what filled those halcyon days but, whatever it was, I was never bored. Mother arranged for me to have dancing lessons, for the early 1920s were the Dancing Days. In Rangoon, Thé Dansants were not the usual form, but dances were held in the ballroom of the Gymkhana Club on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 6.30 to 8 o'clock or thereabouts, as well as the Cinderella Dances on Saturday evenings. The Cinderella Dances were dinner jacket and evening dress affairs, but the others were informal and we wore ordinary afternoon clothes. Monday evening was the popular one and between dances we enjoyed "looking at the papers" - Punch, Illustrated London News, the Tatler, Sketch, &c. In addition to these regular dances, from time to time there were special ones, such as a Fancy Dress Ball at the Jubilee Hall on 5th November 1920. I imagine it was in aid of a special cause but, if so, I don't remember what it was. Mrs Hicks, with whom we stayed when we arrived in Rangoon, lent me a Shan Princess's costume. Mother wasn't very well so didn't come, but Father escorted me and introduced two young men who had recently joined the Burma Railways.

They were Mr Powell of the Locomotive, and Mr Dixon of the Engineering Department, both of whom I used to see frequently later on Monday evenings at the Gym. But Mr Powell seemed to appear more often, at tennis parties and so on. He used to go swimming in the Railway Swimming Bath at Insein. Mr Powell took to asking me to go with him, and we travelled together by the Local train from Hume Road to Insein. The Swimming Bath was inside the walls of the Locomotive Works and was rather a gaunt affair, but beautifully clean and cool.

Mr Craig, the Loco Superintendent, was usually there and he'd invite us and other young people who were there to have tea with him and his wife. And what teas! Mrs Craig did her own baking, and there were always Scotch pancakes, as well as a varied assortment of cakes and endless cups of tea. Then back to the station and by train to 4 Hume Road where, after a drink with Father and Mother, Mr Powell would go off on his Douglas motor bike.³

During December 1920, I went to a Girl Guide camp at Amherst, on the sea coast south of MoulMein. It wasn't a tented camp, but we camped in what I think must have been Burmese rest-houses - roofed and floored but open at the sides. We were close to the beach which, ever since, has seemed to me the ideal of what a beach should be, with clean white sands and a belt of trees coming down to high water mark. The day started with "hoppers" - "hapahs" - in other words, wafer thin rice cakes, the size of dinner plates, with crispy edges, which were bought from Burmese women who came round selling them. The girls were mixed, Burmese and Anglo-Indian, and curry and rice was the rule of the day, and the thin liquid from green coconuts was a refreshing drink. We must have been away from Rangoon just a week, and were back in Rangoon for Christmas.

Father had some casual leave early in 1921, and we went for a trip in one of the big I F (Irrawaddy Flotilla) boats called either Taiping or Talifu. We went by train to Mandalay and boarded the boat there. The Mail steamers were big shallow-draft ships, carrying a few first class passengers, and a great many deck passengers; on either side were attached "flats" on which goods were carried.

The river here is wide and smooth with a constantly changing channel as sandbanks shift. At night a large searchlight picked up the shiny pieces of metal on long bamboos which marked the channel. When a village was reached, a lascar jumped overboard with a mooring rope and, the boat secured, a throng of people milled about, either coming aboard or going ashore.

For miles and miles the river was like a frieze of wallpaper, with a constantly repeated pattern of low hills and occasional riverine villages reflected in the glassy water. As one went further upstream, the river became narrower and the hills higher, till we came to a succession of defiles or gorges, where the steep cliffs towered above us. One of the passengers had told us he was writing a book about Burma. When we were going through some of the finest scenery he was fast asleep in a "long-sleeve chair" in the forepart of the ship. Someone said we ought to wake him up, which my Mother gently did. He barely stirred and, after a cursory look round, said, "We have hundreds of miles like this in New Zealand", and went to sleep again. Shortly after we saw a herd of elephants at the water's edge, but we let him sleep.

BhaMo, our destination, had a character of its own. Being near the border with China (about 30 miles), there were a lot of Chinese about, some of them being women with bound feet. There were also Shans, Chin, Kachin and Shan-Tay-Oke, in addition to the Burmese and Indians that one saw in any Burmese town or village. Being fairly far north, the temperature was lower than in Mandalay, and it was pleasant to see so many rosy cheeks. There was the usual crowd of bullock carts but many pack animals as well. We went to the Chinese Joss House, which was said to be one of the finest outside China. When we went through the Moon Gate one was in an entirely different atmosphere. I can't remember details, only the air of peace and tranquillity. On the return trip, we disembarked at KaTha, on the west bank of the river, and went from there to NaBa, the junction for the mainline from MyitKyiNa to SaGaing. From SaGaing to Amarapura by Burma Railways ferry, and then to Mandalay and by mail train to Rangoon.

The Hot Weather in Rangoon was hot but not unbearably so, though if the rains were late in breaking, the heat and humidity could be trying. I had been suffering a lot from headaches and a friend of my Mother's suggested that I might be more comfortable without so much hair. What about cutting it? Such an idea had never occurred to me but, once I thought about it, I was thrilled with the idea. I had a lot of hair and "putting it up" was a misery, pins were always falling out, and hats acquired a queer boat-like shape. So Mother took the scissors, off came my hair, and I felt about three inches taller. And what bliss not to have long strands of hair winding themselves round one's damp perspiring neck when doing one's hair! It didn't cure the headaches but I had no wish to let my hair grow long again.

The only person who was sorry that my hair had been cut was Mr Powell - he was still Mr Powell in those days - but he changed his mind later.

During the dry season, a lot of tennis was played in Rangoon on either cement or mutti courts, the one in Hume Road being the latter. The ground was dug up all over, then rolled and rolled again, and finally a wash of cow dung was smeared all over. When it had dried thoroughly, it was marked out and was very pleasant to play on. After a while, the surface became scuffed, when another layer of wash was put over it. When Mother arranged a tennis party I played too, but remained the rabbitest of rabbits.

However, I did acquire two new skills - sculling and paddling a canoe or punt. Mr Powell took me to the Boat Club, where we went sculling and canoeing. I never attempted to pole a punt but could manage a paddle reasonably well. The Boat Club was on the edge of the Royal Lakes. To see the sunset behind the Shwe Dagon Pagoda reflected in the water was something to remember. Another sight to remember was the Mussulmans collecting at the edge of the lake with their prayer mats to say their evening prayers facing Mecca.

As a rule, the Rains broke in Rangoon about the 15th May, and it was reckoned that the Monsoon took about five days to get from Colombo to Rangoon so, when we heard that it had broken there, we were prepared for it. It usually broke with dramatic suddenness. Great dark billowy clouds piled up, accompanied by thunderstorms, then down came the rain, florin-sized spots on the dusty earth for a moment or two, then stair-rods of rain, till everything was soaking wet. When darkness came the "poochies" arrived. Thousands of small flying insects were everywhere. Some were harmless enough except for the number of them. Many bit or stung, and then there were the "stink bugs", with an evil smell. In addition to the small insects, there were walnut-sized beetles which whirled around and fell with a clatter to the ground. Sometimes, when one of them fell, we'd invert a small brass ashtray over it and, before long, the ashtray would be clanking along the crazy-china floor. A poochi night must have seemed like Harvest Festival to the little lizards on the walls.

The periods of heaviest rain seemed to coincide with high tide on the Rangoon River but, whether it was actually raining or not, the sky was grey and full of dark clouds, except for about ten days in July when there was usually a "break in the Rains". With all this dampness it was not surprising that things grew mouldy overnight, shoes, clothes, books, everything. Better-quality envelopes were sold with a small piece of waxed paper under the flap, to prevent the gum sticking before its time. How the dhobis ever got the clothes dry is a mystery. It's true they were sometimes late, but they were clean. The dhobis didn't use pegs but twisted lines, with a corner of a garment pushed between the twists. When a sudden shower was heard, all the dhobi family rushed at the lines and pulled the clothes away at speed.

At the onset of the rains, mutti tennis courts became like hayfields until, in October, the rain slackened and work could start on the courts again. An odd game could sometimes be snatched on a hard court but could not be counted on. But swimming at Insein continued. Val - I can't go on calling him Mr Powell any longer, though he didn't become Val to me till later - had a month at Ywataung during the Hot Weather of 1921, when he officiated as

DLO (District Locomotive Officer) at Ywataung while John Wharton was on sick leave, and Rangoon lost some of its zip.

In October, Mother and I went up to KaLaw, and I found myself watching the Up-train come in, "just in case" Val had got some casual leave. He hadn't, but, when we got back to Rangoon, he said he'd been lucky and got a punt in the draw for the following "Moonlight Band Night", and would I go with him? During the Cold Weather, on the Saturday nearest the full moon, the band played at the Boat Club and punts were taken out on the Royal Lakes. What band I'm not sure, though I believe the Burma Railways Auxiliary Force Band played on occasion.

Val dined with us at 4 Hume Road first, and then we went off in the parental Model T Ford with the hood down, being driven by Martaza, Father's driver. The Royal Lakes at any time were lovely, with the Shwe Dagon reflected in the water, but, in the moonlight and with the music softened by distance, they were definitely romantic. Val had found a little cove in one of the islands in the lake and taken the punt there. Ordinarily, there was no lack of conversation but that evening there was a certain constraint, and then he asked if I could ever love him. Poor dear, he thought it was so plain that he loved me that he didn't realise that he hadn't said so, and thus put me in what I felt was an awkward position. The situation was so romantic and I was so unsophisticated that I didn't know what to do. Eventually I said, "Ask me again in daylight", and it was a rather sad pair that returned to Hume Road.

Then followed a month in which we saw very little of each other and, though Val and I may have danced together, he seemed to spend more time with other girls; I began to think I'd done well to be cautious and that I'd been the victim of all-too-romantic-circumstances. However, he asked me to go with him to the Boat Club one afternoon. We went by train from Hume Road station to Rangoon main station and had a tikka gharri to the Boat Club. Then, in punt No 13, in the same cove of the same island, we settled things to our mutual satisfaction in broad daylight. We didn't have a tikka gharri back to the station, so presumably we walked but it felt like floating - past the Municipal dhobi ghats and the "Agri-Horti-" gardens to the station and then to Hume Road, where Father and Mother were waiting for us, realising that some sort of news was imminent. They greeted us with "Well?", and we replied in unison, "It is well!" And "Well" it remained.

We had a blissful period of engagement until it was time to go on leave, and then came the awful business of parting, as Father and Mother said quite firmly that I was to go with them; the separation would do us good and, if we were of the same mind at the end of Father's leave, we could be married. If we felt the same! What a thing to say!

During the time after we were engaged and before I went home with Father and Mother, Val and I got to know each other well. We had never had difficulty in talking to each other, except on the one memorable occasion. Mother, very wisely in view of our long separation (hers and mine), said to Val, "Tell Kathleen what she needs to know about marriage", and this he did in a way that made me eternally grateful. In addition, we read

together and discussed Marie Stopes' "Married Love" and similar books, finding out where we agreed with the authors, and where we had our own ideas. So, by the time parting came, we knew each other pretty well as we met practically every day. The separation was, though painful, probably a good idea, for I doubt whether we could have stood the pace for a year.

End of Chapter 4
(Edited 17/1/91.)

CHAPTER FIVE

We sailed from Rangoon in SS Martaban, then Paddy Henderson's oldest ship. Father, at the Gym, had met a man who had travelled out in Martaban, and he had complained bitterly about the food aboard. Father asked him if he had done anything about it and, when he heard that nothing had been done, Father cabled to Henderson's Head Office: "Ensure good food Martaban sailing (date), signed Kendall." So, when we went aboard, Father was met by the Chief Steward, who hoped he would find everything satisfactory. And it was.

I shared a cabin with "Jack" (Mrs Sidney) Webster and Mrs Joe Watson, who later became Margaret's mother-in-law. Her son Alan was then about 19 and working with BTH in Birmingham, and she was expecting him to take her to dances.

Our landing at Tilbury was dreary in the extreme, as was our journey to Fenchurch Street. Though the journey from Tilbury to Fenchurch Street had been dreary, our arrival there was pleasant, as we were met by Val's parents and sister Monica. (Later in the year I stayed with them in Harrow and was confirmed while there.)

This time we went to Weymouth, where we had rooms on the sea front, presumably engaged for us by Auntie Kit, who was living there then; Margaret and Winifred had been living with her. Then up to Hornsea, where we had a furnished house, Melbourne House in Westgate. One of the things I remember most about this period is the agony of waiting for Mail days and Val's letters; another is the periodic visits of Aunt Louisa.

She was Father's sister and his senior by a good many years, and we tended to think of her as a great aunt. She was a thorn in Mother's flesh, for she used to arrive from Hull unannounced and would stay all day, irrespective of what Mother or any of us were doing. Father, I fear, had no compunction in going off to play golf, leaving the rest of us to it. Looking back on it, I realise that we could have learnt a lot about our forebears from her, but we all found her excessively irritating - and her false teeth clicked!

Once again there was the problem - what to do about the family. Cyril was going to Kings College, London, to study engineering; I was going back to Rangoon to be married. But what about Margaret and Winifred? I suppose I was so engrossed in my own feelings that I didn't really take in what arrangements were made for them. (Anticipating somewhat, I know that Mother was at home in 1924 when Nancie was born but for further details I shall have to ask Margot.)

Father, Mother and I stayed a night, or possibly two, with Uncle Lewis, Father's elder brother, at Hale, Cheshire, before sailing from Birkenhead in SS Bhamo (or was this in 1919?). We had said Good-bye to a forlorn-looking Cyril on Paragon Station, Hull, where he had seen us off.

Val had written that if he could arrange it, he would come out to the Pilot vessel to meet us; but not to count on it, as it wasn't easy to arrange. I didn't count on it, but I certainly hoped, and looked eagerly to see whether the Pilot had anyone with him, and he had, and it

was Val! Once he was safely aboard, and had made his number to the Captain, the pair of us were quite unaware of anyone else. From the Pilot vessel to Sule Pagoda Wharf must have taken something like 16 to 18 hours and we berthed early in the morning, about the 1st November.

Between then and the 22nd, the date of the wedding, we were busy. I'd sent Val furniture catalogues, and he'd had some furniture made, and we had more things made after I arrived. But we chose very simple things that could be packed into goods wagons without suffering too much, as we knew that we'd years of "transfers" ahead of us. We reckoned that we got the basic necessities for Rs 1000/-, and wedding presents helped.

Just before the wedding I ran a temperature and had to go to bed. Mother discussed the situation with the doctor, who just laughed and said, if necessary, we could be married in the bedroom. It didn't come to that, but I didn't get dressed on my wedding day until I put on my wedding dress, and all I had in the way of nourishment, until that moment, was a glass of milk with brandy in it. It was all I needed, and any fever I had disappeared like magic.

We were married in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Montgomery Street and there was a considerable congregation of Burma Railway folk and other friends. The sad part was the absence of members of our families. Like any other bride, I was aware of only one person and that was Val as Father led me up the aisle and, as soon as I reached him, we held hands. Archdeacon Anderson married us and gave us an address which I can't remember, though I know it was based on Psalm 127: "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it." Austin Harvey was Val's best man, but he hadn't much to do as Val insisted on keeping the wedding ring himself - he thought he was much less likely to lose it than Austin was. Peggy Craig was my only bridesmaid - daughter of the Craigs where Val and I had had tea so often. In fact, Hugh Craig, when he heard that we were engaged said, "I'm thinking that our Saturday evening teas were a wee bit irresponsible", as perhaps they were.

The service in the Cathedral was about 3 o'clock, which was pretty hot on 22-11-22 but, by the time we got back to 4 Hume Road, it was becoming cooler and the tea tables were laid in the shade of the mango tree on the lawn. We had decided to go to KaLaw for our honeymoon, partly because Val had not been there, and partly because we could have the use of one of the little construction bungalows to ourselves. Mother had thought we might be more comfortable in the Railway Rest House in MayMyo, but we felt we'd prefer privacy to the possibility of greater comfort.

We were seen off from Hume Road in the usual way and, having seen Mother attach one of my white wedding shoes, I made a point of rescuing it when we arrived at Rangoon station. We travelled by 3 Up Mail, leaving at 6 o'clock to the accompaniment of (probably) illegal fog signals. Mr Craig had lent us his inspection carriage, so we were very comfortable and didn't have to change at ThaZi, as the carriage was attached to the train on the Southern Shan States Line. Our servants were in the carriage too, in their compartment, our bearer Abdul and a Mohammedan cook who made no particular impact on our lives.

"Honeymoon Bungalow" was on the hill overlooking the valley through which the railway came to KaLaw, which stood about 4000 ft. above sea level. The bungalow was built Burmese style, raised from the ground about 5 ft. The framework was timber, filled in with plaited bamboo panels, plastered and whitewashed, and thatched with palm leaves. Rangoon had electric light by this time, but KaLaw still had oil lamps - not that this worried us. It was pretty cold and the wind whistled through the floor boards, particularly in the bath room. Whatever it was that had stricken me just before we were married returned for a couple of days, but not seriously, and just being together was bliss, with no "turning out time" at night as Val said.

Though Val had ten days "casual leave", we didn't spend all of it in KaLaw, so that we could have a day or two settling into our house before he had to go back to work. At that time he was ALO (Assistant Locomotive Officer) Lower District but, because there wasn't a Railway house available for us in Rangoon, we were given one in Insein, ten miles out of Rangoon. It was an odd little house, commonly called "The Prison", and didn't warrant its name. In one way it was unlike most of the Railway houses, being built of brick throughout, instead of being "semi-pukka" (see description of 4 Hume Road, above) like the others. Our furnishings were sparse, a Japanese mat on the floor, four or five cane chairs at Rs 5/- per time, a superior cane settee bought with a wedding present cheque, some small occasional tables bought from a Burmese "sa pwe kone" (travelling table seller), and our wedding presents. With the cheque from the BR officers we had bought a gramophone and some records, which gave us enormous pleasure. That furnished the "drawing room", with the addition of enlargements of Val's Athens and Constantinople photos. A dining table, six chairs and a sideboard, two beds and two almirahs, plus the inevitable bathroom fitting, and that was that.

Our first morning in our own home, we were woken by Bearer beating on a rather horrid little plated gong, which had been among our presents together with three Chinese gongs. It was an infuriating sound and we had to hide the gong, leaving Bearer to say, "Please, chota hazri ready, ma" instead. Val went into Rangoon every day by train, leaving Insein about 7 o'clock and getting home about 4. More often than not, he travelled on the engine, to keep the drivers up to scratch.

We went together to the Bank to open a joint account and I felt foolish when I wrote my maiden name when asked for a specimen signature. That wasn't really as odd as the occasion when I saw my Mother sign her maiden name when she'd been married nearly twenty years!

Val's work took him to Prome and HenZaDa and BaSsein in one direction, but I can't at this stage say with any certainty how far it went in the other direction; I think it was up to PeGu on the main Mandalay line, and then to MarTaBan, MoulMein and Y,. As a rule, I went with him when he "went out on line", travelling in an Inspection carriage - not as big as the one in which we travelled to KaLaw - but it had a saloon with observation windows at the rear. It also had a bathroom, and servant's quarters and a kitchen, so we were self-contained. Leaving Insein we usually went by the Prome Mail, 7 Up, about 10 pm, so of course bedding rolls went with us. There was one permanent bunk and one folding one

which could be put out of the way during the day time. The carriage would be cut off the train at intermediate stations so that Val could inspect the engine sheds, check stores with foremen, and so on. And in one respect he was like Royalty for, wherever he went, he was followed by the Boxes, containing office work that he had to deal with, with (sometimes) the bonus of letters and magazines.

The first time I ate a duck's egg was on one of these trips. Val loved them but I had never come across them so, when we were at GyoBinGauk (a name to remember in another connection) and saw some on a Burmese stall, we bought some. I was not impressed. I think maybe they were pickled.

Prome, on the Irrawaddy, about 160 miles from Rangoon, was pleasant in cold weather and the walk along the river bank looking towards the Yomas on the other side was attractive. There, to my astonishment, I found miniature loofahs growing, about four inches in length. I sent some of these home to Monica, still with their outer skin intact but brown and dry, and she has some still and gave one back to me when we finally left Burma.

There was a branch line from LetPaDan to TharRaWaw Shore, and thence by BR ferry to HenZaDa. From HenZaDa the line went north to KyanGin and south to BaSsein. The lascars on the ferry kept hens and it was amazing to see these birds as the ferry approached the shore, for they flew off and landed in the water, and then swam ashore and had actually developed little webs in their feet. When the ferry hooted for the return trip, they repeated the process in reverse.

Sometimes Val had to go out on line just for the day, and I went with him; as it was just for the day, there was no need to take the usual quantity of luggage that was involved for a week or more. On one such occasion, Mrs Cantor, who lived next door to Mrs Craig and liked to keep track of everyone's doings, went to see Mrs Craig and said, "Where are the Powells? I've seen no sign of life in the house. I've seen no luggage being taken to the station, and Arthur doesn't know where they are!" Mrs Craig let her go on and then said, "I expect Kathleen's gone home to her mother", and with that Mrs Cantor had to be content.

End of Chapter 5

CHAPTER SIX

We weren't in Insein very long. Sometime during the hot weather of 1923, Val was posted as officiating DLO (District Locomotive Officer) to YwaTaung, head quarters of the Upper District. "Transfers" were definitely Do-it-Yourself jobs as there were no removal firms. We were allowed a couple of four-wheeled wagons and made our own arrangements, but a house went with the job. Val arranged for crates to be made at the Loco Works at Insein, using as a basis the crates in which engine parts had come out from Home. These proved to be very substantial but were something of a menace, as they were really much too big and the weight, when filled, was considerable. Arrangements were made for coolies to carry furniture and crates from the house to the wagons in the station yard. I used to stay in the house while Val stood by the wagons to see that the heavy stuff went in first. Left to themselves, the coolies had a tendency to put the cane chairs in first and the rest on top!

YwaTaung had no existence apart from the railway. There was the station, the engine shed, coal and wood fuel stacks, a Railway Institute with tennis court, and "lines" for the Indian Loco, Engineering and Traffic staff. On "the other side of the tracks", to use an American expression which I had not then met, was the Office and four houses for officers and three or four for office clerks, and a tennis

court. There was also a building that was called a Rest House, but there was no furniture in it as it had mysteriously found its way across the tracks into the house of the Permanent Way Inspector.

Very fortunately we didn't have to use the Rest House, for we found that the District Engineer, Oliver S Macdonell, had made arrangements for us to stay in his house, until John Wharton was out of what would be ours. OS himself was out on line, but he'd left staff in the house to look after us, which was a thoughtful thing to do. His wife was at Home, but it was a "memsahib's house" and equipped to cope with guests, which John Wharton's bachelor establishment certainly was not.

As soon as John had handed over to Val and packed up to go on leave, we moved in, and a couple of days after that the General Manager's Inspection Party arrived. At this time, the Burma Railways was still a Limited Company, and the General Manager, Mr Home, came out from England every year to inspect the whole of the line; he was accompanied on each District by the Engineering, Locomotive and Traffic District Officers, as well as by the heads of each Department. While in Rangoon, I had heard so much talk about the nuisance it was when wives accompanied their husbands on these occasions, that I decided I wouldn't be one of them. So, there was I, saying a fond farewell to Val, staying alone in YwaTaung, with no other European within miles, and not even knowing what made all the strange creaking noises in the house, as it settled down to the changes of temperature at night. But I

didn't really mind and there was something strangely peaceful about the place. Early in the morning there was a sound that might have been the pipes of Pan played, I think, by the local goat boy.

The compound was big and largely uncultivated, as John wasn't interested, but along the front boundary there were a lot of pink oleanders, the smell of which I always associate with YwaTaung. The house faced east towards a low line of hills, beyond which ran the Irrawaddy. On the hills there were many whitewashed pagodas and near us was a sizable one which we called the wedding cake pagoda.

YwaTaung had no bazaar, so our cooks used to go by the early morning train, which made a special halt so that they could get off near the bazaar at SaGaing. Fish was good, chicken and meat were reasonable, and fruit and vegetables varied with the time of year; beans and bananas were available pretty well all the year round. Cold water was laid on in the house, though it would not run if an engine happened to be taking water in the station. Nor did we drink it, as it was slightly brackish. We bought fresh water at one rupee a day (I think) from a Burman who came round with a huge barrel on a bullock cart. We had oil lamps, of course, and a "pull punkah" over the dining table. It was in the days before oil-operated fridges. We had an indifferent little ice-box, which we optimistically fed with 4lbs of ice which our pani-wallah collected from the 4 o'clock train from Rangoon - 77 Up - together with a supply of soda-water. We kept some soda in an earthenware chatti of water, so that evaporation through the unglazed surface of the chatti should cool them slightly before being put in the ice-box.

YwaTaung was in the Dry Zone but, while Val was out with the Inspection party, we had torrential rain. The rain came through the roof shingles, through the bedroom floor and into the sitting room, causing Abdul to say, "Can't living-to here, memsahib", but the roof shingles swelled with the rain and we had no further trouble, though that year there was more rain than usual.

I used to go out on line with Val, which was always interesting, though not terribly comfortable. The Inspection carriage was a four-wheeler and the track was laid with comparatively light rails taken from the main line when heavier ones had been laid there. These old rails were badly "hogged" so each wheel went into a rail joint with a thud, and we went along bump, bump, bump, bump, instead of bumpetty-bump, bumpetty-bump, as in a bogie vehicle. It was hot, so all the windows were open and in consequence it was noisy too. At night, or rather, at dusk, we dropped the gauze screens at the windows to keep the mosquitoes out and burnt mosquito coils, for KanBaLu and NaBa, where Val always had work, were in bad malarial districts.

In addition to inspecting the engines and engine sheds he had to measure wood fuel stocks. All the engines on the Upper District at that time ran on wood fuel, which was supplied by contractors, in billets about 2 ft. long by about 4 inches in diameter. These were built in long stacks about 4 or 5 ft. high, and Val had to measure all of these, entering the measurements into a special book and then work out the cubic content before the contractor was paid. Hardly a job which required long years of training, but it was left to an officer rather than to a subordinate, who might be tempted to falsify the figures for a consideration from the contractor. So, when he had finished his outside work, Val came back to his "boxes" and his sums.

Sometimes we got as far as MyitKyiNa, but not as often as to KanBaLu and NaBa, as they were the stations where most wood fuel was stacked. The Mu Valley Railway, as it was called, was built as a strategic line to MyitKyiNa and was built like a Roman road, in straight lines from one point to another, up a hill and down a hill, rather than following the lie of the land. This caused delays during the monsoon as the fuel was sodden and poor little "F class" engines would run out of steam and have to pause while the "kettle" boiled again, before attempting the next incline.

The country between YwaTaung and KanBaLu was mostly in the Dry Zone and comparatively flat, with one or two big jheels near the railway. Paddy was grown in the areas irrigated by canals. Another Wet Zone started just south of KanBaLu, and the jungle became dense. Before reaching NaBa, the line ran through the BonChaung Gorge, on a ledge cut out of the rock, and the river running swiftly what seemed a long way below. During the rains, it was the duty of the engineering staff to send a man on a trolley through the gorge to see that the line was safe, unbreached and with no fall of rocks. On one occasion he met another hazard and sent the following telegram: "To all concerned: Time keeper on patrol trolley reports - we met one of Foucar's elephants. Trolley hit elephant. Elephant picked up trolley and threw it away and we ran on fast feet to NanKan."

Once, when we left NaBa on our homeward journey, it rained and it rained and it rained during the night, and we couldn't help wondering whether the line would collapse beneath us. It didn't then, but did shortly after we had passed, and the line was unusable for some weeks.

North of NaBa, one passed into more open country again, with long ranges of hills on either side, country that became known to many British troops during the War. When we were first in these parts, the original timber trestle bridges were being replaced with bridges with masonry abutments and steel girders. The damp brickwork of all the bridges was an amazing sight, for it attracted hundreds of beautiful butterflies! There was a stretch of nineteen miles between stations in the region of a game reserve before we reached MoGaung, where most of the world's jade comes from, and then one came to MyitKyiNa (Myit-kyi-na = River-big-near) which was a most attractive place. Across the river the hills of China were visible, the air was cool and, as in BhaMo, the population was varied, mixed and attractive. MyitKyiNa gave us a glimpse of social life that felt positively metropolitan compared with YwaTaung. We went to the Club, and met men from the Military Police {not the Royal Corps of Military Police, but Burma's 'gendarmerie'}, Bombay-Burma and PWD men and others and, in some cases, their wives too. We met Stanley Vvall there, then a dapper little man, whose chief passion in life was polo, second only to his work. He and his wife lived in Lymington for a time.

Re-living my life like this poses puzzles which can never be solved now. I recall being in MyitKyiNa one Cold Weather, when Val and I slept in the Rest House there. But why we were in the Rest House rather than our carriage I can't be sure. (Digging back into my memory, I think it must have been when we took Nancie, then six months old, and Hla Thein with us on that trip. Perhaps we were all in the Rest House, or perhaps we left them in the carriage, as being more comfortable, and we went to the Rest House.) The long and

the short of it is that Val and I shared the only bed available, single, made of wooden slats, with a very hard coir mattress and inadequate blankets, on one of the coldest nights I can remember.

Of social life at YwaTaung when we first went there, there was virtually none. Mrs Macdonell, wife of OS the District Engineer, was at Home, the Assistant Engineer and the District Traffic Officer were bachelors, so I was the only woman. As all the men spent at least ten days a month "on line", life wasn't a giddy social round. We played tennis in the evenings, and then sat in the garden under the stars, drank lime squashes or whisky and soda according to our tastes, and talked. Naturally, a great deal of this was "shop", but I didn't mind this as I found it interesting. One evening Aikman, the Traffic man, said he was puzzled because the rates for carrying pulses and grain were different. We all tried to think of reasons to account for this, but couldn't decide what constituted the difference between them, size seemed unlikely, both were used for food and so on. I said that the only real distinction between pulses and grain that I could see was that pulses were dicotyledonous, while grain was monocotyledonous. Complete silence for a moment, as none of the men had ever heard the words before and thought I was shooting a line. I'd spoken in all innocence, as it was the only difference I could think of, though I could see absolutely no reason why they should be charged at different rates.

From time to time we had the odd visitor from the outer world, inspecting or passing through on his way to somewhere else, and he would be given a meal, possibly a bed, and would tell us all the news. Padre Caldecott, the Riverine chaplain, used to descend on us occasionally and, whatever the day of the week, would hold a service in the rather depressing Railway Institute, with a congregation that rarely numbered more than five. I noticed that the altar cloth was horribly shabby, so sent to Rangoon for patterns of linen. My choice can't have been very good, for I found it incredibly difficult to draw the threads for a hem-stitched hem, but did eventually finish it. I think Caldecott was as pleased to see us as we were to see him, for his was a lonely life, travelling up and down the Chindwin and Irrawaddy valleys.

Father Laffan, the Roman Catholic priest from Mandalay came from time to time and was delighted when he found that Val talked French that sounded like French, even if he was out of practice. Father Laffan had never been back to France since he came to Burma, and was unlikely ever to do so. He enjoyed talking French, smoking a cheroot and drinking a whisky and soda. Val used to chip him about visiting a heretic, but Laffan would reply, "Ah! Mais il y a des heretiques et des heretiques."

It's odd that the next visitor that comes to mind is Bishop Fyffe of Rangoon. Padre Caldecott wrote and said that the Bishop was coming and would I "invite the Station to tea"? I did what I could at short notice - sent Dost Mohamed to the Railway Steamer at SaGaing, which had a refreshment room of sorts, to get some sardines for sandwiches, and cook rustled up cakes of a sort, and egg sandwiches. No sardines were available, and never have I known tinned fish so tough and spikily boned. Tea was laid in the garden, for it was the time of year when rain was virtually unknown, but it arrived while we were having tea,

and everything had to be hustled indoors. I think the Bish was as awkward and nervous as I was, for he giggled and tittered in an infuriating way. Not my best tea party!

No shops, no church, no car, no telephone, no radio, no electricity but, thank heaven, a gramophone and records. 78s they may have been, but we loved them. They were our Desert Island Discs with a vengeance. Nor were we the only people to enjoy them. When Macdonell came we always had a Wagner session, and he'd listen entranced, occasionally coming to the surface to mutter, "Su-su-su-perb!" for he stammered worse than anyone I have ever met. However, once he knew that we'd give him time to say what he wanted to, he hardly stammered at all. It was alleged that, on one occasion, he met a Permanent Way Inspector for the first time and didn't know the poor man stuttered. "Don't m-m-mock m-me," said Mac. "I'm n-n-n-not m-m-mocking you, sir." "Yes, you are!" shouted Macdonell... As far as Mac was concerned, Wagner was the Greatest. He'd say, "That's cribbed from Wagner" and, if it was pointed out that the music was pre-Wagner, he merely said that Wagner had made better use of it.

Nor were humans the only creatures to enjoy our records. There were two big tucktoos that lived in the recesses of the ceiling, where the beams were laid on the walls. We called them Jimmy and Jenny. As soon as the record was put on they appeared, apparently listening intently until the gramophone was shut, and they waddled off to their hiding place. The tucktoos - so named because of their call - were large geckos, about 10 or 12 inches long, with large heads. They were fawn in colour, with rows of white, red and black spots. The wall lizards were almost transparent, in fact, if one happened to be on a window and you could see its underside, it was possible to see two eggs just about to be laid. These lizards were only about three inches long.

SaGaing Railway Station was about three miles from YwaTaung, but wasn't much nearer the Civil Station, where Government officials lived, than YwaTaung was. Looking back on it, I think a bicycle might have been a good idea - perhaps not. The road was hardly worthy of the name, more a bullock-cart track so, what with the heat and the dust, it wouldn't have been very pleasant.

The bazaar was a very limited one, so most of our shopping was done by post, but the occasional box-wallah was a help. One in particular I remember, the representative of Mrs E. Wood, Burr Street, Rangoon, from whom I bought a set of No. 12 steel knitting needles, with which I knitted many a pair of stockings for Val. The wool was bought by post from India. I had no book of patterns, so the first pair was made after many "tryings-on" at various stages. I had once turned a heel under Mother's instructions, but I had no notes to refer to so had to do what I could. I looked at a machine-made sock and from that worked a heel technique which I have used ever since, but it was many years before I saw it described in a knitting book.

Mandalay was only about ten miles away, as the crow flies, but to get there was a wearisome business by train to SaGaing, where one had to wait for the Railway ferry to take one across to Amarapura shore. There, one had to wait while wagons were off-loaded from the flats by winding engines on the shore, and eventually be taken by four-wheeled

coaches, bump, bump, bump, bump into Mandalay, arriving in that dusty place at the hottest time of the day, when all normal citizens wanted to relax. I made this trip once, before Nancie was born, to go to "Rowe and Co" to buy baby necessities. When I asked for large safety-pins, the Eurasian girl said, "We have not any safety-pins, but we have some nice white voile." (Eurasian was a much more descriptive term than Anglo-Indian, which was later preferred, many of the mixtures were Portuguese-Burmese and many were just mixed.) The return trip was even more exhausting than the outward one, as everything had become hotter and staler and, when I got back at 4 o'clock, having left at 9 and achieved nothing, I just got into a bath and cried - though I have laughed many a time since at the "nice white voile"!

During our time at YwaTaung, Val and I did have one trip to Rangoon to do some necessary shopping. We felt like real country cousins and had to take ourselves seriously in hand. Having been so much on our own, we found that there was rarely any need to finish a sentence because we each knew what the other meant, but the rest of the world didn't react in the same way. We probably bought quite a lot in our two days but I can remember only the candle lamps we bought for our dining table, and their shades. They were only delivered just before our train was due to start and I'd just unpacked them, to see whether they were all right, when the train gave a lurch going round one of the many "dog's hind leg" curves that the line took out of Rangoon to avoid the many cemeteries. I was caught off balance, and fell against one of the shades on the carriage seat. Though usable, it was never quite the same. However, we felt they added a touch of "gracious living" to our up-country life.

So far, I haven't said anything about the MonYwa branch, which was the other part of Val's district. At that time, the line was only open as far as MonYwa, but the line to Y,-U was under construction. Mr van der Beek was the engineer in charge. He and his wife and three small daughters were living in a bungalow like "honeymoon bungalow" at Kalaw. It was in a pleasant position on the banks of the Chindwin at Alçn. We went to see them in the evening and had a drink but, for the space of about twenty minutes, conversation was quite impossible, as the cicadas were singing their nightly hymn to the setting sun and drowning every other noise! Mrs van der Beek's first baby weighed 14 lbs. at birth and was the first new baby I ever held. The second weighed 12 lbs. and the third a mere 10 lbs! I think I must have been pregnant when I first went there, for Mrs v d B recommended some baby books to me, for which I was grateful, as I'd no one to give me advice. There was a bright side to this, as there was equally no one to depress me with horror stories and old wives' tales.

I don't remember much about MonYwa, except that there was a Burmese doctor there of the name of Tin Po. Not unnaturally, he was known to all his friends as Jerry Tin Po, a name which he enjoyed as much as anyone. Coming back from one of these trips, we were caught by a breach in the line on the wrong side of the Mu river, which was in flood. We had to leave the Inspection carriage there and were ferried across the river in a crowded country boat. The steersman seemed drawn magnetically to any bit of greenery rising out of the water. As every imaginable insect and creepy-crawly had taken refuge there, we soon had a lot of unwanted passengers. NyaungBinWun station was on the YwaTaung side

of the river. The platform was under about three feet of water and the station master in his office was squatting on a high stool, tapping out Morse messages as hard as he could go. A light engine came from YwaTaung, with Macdonell on board to survey the scene, and we all went back on it to YUG (code initials for YwaTaung).

We were delighted when I became pregnant, though it meant a certain amount of separation, because the journeys "out on line" really were pretty bumpy. Barring what I read, I had absolutely no ante-natal advice. Dr Hayne, the Railway doctor in Mandalay, came to confirm that I was pregnant but, beyond saying that he thought I should have no trouble, didn't make any suggestions. After my abortive shopping trip in Mandalay, the necessary baby things were bought by post from Rangoon, with the help of catalogues from Rowes and from Whiteaways, and some embroidered baby dresses from a convent in South India.

The Hot Weather of 1924 was a stinker. The day time temperatures were often 113øF, and the temperature in our bedroom was never below 103øF at night. We could hear the breeze in the trees but it didn't come down to house level. To add insult to injury, the nightjar was at it all night long - rat-tat-rattat-tat. Poor Val had dreadful prickly heat, and I used to feel I ought to have a whitewash brush for applying his prickly heat lotion, which didn't cure it, but gave some relief.

Hla Thein, a Karen nanny who had been with the Johnsons and the Bevans, came to us some time before Nancie was born, about a month I think it was, so that I shouldn't be alone while Val was out on line. We made arrangements for me to go into Mandalay Hospital, and kind Dr Hayne said he would put me up till I had to go in. When we first arrived and I went into the bathroom, one look at the towels made me think the doctor had a rotten dhobi, for the towels were grey. But only for a moment. As I moved, so did a cloud of mosquitoes, leaving the towels a beautiful white.

About 6 o'clock on Whitsunday morning, the 8th June 1924, I realised that something was happening, which Dr Hayne confirmed, and I went off to the Hospital and, at 12.40 (or it may have been 1.20), Nancie Ruth was born 7½ lbs. and 21 inches long - or should one say, tall? A message was sent to Val and he told me that he vaulted over the back of the settee when he got the news. He hadn't even begun to wonder when he'd hear, for Hayne had told him that it would probably be twelve hours before the baby was born. When I first saw her I said, "Oh! You little darling!" and have felt the same way ever since; Val was like a cat with two tails.

He was able to stay in Mandalay for a few days, so visited me regularly, and my Father made a special trip to come and see his first grandchild, which thrilled us. Mother was in England, so didn't see Nancie till some time later. Val's mother was delighted, but wondered why we had chosen to call her Nancie Ruth, to which the easy answer was that we liked the names.

I stayed in hospital for three weeks - not an unduly long time, in those days - and was glad to do so, as I had absolutely no experience of babies, and at YwaTaung I should be

very much on my own. It was a bit bleak without Val for, as I knew no one in Mandalay except Dr Hayne, I had no visitors. However, the hospital staff were good to me, and Nancie and I were in good shape when Val came to take me back to YwaTaung. Hla Thein was an experienced and reliable nannie, but felt somewhat deprived because I was feeding the baby myself, and hadn't got the sort of layette to which she was accustomed. That didn't matter to her as much as it might have done, as there were no other nannies about to see that her baby hadn't got "the very best of everything" - or what they considered the very best. The absence of other nannies must have made it a lonely life for Hla Thein, for there were none of her own people, Karens, in YwaTaung. I hadn't other women to talk to either, but I had got Val.

Nancie was christened in the Garrison Church in Rangoon, always known as the Tin Church, being one of the early examples of a Pre-Fab, being made of standard sections of corrugated iron. We stayed with Father in Hume Road; Mother was still at Home.

End of Chapter 6

CHAPTER SEVEN

When the time came to leave Ywataung, we moved out of the house, so that whoever was taking over from Val could move in, while we went to the Rest House, having been able to have some of the missing furniture returned. It was pretty primitive and lacking in comfort.

Val was posted to Insein as ESM (Engine Shop Manager), so we had no "line" work to do, at least for the two months that he officiated as ESM. After that, he reverted to ALO Rangoon with district work, though living in Insein. This time, we lived in an all-wood house, the oldest in Insein, on the opposite side of the maidan to the all-brick one we had been in before.

A very strange incident happened while we were there. We were just finishing our dinner when we heard a train coming in, but with so much noise that it was obvious that something very unusual was happening. Val was out of the house like a streak of light, and was at the station before the train had come to a halt. Craig, who had further to come, was also soon there. The sight that met our eyes was remarkable. It was a "mixed" train, consisting of the goods wagons in front with the passenger stock behind - but - the wagon just in front of the coaches had no wheels. We goggled, we looked and couldn't believe our eyes, but it was true. Further looking showed that one pair of wheels was being trundled along under the headstock of the first coach. Where was the other pair? Craig and Val and a party with lights walked up the line to try and find them. The first sign of anything having happened was a mile and a half north of Insein, where the axle horns had bumped on the sleepers. It was some time before they found the axle with its wheels in a paddy field 150 feet off the track. The driver had apparently been entirely unaware that anything was amiss, except that the train had seemed exceptionally heavy, so he had pushed the engine as hard as he could. The guard also had been unaware, until some railway apprentices at a level crossing had roused him to the situation. He had then applied his brakes, so he and the driver had, as it were, kept the wagon more or less in suspension. Otherwise, the passenger coaches might have piled up on top of the wagon, with disastrous results.

After our very quiet life at YwaTaung, we felt very gay and giddy, going to the Gymkhana Club to dance and to the Boat Club to scull or, in more leisurely fashion, to paddle a punt or canoe. And, to do it in style, we had the use of Father's Model T for a bit, which he had left with us to sell on his behalf when he went on leave; later we had the use of Aikman's Bull-nosed Morris Cowley while he was up-country on a traffic survey. Life was more fun for Hla Thein, too, as there were lots of other Karen nannies in Insein, as well as an American Baptist Mission Karen Seminary.

There is one sound that is particularly associated in my mind with Insein, and that is the call of a gibbon, almost a song. At one time, before our time, there had been a lot of them in the trees behind the Railway houses but, when we were there, there was only one. We used to hear him "making a joyful noise unto the Lord" as he swung himself with abandon from branch to branch and tree to tree. There was an Airedale in one house who got wild when Charlie was about and barked furiously. Charlie would swing low on a branch and brush

the dog's fur the wrong way, from tail to head. The Airedale would rush at him, when Charlie would muscle-up on a branch just out of reach. When the wires were first put up for electric light in the houses, Charlie behaved as though they were for his special benefit, swinging along with one hand on each of the parallel wires. This was before the current was switched on and everyone was full of foreboding. Charlie must have had an extra sense, for he never did it once the current was on.

The "flavour" of Insein was quite different from that of YwaTaung in many ways. Though YwaTaung was much more limited in the matter of people, it was very much wider in a physical sense. We missed the openness but, as I said earlier, it was pleasant to enjoy the "fleshpots of Egypt" again. Odd little incidents come to mind, like the evening when we had dined with friends in the New Civil Station, some way from Insein proper. Val had been doing some of his animal and bird imitations and crowed like a cock as we got into our open car. That set all the neighbourhood cockerels crowing, answering one another all the way to our house, with Val putting in an occasional cock-a-doodle-doo.

Nancie, meanwhile, had a chance of meeting other children when Hla Thein met the other nannies and ayahs out for their morning and evening walks. I remember one evening giving Nancie her supper. She was sitting at her miniature table in her little arm chair and leant across to touch the lace round the collar of a dress I had just made, and said the one word, "Pretty." As far as I can recollect, that was the first word that she said that was an actual comment on a situation.

Father and Mother came back from leave at the beginning of the Cold Weather of 1925, and Cyril came with them as an Assistant Engineer on the Burma Railways. It's very strange, but I remember nothing of our meeting, though I do remember that we engaged Appalswamy - always known as Sammy - as his servant - Boy, Butler, Bearer, call him what you will. Sammy was never at a loss and rose to any emergency. He was with Cyril throughout his service on the Burma Railways; they both died on the trek over the ChaukKan Pass during the evacuation of Burma in 1942. I think, but even this I can't be sure about, that Cyril, after a few days in Rangoon, went up-country to the construction of the PyiMaNa - KyaukPaDan branch line.

Val, who had landed in Burma in July 1920, was due for leave in April 1926, so we packed up all our belongings in crates, and they and the furniture were sent to "Stores" (B.R.) to await our return from leave. Before we sailed, we stayed for a few days with Father and Mother in Hume Road and, while there, heard the news that the Duchess of York had had a daughter on 21st April. It was the hottest Hot Weather I remember in Rangoon, with the temperature consistently over 100°F, which was unusual for Rangoon. We had had it much hotter in YwaTaung but the humidity in Lower Burma made the heat more difficult to bear, even with the help of electric fans.

We sailed in "Bhamo" (Henderson Line), landing at Plymouth just as the General Strike was over. We must have had news of this on board, but I can't recall it. Paddy Henderson never believed in keeping passengers on board a moment longer than was necessary, so we were ashore bright and early and had breakfast on the train: real porridge, real cream, real

bacon and eggs - the selective memory at work again. England looked as England ought to, lush green fields, contented cattle, the lot, but it hadn't seemed as peaceful as that to people living in England. When we eventually arrived at Harrow it was late, how late I can't say, but it had been a long day for all of us, and Nancie was not yet two years old.

Val's father had died before Christmas 1924, without a Will. As the law stood then, house property came to the son, not the widow. As Val had been in the Balkans from 1916, didn't return to England until Christmas Eve 1919 and then left for Burma in July 1920, he wanted to see something of his mother and sister. His mother would have taken it very hard if we had gone somewhere on our own. After her husband died, Val's mother let the house, Fyning, until just before we were due; as legally the house was Val's, the sensible thing seemed to be that we should live together, at any rate to start with.

It was after dark when we arrived, so I got Nancie settled in bed and then Mrs Powell asked me when I'd take over the housekeeping. This must have cost her an effort, which I appreciated, but I said would she please carry on as it was her home and I'd do all I could to help. It wasn't easy for either of us and I could see that it was very hard for her to have returned to the house where she and her husband had lived for many years, to share it with her son, of whom she had seen so little for ten years and who, in the meantime, had married and got a family.

She had given up the big front bedroom to us and gone into a smaller room at the back of the house. In addition, she had become very deaf, which was extremely frustrating for her. Val and I did try to help but were often met with, "Now you are making me feel a stranger in my own home!", which wasn't exactly encouraging. We helped with the shopping and tried to help with the washing-up, but there were so many "laws of the Medes and Persians" which were not self-explanatory that I think my efforts were more bother than they were worth. In spite of all this, we became very fond of each other and remained so.

We bought a "touring model" of one of the early Baby Austins. Val made up a little ditty about it of which I can only remember the final couplet, "in fact it is a bargain fine, for pounds one hundred and forty nine". The bucket seats in front were comfortable but the room at the back was distinctly limited. However, if we were taking Val's mother out, she sat in front, as was right and proper, and Nancie and I were quite happy behind. Once, Val was taking her out alone when he remarked, "By Jove, that's a good-looking girl!", and she said, "Don't let your dear little wife hear you saying things like that. That's how misunderstandings start," to which Val answered, "Kathleen picks 'em out for me." "Oh! What an extraordinary attitude!"

Though in many ways living in the same house was unrestful, we did manage to have quite a lot of fun and actually saw quite a number of London shows: The Constant Nymph; No, No, Nanette; Rose Marie. We went to Music Recitals at "Speech Room", to Orley Farm Prep School, to the Harrow and Eton match at Lord's. We also had a few days on our own, when we went to Nantwich and Crewe, where Val showed me over the Works where he had "served his time" as an articled(?) apprentice and Premium Pupil under Mr Bowen-Cooke. Margaret and Winifred spent part of the summer holidays with us and again part of the

Christmas holidays, during which we went to a revival of "Charlie's Aunt". It was, I think, the first matinée performance of the revival and was going very stickily, until something struck Win as being funny and her laugh turned into a snort. This released the tension and from then on the show went like a bomb.

We left Harrow on a bitterly cold and snowy day. Just what arrangement we had made to go to Euston I don't know, except that it was simple and easy. So we said Good-bye to Mrs P and Monica in the warmth of the house, so that they weren't exposed to the cold. But our concern back-fired, as we learnt from a letter we received when we reached Port Said. Mrs P had found a pair of Nancie's gum-boots (outgrown) and a shabby leather bag, and had tried to catch us at Euston; this had necessitated walking to the station, taking a train to Baker Street, Underground to Euston, and finishing up with pleurisy. If we had realised that this "proper" seeing-off mattered to her so much, she could have come with us in peace and comfort.

End of Chapter 7

CHAPTER EIGHT

When we arrived in Rangoon, we stayed a few days with Father and Mother before going to YwaTaung once again. While in Rangoon we bought a second-hand pram, for I was pregnant again, and engaged a young Karen nannie, a rather indifferent one whose name I can't remember.

On leaving YwaTaung in 1925, we had moved out of the house into the Rest House, to let whoever was taking over move in. Our return was not comfortable, for Boeddicker had made no attempt to get his gear out of the house, which he could easily have done and slept in the Inspection carriage. Mr Cantor, the Deputy Loco Supt, in his rather dictatorial way, had issued "handing-over orders" - "You will proceed to YUG by the morning train and proceed with Boeddicker by the afternoon train to Kanbalu, Naba, etc." So, between 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock, Boeddicker's furniture and goods had to be moved out and our wagons unloaded, and furniture and packing-cases carried across the maidan by coolies. Once they were in the house, beds had to be erected (and that was quite a job, every bolt being an individual one that would only fit in one place), packing cases unpacked that had been in store for a year, pillows, sheets and towels found, oil lamps located, mosquito nets put up, some crockery and cooking pots found, etc., etc. So Val had to leave Nancie, Nannie and me, plus Abdul, at 4 o'clock, having opened cases for me to unpack. All the other officers were out on line - all three of them - there was no one else there so things did look a bit bleak. However, in the morning things looked brighter, I did more unpacking, we arranged furniture and Cook (what cook? I can't remember) went off to the bazaar. At least I knew the drill.

Later, I found there was more life in the place. Pat Brewitt had taken Aikman's place as District Traffic Superintendent and his wife Margaret was great fun. Whether the van der Beeks were stationed there when we arrived I can't remember. They were certainly there later, but not the children. So there were three memsahibs there and five men, which made life more interesting. Oh yes, and we had a car!

The Baby Austin lived on the front verandah, so we were able to go to SaGaing and have a look at the river, or go in the opposite direction and look at the KaungMuDaw Pagoda. Nancie used to talk about Bigodas and Babygodas. The KaungMuDaw Pagoda was a massive one, being entirely solid (ie rubble-filled) and not a temple, in the sense of a building with an interior. It was built about the time of Queen Elizabeth I. The story goes that the Burmese Queen of the time instructed her architect to build the most beautiful pagoda that had ever been built. "What shape shall I make it, madam?", to which the Queen replied by drawing her aingyi to one side and saying, "Like that!", and "like that" it is, an enormous female breast. When Cyril first saw it and heard the tale he said, "Where's the other one?"

YwaTaung in 1927, as I mentioned above, had an increased female population compared with 1924, but even so I was quite often on my own, as Margaret Brewitt always went out on line with Pat, as did Mrs van der Beek with her husband. (Query - did we ever know their Christian names? I don't think we did.) The construction of the Ava Bridge had

begun, at least the preliminaries in the way of offices and temporary bungalows for the staff.

We had made arrangements for me to go into Mandalay Hospital once again for the birth of the new baby, but she or the Fates had other ideas. Winifred Toller, whose husband was going to be Superintending Engineer for the Bridge, came over and had a cup of mid-morning tea with me a fortnight before the baby was due. She had been spending a few days with Margaret Brewitt so, when she was ready to go, I walked the short distance to the Brewitt's house with her, having had a few odd feelings but thinking nothing of them - just the baby settling down into the pelvis. And then - Help! - it was more than that. Val's gear was all packed ready for him to go out on line at 4 o'clock. The Brewitts and van der Beeks were going on the same train, and Winifred Toller was returning to Rangoon. Somehow urgent messages were sent to various people - the Civil Surgeon in Mandalay, the native Sub-assistant Surgeon at YwaTaung, and Mrs van der Beek. I put a pair of scissors in a pan of water on my Valor Perfection Stove, to be sure of that, and got the bearer to see that other water was boiled.

Mrs van der B came over with a trolley-man's mackintosh ground sheet to protect the bed and, in little more time than it takes to write, an hour and twenty minutes from the first suspicion that anything was happening, Daphne Margaret arrived, with Val in time to see. She was tiny, only about 16 inches long, but plump and well nourished-looking. Val did not go out on line, and we were lucky, for Col Brayne, the Civil Surgeon, came by the four o'clock bringing with him a nurse from the Hospital. She was allowed to stay with me until Sister Garness, one of the Lady Minto Nursing Sisters from Rangoon, arrived. Once I'd got over the shock of being so nearly on my own when the baby arrived, it was lovely to be at home with Val, Nancie and Daphne. I'd been well looked after in Mandalay, b FP Ris was lovely. All the same, I must have looked a shade pathetic as Mrs Brayne, the Colonel's wife, came over from Mandalay and persuaded me that I must accept her invitation to come and stay in her house in Maymyo for a month, if not for my sake, then for the children's, to get them in cooler air for a while. I think it did us good and I was grateful, but I was very glad to get back to YwaTaung and Val.

Tennis was the chief entertainment though there was only a short time to play, from about 4.30 to 6 o'clock, when it became too dark to play. Some time after Daphne was born, the van der Beeks must have been transferred, for "Wullie" Air became District Engineer. His wife, Bee, was an exceptionally good tennis player, Wullie was pretty good and so was Pat Brewitt. Margaret didn't play and I rarely did. Val had an almost untakable first service but, if that was out, wasn't so good with a second one, but played a good game nevertheless. After which, we sat out under the stars, had drinks and, of course, talked.

On one occasion Geoffrey Fane, a young bachelor Assistant Traffic Superintendent, returned hospitality by inviting us all to his house for a drink, of which he'd provided a considerable quantity. As usual, we were in the garden and, in the moonlight, I saw a gin bottle gently swaying to and fro, and I exclaimed, "Oh! look at that gin bottle!" I was still feeding Daphne and had drunk nothing stronger than squash but Geoffrey, who had, shot a quick glance at it and turned hurriedly away. The bottle had swayed and, eventually, fell

over and the cause became clear. One of the big "Tharrawady beetles" had been imprisoned in the recess at the bottom of the bottle, and its efforts to get free had made the bottle sway.

I have photographic evidence that Cyril came to YwaTaung during this period, for the snap shows Val, Cyril, Nancie, Daphne and me. I think it must have been the time when he said he'd seen Padre Caldicott and arranged with him that he'd christen Daphne at SaGaing on a particular date. Cyril wasn't at the christening and I'm not sure where he was stationed, but I think it was the time when he was on the MyinGyan - PaLeik construction, and so not very far away.

Daphne was duly christened at the church of St Cecilia in SaGaing, in a font to which we had subscribed when we were in YwaTaung in 1924-25. It all seemed very apt, as St Cecilia's Day is 22nd November, our Wedding Day.

Our Christmas dinner that year was fun. We had it in the District Engineer's house, as that had more facilities than the others. We shared the catering, each household being responsible for one item of the feast. It worked very well.

Once again we were on the move, and once again in the Hot Weather (1928). This time we were going to live in Rangoon, in 10 Ahlone Road, just by Mission Road Station. I think our departure from YwaTaung must have been comparatively painless, in spite of the fact that we had two small children to cope with, for I can't remember any details, nor our arrival in Rangoon. Knowing the background, I can imagine it, the coolie-carts laden with furniture coming from the goods yard in Rangoon, and the chaos as it was brought into the house.

I think Ahlone Road houses had more doors per room than any other I have lived in, which, of course, meant yards and yards of curtain material, and corresponding yards of machining. It was while we were in No 10 that we bought a Chinese carpet. Perhaps it would be more realistic to call it a generous-sized rug. It was a gorgeous Chinese blue and was our pride and joy. We had never owned one before, and had said we would never buy one just for the sake of having a carpet, but we both fell in love with this one and it looked good on the marble floor; so good that we used to take our shoes and stockings off so that we could walk on it in our bare feet.

It was in this house that I saw, in the house, a beautiful little kingfisher with an amethyst-coloured breast. I looked in vain for an illustration of it, till Dennis gave me "Birds of the World", where it is called the Indian Three-toed Kingfisher, *Ceyx erithacus*. I've just referred to the book and find that, though there is amethyst in the illustration, it is not on the breast, so perhaps my memory has played me false. It is not illustrated in "The Birds of Burma" though there is a note that the small size, 5½ inches, and the violet colour are unmistakable. It must have been fairly rare, for it states three places where it was actually seen, one in MayMyo, one in Rangoon and one from Mount PoPa.

Ahlong Road was handily placed for the children as it was very near the Gymkhana Club, where all the local children, with their nannies or ayahs, congregated in the early morning and again in the evening. We used to take them to the Boat Club, too, where we went out in a punt, and they could dabble their hands in the warm water. We used to go to the zoo occasionally, where the otters were the biggest attraction.

Though we were in Rangoon from the Hot Weather of 1928 till we went on leave early in 1931, that did not mean that we were in the same house all the time. Dear me, no! It's impossible to say now why we had to move to No. 11 Ahlong Road in 1929, and to No. 10a in 1930. They were all Railway houses but, as a rule, each one was allotted to a particular job but there was always a certain amount of "here we go round the mulberry bush" when people went on leave. No. 11 was a large house, with four rooms upstairs and four downstairs, all facing on to a long continuous verandah and, in addition, a very large verandah room over the drive-in porch. Each bedroom had a real "European-type" bathroom. When Val first arrived in Burma, this was the house he lived in. It was then a "chummery" and was probably intended originally for a number of bachelors.

Nancie shared lessons with one Elliot Murray, son of a doctor, and about half-a-dozen other children, and then later went to the kindergarten of the Diocesan High School for Girls. Val used to take her there when he went to the Office, but she used to come home at mid-day in a chartered tikka gharry, escorted by Dost Mohamed. As far as I can remember, transport cost five times as much as tuition!

Some time towards the end of the year, we were asked if we'd take a PG - "just till after Christmas". We weren't a bit keen to have a stranger living with us, and a Lady Health Visitor sounded rather daunting. But we felt we could hardly say we hadn't any room, nor could we plead lack of furniture, as the Mercers (from whom we had taken over the house) had left much of their furniture in it, so we said we would. Norah Ross arrived out from Home in SS Gloucestershire, in which Val and I had come out - I was going to say, "for the first time", though mine was actually the second. We went down to Sule Pagoda Wharf to meet her, wondering what we had let ourselves in for. As people came ashore we said, "Have you seen Miss Ross?", "Yes", they said, "She's wearing a blue dress and a yellowish straw hat." A number of women answered this description and one, at least, looked something of a dragon. However, at last, someone said she was in the saloon having breakfast, so we thought, "At least she's human." And a very lovable human Norah Ross certainly was.

She came out under the auspices of the Public Health Department and the Red Cross Society, who were jointly responsible for her salary. A car was obviously necessary for her work, but neither party was prepared to advance her the money to buy it, so we did. Val vetted a car that seemed suitable, and taught her to drive and she was soon travelling all over Burma in it. The first evening it was in our compound Nancie said, "There are two Baby Austins in our garden, our car and a balloon (sic) car." Saloon cars were not so much the norm as they are today. Norah told a tale of one of her journeys up-country, when she hit a bullock and found her car see-sawing on the poor animal, and the local Burmans

convulsed with laughter. Later, she said we'd made the story up, but I'll swear that that's how she told it originally.

Driving in Burma had always had its hazards. In 1921, before Val and I were married, we had been out to Insein to swim, going by train as usual and also, as usual, having tea at the Craig's afterwards. At tea there was a Mrs Murray, whom Mr Craig used to call "a wee Peebles body". She'd come by car, a Model T Ford. When it was time to go, she offered us a lift. It was then dark and pouring with rain and, as this was the first time she'd been out to Insein, Val asked if she'd like him to drive as he knew the road well. She declined as she said she'd done a lot of driving during the War. Val and I sat at the back and clutched hands as Mrs Murray drove on in blind faith in her own ability. The night was pitch-black, there were no screen wipers and the lights dimmed to virtually nothing if she went slowly. On the outskirts of Insein, within the municipal limits, there were a few street lights, oil ones, on either side of the road, but staggered, not opposite to each other. Mrs Murray started off by trying to keep them all on the same hand, which caused us to hold hands even more tightly. Meanwhile, the rain was coming down, and in, for the only protection from the weather was the canvas hood and the folding side curtains, which were supposed to slide along wires under the roof, but didn't. Fortunately, there weren't many cars about, but there were trains of bullock carts loaded with bricks, which wandered all over the road. Now, bullock carts, because they travelled at less than four miles an hour, were not compelled to carry lights. What with the rain, and the pot-holes, and the dimmed lights, it was rather a hair-raising journey. Mrs Murray admitted to Mother afterwards that she couldn't see a thing and said, "Mr Powell kept saying, 'Oh! Mrs Murray, there's a tree' and there was!"

Some time in 1929, Val had to attend a Fuel Economy Conference in Simla. Shortly before going he said, "I suppose we shall have to order a taxi to take me to Sule Pagoda Wharf." This seemed absurd, as we had a car, but I'd never driven in Rangoon, and only a little on the very quiet road when we were in YwaTaung. However, plucking up all my courage I said, "I'll drive you." We went for a practice drive or two and, when the day arrived, I duly drove him to the ship and drove home. This, of course, was the crunch, but I managed without hitting anybody or anything, in spite of the awkward assorted traffic, which included the usual hazards of cars, bicycles, trams and pedestrians but, in addition, rickshaws and coolie carts, both of them two-wheeled vehicles that could turn at right angles at a moment's notice. The wheels of the coolie carts must have been four foot in diameter and may have been more; they were pushed by four coolies. During the time Val was away, I drove into Rangoon a number of times without incident. I can't remember whether I went to meet him; I probably did, but it wasn't easy to find out what time the boat from Calcutta was coming in.

The National Council of Women in Burma organised an Infant Welfare Clinic in Kemmendine, known for some reason as the Baby Welcome. I think it was to organise this and similar clinics that Norah Ross had been engaged. I used to help with weighing the babies and other non-technical jobs. Coming home one day in the car, it developed a flat tyre, and the heavens opened. I was struggling to see in the pouring rain, and was doing something ineffective with an inadequate spanner, when a young Burman befriended me.

He saw at once that I hadn't a clue, but he knew where to look for the proper tool and proceeded to change the wheel in a very short time. We were both soaked to the skin but at least it wasn't cold, and I was on my way home and not going to the Clinic. I couldn't speak Burmese and he didn't speak English, but I think he knew I had appreciated his help.

When we came back from leave in 1931, we brought with us an Armstrong-Siddeley 12 with a Wilson self-change gear box which was said to be fool-proof. They hadn't heard of me. I managed to lock that gear box solid. Whether it happened as I was setting out I don't know, but I think it must have been, for I don't remember being towed home. Val was out on line. I was going to say, "of course", but there was no "of course" about it, but he was out on line. Dear man, not a word of reproach when he got home, though he was completely mystified. We were at Toungoo at the time, where there were no facilities for dealing with a job like this. Fortunately, the Railway Gazette had had an article on Wilson self-change gear boxes fitted on motor trolleys, complete with detailed drawings, so he was able to remedy the trouble; no one in Rangoon had any such drawings. Armstrong-Siddeley later admitted that there was either too much or too little clearance somewhere, and later models were improved.

In the Hot Weather of 1929, Nancie, Daphne and I stayed in the Railway Rest House in KaLaw. It was still often called the Railway Hotel, as it had been at one time, probably when the Southern Shan States Line was first opened. It was a two storey house with a timber framework, the walls being made of plastered bamboo matting, the Burmese equivalent of wattle-and-daub, and the roof was corrugated iron painted red, as all such roofs were in KaLaw, by municipal orders.

There were quite a lot of bedrooms which were balloted for each Hot Weather, plus common sitting and dining rooms. We all took our own servants and, marvellous to relate, there was singularly little trouble while we were there, but many were the tales of troubles there had been. Val managed to get up one weekend. We were enjoying our usual sort of simple food, when Mrs A came into the room, looked at what we were eating and said, "I wish I could eat just anything, like you people do." Another night we had a soufflé, - just Val and I - and Val said, as was his wont, "You take your share and I'll have the dish." Afterwards, Mrs A upbraided me and said I ought to have left him more!

In KaLaw "Big Bazaar Day" was once in five days. There was virtually nothing available on the other days, so the cooks had to buy quite a lot at a time. KaLaw was a good place for fruit and vegetables, but meat was more of a problem. It didn't worry us much as we were quite happy with the ubiquitous murgli (chicken). Mrs A, however, had to have "the best", so went down the hill the night before Big Bazaar, as the butchers were sometimes there, and came back with pounds of beef and liver. On a previous occasion, I had been able to let her have some change, but this time I couldn't, so she had had to give her cook a ten-rupee note for Bazaar the following day. She went off to play golf, being driven to the course by her Burmese driver. She was late coming back for lunch and we had finished ours. She called for lunch - no lunch - cook had disappeared with the ten-rupee note, and all she had got was pounds of uncooked beef and liver. All my fault for not having

change! I'm afraid we weren't awfully sympathetic; after all, she'd got a car and a driver, and could go to the Club for a meal.

KaLaw was a lovely place, in a wide valley with pine-covered rolling downs round it, and higher hills in the distance. The station was 4292 ft above sea level (How do I know? I have photographic evidence), and looked very attractive, for a local architect had designed it so that it was more than the usual utilitarian structure, and there were lots of flowers. When one first arrived, the climb up to the Rest House seemed a real pull in the thinner air, after being in the plains, but one got used to it. MyinMaHti was a high rocky outcrop lying - I was going to say to the east of the Railway houses, but I find it extremely difficult to visualise the orientation of KaLaw. It was quite a climb for people like us; I don't mean a mountaineering feat, but a walk up a steep and stony track. But it was worth it, for the top can't have been much more than the size of a fair-sized room. On it was a small pagoda, with some sort of shelter for a hpongyi. He was a saintly-looking man, who made one feel welcome, though we spoke no Burmese and he spoke no English.

Norah Ross lived with us until the Hot Weather of 1930, when she got accommodation in Allandale Hotel, and the children and I went up to KaLaw again for three months. We rented the Annexe to Granoi, the house belonging to Mr and Mrs Hertz, Mrs Hicks' parents. This was the other side of the valley from the Railway houses but had a lovely view, which included a good view of the line itself, and it was always a thrill to see the trains passing.

Nancie, Daphne and I had dengue fever while we were there, and were still feeling pretty rotten when Val arrived for the weekend. I said it was bad enough having fever, without a wretched bird (probably a Plaintive Cuckoo - see *Birds of Burma*) reiterating over and over again, "Wish I were dead. Wish I were dead." Val listened carefully and said, "No, he's saying, 'I'll be better soon, I'll be better soon'" and we were. Norah also came up for a day or two.

We travelled back from KaLaw in luxury. Some important personage had travelled up in what was called a Tourist Saloon. It was the one the Prince of Wales had used when he travelled to Mandalay in the Cold Weather of 1921-22 and, as it would otherwise have been coming back "light", we were allowed to use it. We had our cook and bearer with us, so provided our own meals. Cook had made a nice little canary pudding. Val looked at it and said, "Looks like short commons", at which Daphne said, "I like short commons", but I think she got her share.

Just after we'd left a station where I'd been holding Daph to look out of the window, I noticed a diamond was missing from my engagement ring and feared it was gone for ever. However, we searched carefully and found it in a blanket on the bed, which was a great relief! It was in the bathroom of this saloon, with its many mirrors, that I caught sight of my back view, which showed that I had a noticeable wiggle in my spine. It's odd how much completely unimportant stuff one sometimes remembers, for no reason at all.

Rangoon station when we arrived felt strange and ominous, and was not the scene of activity it usually was. We heard that there was rioting in the town, chiefly near the river,

where Indians and Burmese were fighting. The Indian coolies at the wharfs had been on strike for more pay, Burmese labour had then been employed at a higher rate - they wouldn't come for less - and not unnaturally feelings had run high.

Norah, kind person, had come to meet us and took us back to Ahlone Road. I think that must have been the children and me, as the Balloon car wouldn't have coped with Val as well. He probably went straight to his office, which was in the station building. Whether we moved from No. 11 to No. 10a before or after KaLaw I can't remember - what does it matter, anyway? Fortunately, the three houses were much the same in the matter of doors and windows, for the same curtains served them all. Those curtains certainly earned their keep, for they were later used in No. 9 Ahlone Road, in Toungoo and, unless my memory is letting me down, in Myitnge as well.

The atmosphere in Rangoon was definitely unpleasant for a time, for in addition to the rioting there was an outbreak from the Jail, which lay between us and the heart of Rangoon. One night, when Val was out on line, Norah came to see me and, just as she was thinking of going, we heard what sounded like alarm signals on the river and, in a moment, it seemed as though every ship was hooting. Norah and I looked at each other. Whether she said she didn't like the idea of leaving me alone or I said I didn't like the idea of her driving alone I don't know, but she spent the night with me. The Army had to be called in at one stage; from his window, Val saw one of the Cameron Highlanders, with a jerk of his thumb as though to say "hop it", disperse a crowd. Life became peaceful again, at least for the time.

Some time in 1928, we met the Moodys, Harold and Dorothy. Both Harold and Val were members of Lodge Rangoon, and Dorothy and I used to foregather on Lodge nights and on other occasions, and often at the Boat Club. When we first met, they were living in a house near Hume Road station, then they moved to a house in Kokine and were living there when John was born in July 1929; later they moved to the house in Forest Road, where Father and Mother were living before Margaret was born. Dorothy and I used to go for early morning walks, finishing up at her house or mine. At least, we did in the Forest Road era, for that was close to Ahlone Road, whereas Kokine was too far for walking, and it annoys me that I can't remember how we worked it.

I was at Dorothy's in Forest Road one day; in the drawing room, for it was too hot to be outside. All the many doors were open and in walked a hen. The pani-wallah removed her but she came in again, and once again was removed, and once again returned and came and stood by my chair. Dorothy said, "Do you know what she wants? She wants to lay an egg in that chair." I pointed out to the hen that the twin of my chair was vacant and she could use that one instead. She didn't agree with me and looked so distressed that I said, "Oh, very well, then, you can have it" and sat in the other chair. Whereupon, the hen jumped into the chair I had vacated, and duly laid an egg! Dorothy told me this hen had been hatched from an egg laid in this same chair, when it was in the Kokine house!

Other good friends, of this and earlier as well as later periods, were Sydney and Jack Webster. They had been friends of my parents, at least Syd had, ever since my parents

first arrived in Burma, and Jack had, since she arrived in 1910; she and I had shared a cabin in 1922.

End of Chapter 8

PART THREE - PRE-WAR

CHAPTER NINE

All our moves seemed to happen in the Hot Weather, and going on leave in 1931 was no exception. We travelled Henderson Line, SS Pegu I believe, as the fare was somewhat less than Bibby, but quite comfortable. After a while it is very difficult to distinguish one voyage from another, but I think this was the one where we ran into a sandstorm in the Red Sea, just after the skipper had told us that we should shortly be coming to the Twelve Apostles - islands that I don't know by any other name - and for hours we had to endure the foghorn. In the morning, we saw the decks were covered with sand. I was giving Nancie and Daphne tea in the saloon one day while we were still in the Red Sea. Nancie said the milk wasn't nice, so I tasted it and it was sour. I asked for some more. The native steward said he couldn't bring more and the Chief Steward came and said, "What is it now, Mrs Powell?", as though I'd complained before, which I hadn't. I said the milk was sour, could we have some more? He refused to taste it, and said it couldn't be sour because it had been mixed in a machine which cost £200! We passed close to Stromboli at night, an impressive sight!

When we arrived in England, we went first to Harrow, where Val's Mother and Monica were in a small flat in Headstone Road. They had booked rooms for us in a boarding house fairly close to them, so that we could see something of each other. It was there that I heard a small boy calling repeatedly to his mother, "Where's my socks?", and then, "Why is it I can never find anything till I hear you coming?"

From Harrow we went to Hull, to stay with Father and Mother. Father had retired in 1927 and they went to live in his native East Yorkshire. We were something of an invasion, Val, Nancie, Daphne and me, plus the extraordinary amount of luggage we travelled with. This was partly because we needed two sets of clothes, one set for a fortnight of hot weather with very limited laundry facilities, and the other for a fortnight of cold weather. Father and Mother took this in their stride. After all, they'd stayed with Grannie Lambert in similar circumstances.

We hadn't made any definite plans and booked rooms on the front at Hornsea, but very soon decided that they weren't congenial. Margaret Brewitt had given us the address of a house agent in Felpham, near Bognor Regis, where they had spent a leave, so Val and I went prospecting in our new Armstrong-Siddeley 12, leaving Nancie and Daphne in Hull. We saw and took a house in Felpham, very near the sands, arranging to have it till the end of our leave, except for the latter half of July and all of August. As far as we were concerned it was a good summer but, for the working world, it was not. As sure as early-closing day came round, down would come the rain. Then gorgeous weather until the weekend, and down came the rain again. We were so near the beach that we could go down there in our bathing things, usually coming back to the house for lunch. I managed to feed us all without too much trouble. Val's mother asked him how we were getting on and he told her. "What about puddings?" to which Val said that we had rhubarb and custard, or rhubarb and

junket, or plums and custard, or plums and junket. "But what about 'made' puddings, don't you have any 'made' puddings?" She ought to have known her son well enough to know that he didn't ask for anything better than fruit and custard or junket, for he didn't think there was anything better, and was almost aggrieved if they were not there.

We went once to Fontwell to see my Uncle Bob, Mother's brother, and came home with a rabbit he had shot for us. ("Poor little bunny, poor little bunny." Bang! "Hooray! Uncle's shot the rabbit!") I was able to cope with skinning this, as I remembered Mother's tale of her first attempt to skin a rabbit. She hadn't realised that you couldn't take off his overcoat until you had removed his gloves. I didn't cope so well with a chicken I bought from a woman at the door. It was a rather hot Saturday night and I thought I had better cook it then, rather than wait till Sunday (no fridge). When I thought it was cooked enough, I took it out of the oven and put it on the kitchen table and, when next I looked, its sides had blown out! Val heard my giggles and came to look, when he collapsed with laughter too. The chicken had been plucked and trussed but not gutted and, in my ignorance, I'd taken it for granted that it was ready to cook. So, though we were nearly helpless with laughter, we cut that chicken in half, held the halves under piping hot water, and then back in the oven again.

We had a friend staying with us in Felpham in June, and Val was going to drive him back to Netley Hospital on the Sunday night, while I stayed and looked after the children, but it was such a gorgeous mid-summer evening that I didn't see why we shouldn't all go. So I put the kids to bed as usual then, when we had had supper, we picked up the sleeping forms and put them in the back of the car, where they continued to sleep. Portsdown Hill in the evening air was enchanting, with the hedgerows full of wild roses and cow-parsley. We left Leslie at Netley and came home in the late dusk; it wasn't until we got on to our rough unmade road that there was a chirp from the back seat when Nancie said, "Mummy, we are back in Felpham now."

The six weeks, when the house was already let, we spent with Father and Mother in Hull. Hanging over us was the knowledge that we should have to leave Nancie behind when we returned to Burma. A friend had told us about a Home School at Great Missenden, where her children had been; we went to see it and felt quite happy about it, and also arranged that Nancie might spend some holidays or parts of them with another friend. How does one choose such a place, with any certainty that it will prove satisfactory? What we had seen and heard promised well, but it didn't turn out like that. Those who have had to leave a child like this, knowing that in all probability they will not see each other for about three years, will know what it is like. Those who have not, will have to imagine it, for I can't describe what it was like taking Nancie to Woodlands. I can see her as we waved goodbye, but how we got back to Harrow I don't know. And I should not know that we went there, except that I can remember Val's mother saying, "Have you got a cold, Kathleen, dear?" I suppose she was tactfully giving me an excuse for the constant use of my hankie but, at the time, I found it hard to bear. Nancie was older when she was left than I was, which may have made it harder for her, that I can't say, but in one thing I was luckier, as Cyril and I were together and could talk about our Rangoon home, though we had left that about 18

months before we went to Leeds. Perhaps Val's mother thought I was hard-boiled and didn't care, but I find that hard to believe

While we were in Hull, we arranged a passage for Margot to travel back to Burma with us, as a 21st birthday present. I remember that we arrived back in Burma six weeks before Dennis was born on 28th December, so I think we must have left England just before her birthday on 25th October. We drove the car up to Birkenhead for shipment, spending one night on the way at a pleasant country hotel at Broadway, and the following night at the Woodside Hotel, Birkenhead, which was a dreary contrast - red wall paper, shabby brass bedsteads, a perpetual smell of fried fish and chips and cabbage, but at least there was the river to look at. Where did we make contact with Margot? I don't know. Perhaps Father came down to see her off.

One night we were dressing for dinner when we were in the Bay of Biscay. I was not feeling too good and looking in the mirror didn't make me feel any better, and I said I looked old and dreary. When Val said, "You'll be good-looking when you're sixty", I nearly collapsed and said, "Fancy having to wait over thirty years!" To start with, Val couldn't see what I meant, and then we burst out laughing so much that Margot, in the next cabin, had to come and see what it was all about, and then joined in the laughter.

Coming out for the first time, newly graduated from Oxford, were a bunch of young men joining the Forest Service. Their names went with such a swing that we never forgot them: Hugo Hinds, Billy Braithwaite, Ray Hobbins, Peter Garthwaite, Tommy Thompson and one is tempted to add "Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all" but he was not of their number. So there was young company for Margot, and I think she enjoyed the trip very much, and loved the warmth when we got east of Suez.

When I went out to join my parents in Burma in 1919, my Father warned me that they weren't going to do any special entertaining for me and, indeed, during our whole time in Burma, our "social life" chiefly involved family and close friends. There were, however, some rather grand occasions. One was the visit of the Prince of Wales in the Cold Weather of 1921-22.

Not unnaturally, Rangoon was in a state of high excitement at the thought of the Prince's visit. Verses by JMS appeared in the local paper which expressed the feeling well. Unfortunately, I can remember one or two lines only, but they convey the atmosphere that was general:

And Lightaway Waidlaw have given up Sales,
For prices must rise for the Prince of Wales.
And Old Mother Hubbard is practising scales
For she intends to sing for the Prince of Wales...

(Whiteway Laidlaw were notorious for their Sales.)

An extra ballroom was built at the Gym as it was rightly felt that the existing one would not accommodate all those who would want to be there. The existing floor was a lovely one to dance on, being built of beautiful timber, and laid on old Burma Railway buffer springs. The new ballroom was built on piles raised about three feet from the ground, roofed, but open at the sides, so it was relatively cool. However, it was not nice to dance on, as the boards were laid across the floor and not parallel with the length of the building. It was like dancing on corrugated iron.

After various functions in Rangoon, the Prince was to travel up-country by train, leaving Rangoon about eight in the evening. Before the Royal Train left, a pilot train would go, as is customary, to ensure that all was well on the line. The Prince would board the Royal Train and be seen off by the Governor, who would travel in another train behind the Prince's. At some stage on the journey, at a suitable station, the Governor's train would travel ahead of the Prince, in order to be able to receive him in Mandalay. There were, therefore, three special trains and three special engines to be prepared for the great day.

Val spent the whole day personally checking and supervising each of the three Special engines, and the rolling stock of the three Special trains, then home for a bath and a meal before going to the station to see that all was well. He was horrified to find that the Traffic people, whose job it was, had not yet marshalled the trains, so he set about trying to find the people who were responsible for doing it. At an appropriate hour before the trains were due to start, the Traffic Manager, his Deputy and various District Officers assembled on the station, all clad in "tails and white ties", but no sign of any trains. When Craig, the Loco Superintendent arrived, the Traffic Manager said to him, "Here's a fine state of affairs - waiting on Loco - as usual!", at which Craig tore a strip off him, saying, "If you b....s had done like my men, doing their job and not prancing around at the Races with the Prince, we shouldn't have been in this mess now!" This is the only recorded instance of Craig swearing, at least in public. All the Traffic people, including the station staff, had been at the Races, so there were a lot of red faces.

However, trains were marshalled and got away without incident, except that the District Loco man's inspection carriage, which was supposed to be attached to the Prince's train, had been shunted into a siding at Malagon and forgotten, and Val took his place on the engine of the Prince's train. If there was an officer on the pilot train, I don't know who it was. Possibly the man who was marooned in the marshalling yard.

There were Garden Parties and Dinners at Government House, decorated boats and illuminations at the Boat Club and on the Royal Lakes, as well as dances at the Gymkhana Club, so we had a good chance to see the Prince, but I'll admit to being more taken with Lord Louis Mountbatten, who then, and later, struck me as one of the few men who could be called really good-looking. One of the tales that circulated about the Prince's visit was that he was alleged to have said, after the National Anthem had been played for the umpteenth time, "There, that's done for Father, now let's get on with the biz."

There is a current series of advertisements (in the 1970s) depicting awkward situations, all carrying the same caption, "I think this calls for a large Haig". I remember a Garden Party

at Government House in Rangoon, at about this time (1920), that produced such a scene. Five ladies had bought dresses in widely separated places, England, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand, for example, and each was told that it was the only one of its kind in the area but, believe me or not, they all met in Rangoon! They were identical in style, being a straight up-and-down shape, sleeveless and with a boat-shaped neckline. The background material was a sort of net with wide horizontal bands of chenille worked on it. Some of the dresses had black backgrounds and some white, being "positive" and "negative" versions, and the bands on some were rose and some green. In other words, though basically the same, none of them were identical.

When Sir Archibald Cochrane became Governor of Burma, he was a man with a fine naval record, but not given to a lot of small talk or the minor social graces. Lady Cochrane, on the other hand, was a charming person who was a great help to her husband. She made a point of meeting as many of the women in the country as she could, at informal tea parties as well as at Garden Parties and official functions. One Hot Weather (circa 1937), I was invited to one of the small informal tea parties at Government House. I suppose there might have been about a dozen of us there. Someone was telling of some interesting event, and Lady Cochrane was listening with great attention, while eating a chocolate éclair. Now, éclairs require a measure of care, which this one did not get, with the inevitable result - cream all over the place. Lady Cochrane was not a whit abashed; nor was Mrs Bellamy, formerly Princess Ma Hlat of the Burmese Royal Family who said, "There's only one way to eat an éclair." Of course, we all said, "How?". to which she replied that one had to take a small bite of the end of the éclair and then suck the cream out. We all demanded a demonstration, which she gave very neatly and proved that it was perfectly possible - at least when she did it!

On another occasion, Val and I were invited to dine at Government House in Mandalay. As far as I can remember, it was an old wooden building, built into the wall that surrounded the old Burmese Palace, with the moat all round it. GH was on the north wall, looking towards Mandalay Hill with its thousands of pagoda. Thanks to Monica, I still have an invitation, for I'd sent it Home as a small matter of interest:-

December 27th 1937

Dear Mrs Powell,

His Excellency will be very pleased if you will reserve No. 5 Dance at the Government House Ball on December 29th to sit with him.

If it is convenient to you I will meet you at the top of the main staircase at the beginning of this dance.

Yours sincerely,

ADC

Thinking about this now, this seems extremely short notice, but on looking at "Plain Tales from the Raj", where a very similar invitation is reproduced (oddly enough addressed to

Mrs Kendall, but not my Mother), I see it was dated Nov. 6th 1933 and the invitation is for 9th November. Posts must have been quicker in those days - though now I come to think of it, they were delivered by hand and one signed for them in a book.

The invitation Monica kept was for a dance not a dinner, but the night we dined there I was sitting near "Bingo" Fink. I can't remember his rank or regiment, but he was one of HE's ADCs and looked like the proverbial "silly ass" officer, but I noticed that he was carrying on a written conversation with a very deaf elderly Burman, and doing it in Burmese script, and that took some doing!

I dropped some clangers. Once, when we were in Myitnge, I invited a certain Lt. Col. and his wife to dinner. We only knew them slightly, but their sons were at Uplands, Heathfield, where our children were, so we had something in common. At the same time, I invited Michael and Barbara Hadfield, who were newly married and, as was the custom, I placed Barbara, as the bride, on Val's right. Mrs Colonel didn't take at all kindly to this, and I realised later that she probably wouldn't have minded if they had dined with us before and she had been on her hosts right, but I had taken it for granted that she wouldn't mind the bride having that position. After a rather frosty dinner, and a like period after, she made it quite plain that it was her privilege to make the first move of departure, which she did.

Not long after, an invitation to dine with them in Mandalay arrived and, oh dear me, the lengths she went to, to accord me all the honour due to the wife of the Deputy Carriage and Wagon Superintendent, Myitnge. Now that the Burma Railways was a State Railway, all Railway Officers were Government Servants and therefore appeared in the Civil List, with appropriate ranks; DYC. Myitnge was reckoned equivalent to Lt Colonel. So, where, in pre-State Railway days, BR officers were considered by Government Servants to be "Box-Wallahs", they now joined the company of the elect. Thus, at this dinner, I was duly on my host's right, but with no competition. Neither the Army nor Civil Service were there, nor even Burma Railways Officers of higher rank than Val. The rest of the party were all box-wallahs, people we were friendly with, but somehow Mrs Colonel made it apparent that she was showing that she knew how to behave, even if I didn't.

After dinner we played the Burmese Six Animal gambling game. On a large cloth were depicted six animals, tiger, elephant and so on and a tortoise. There was a lot of discussion about stakes. Val and I said we'd be happy to play for love, but fell in with those who wanted to play for cash. Val hated this gambling game and persistently placed the lowest possible stake on the tortoise. To compensate for this, I played as recklessly as I could, but throughout the evening it made no difference. We were the only people who won so, as we had said we'd be happy to play for love, we said, "Let's wash it out" but, no, that wouldn't do, and it was duly entered in the book at the Upper Burma Club. I don't remember how much we won - it wasn't a great deal.

Another clanger I am said to have dropped was to say, at the Upper Burma Club, "No thanks, I'm not thirsty", when asked if I'd have a drink. I can't vouch for the truth of the story, but it could have happened.

Once, in Rangoon, we'd just finished our dinner, when we saw car headlights coming up our drive. "Looks like Norah - good!", so we went to greet her, saying we'd just finished dinner, but come and have a coffee with us, which she did. We chatted of this and that, till Norah burst out laughing and said, "I'm sorry, but I can't keep it up, but you did invite me to dinner tonight!" She then went on to explain that people had dropped in for a drink, and stayed on and on. When eventually they left, she thought to herself, all the way to our house from the outskirts of Rangoon, "Even though I do know Kathleen and Val so well, it's no excuse for being so late", and then to be greeted as she was! I can't remember what we rustled up for her, but she didn't go home hungry. I remembered afterwards that we'd been out to see her, and she'd had some domestic crisis, so I'd said, "Come and have pot-luck with us on Thursday" - which, poor dear, was all she did get.

As a matter of interest, I've been looking at the Quarterly Civil List for Burma, October 1936 (commonly known as Grandmother's Guide) to see how many officers there were on the BR, a point I'd never given much thought to, and I found that on that date there were 95, of whom 19 were on leave and, with the exception of five Indians in the Accounts Department, I knew them all. The Headquarters Officers, in what was known as the Agent's Office, were all stationed in Rangoon, though in 1930 all but one of them had been "District" men. Some were engineers and some were traffic men. There were six men in the Agent's Office, twenty-nine men in the Engineering Department, twenty-three in the Traffic, twenty in the Loco, two in the Electrical, seven in the Accounts, one in Audit, two in Stores and five in the Medical Departments.

When stationed in Insein or Myitnge, it was Loco officers we met, because a number of them were stationed there because of the Works. Neither place was a District H.Q. for the BR as a whole but, when in a District, we would be living with Traffic and Engineering people as neighbours. With a regular rota of men going on leave, there was a constant transfer of men from one District to another, so one soon got to know pretty well everybody.

Which reminds me of an incident that happened when we were living in YwaTaung, but were staying with Father in Hume Road. Val and I had gone to the Gym and, while we were out, Mrs Power, wife of a Traffic Officer also living in Hume Road, came to see Nancie. Hla Thein told me afterwards that Mrs Power had said that I ought to be told to give Nancie Steedman's Teething Powders. I felt angry but did nothing about it. A couple of days later, Mrs Power came across and asked Hla Thein whether I had given Nancie the powders. I was hopping mad and wanted to go and tell Mrs Power so, but Father restrained me. He said, quite rightly, that it would do no good and, furthermore, our respective husbands might be serving in the same Districts for many years to come; if wives were at cross-purposes in small up-country stations, it made life difficult for all. So I simmered down and, though I didn't forget the incident, neither did I forget his advice.

At the time we were at YwaTaung, when an officer officiated in a higher grade than his usual one, the practice was that his salary was calculated as half that of the man whose place he was taking and half of his own substantive pay. Just about the time Nancie was born, Mr Craig, the Loco Superintendent, who had been on leave (and others were therefore

"acting up"), attended a Railway Conference in Colombo and was counted as having returned to duty (although officers were still officiating). This meant that all the officers below him reverted to their substantive pay for the period of the conference (although Craig was still not actually in Burma). When he got back to Burma, Mr Craig made a point of seeing each of the officers concerned and giving him a cheque out of his own pocket for the amount they had dropped. "Ach! Ye've done the worrk, ye're entitled to the cash." Not many men would have done that. He was a man of great character and integrity, scrupulously careful of Railway money but generous with his own.

One riddle we never solved concerned a certain padre. He looked just like a stage curate. He may have realised this and decided to give people their money's worth or, as some people maintained, he just didn't realise the impression he was giving. Val met him at the Gym and asked him to have a drink. "Thank you - yes. If - I - may - I will - have - a - small - lime - juice. I - am - shortly - addressing - a - meeting of - the Mother's - Union - and - I do not - consider it - would be - seemly - if I went - smelling of - strong - liquor." This really might have been said by anybody but, said as he said it, it made one wonder, especially when one heard the other stories that were in circulation.

He took a young bachelor round his house, showing him with great pride his new furniture from Hajee Ahmed, one of the best-known furniture makers in Rangoon. The merits of each piece were pointed out, and then they went upstairs to inspect the bedrooms - "This is my wife's dressing table. This is mine. These are our beds" - and then opening the dressing-room door and indicating a camp bed - "And this is where I sleep during Lent."

At one time there was trouble in convincing the troops that mosquito nets were really necessary, and the Padre was asked to give them a talk on the subject. Which he did, saying that he had difficulty in convincing his own dear wife, "...and you should see my wife's legs."

But the story that everyone liked best was about a sermon he preached in the Garrison Church in MayMyo. He said he had recently had occasion to visit NamTu, where the silver mines were, and what wonderful men they were there. He had gone to the General Manager's office, and found him "...speaking on the tele - phone, exhorting somebody to get on with the job - not for his sake - no - nor for the Company's sake - but for Christ's sake". He was particularly gratified with the reception this sermon had, for he had been asked to repeat it for the benefit of those troops who had not been able to hear it the first time! On balance I think he did it all with his tongue in his cheek, and got away with it.

End of Chapter 9

CHAPTER TEN

The Oxford Group cult and the Hay Diet "hit" Burma at much the same time, and devotees of both became great bores. The dieters were a menace to hostesses, because they would not take protein and starch at the same meal and, instead of just eating a potato with their meat, would give an impassioned plea on the benefits of the Hay Diet. At one dinner party the conversation was about nothing but diets, so Val said he favoured the Marie Lloyd diet. Ears were pricked up at once, for up to this moment Val had said nothing about diets. Like the Athenians, they "...spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing..." and they wanted to know what this diet was; there were decidedly baleful glances when Val said, "A little of what you fancy does you good."

There were many tales of the result of the "Absolute Love, Absolute Truth, Absolute Honesty" that the Groupers went in for. One woman came up to another and said, "I've tried as hard as I can, but I still can't like you."

Croton Lodge stood at the corner of Ahlone Road and Fytche Road, a wooden house, painted white with green shutters. (Most wooden houses were just the natural wood treated every year or two with "earth oil".) It was a boarding house kept by two elderly ladies, or so we thought them then. The elder was Mrs Chadwick Brown (the "Hon." I believe) but her sister's name I can't remember; I think both of them were widows. They were fascinating to look at, and one would have liked to stare and take in all the details. They always wore white and their fashions never changed. Their period must have been about 1905, if the captions of fashions seen at Ascot is correct. Perhaps they were in Rangoon for the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1906, and liked the fashions so well that they couldn't bear to change. We often wondered whether they had such a large supply of cloths that it lasted all those years, or whether they had a tame darzee who just copied them from year to year. But where did they get their corsets? Or did the darzee make them too? When they went out they did so in a fitton gharri, in other words, a phaeton, sitting up with their sunshades.

Their boarding house was a very select establishment; Mrs Chadwick-Brown presided at the table and kept the conversation on a socially suitable level. Oliver S. Macdonell stayed there at one time, probably while his wife was at Home. Mrs Chadwick-Brown, who had peppered her conversation with the names of titled ladies, turned to Macdonell and said, "Do you know Lady So-and-so, Mr Macdonell?", to which he replied, "N-N-N-o-o-o" and then with a rush, "N-N-N-o-o-o, but I know her cook". His stammer was quite the worst I have known, so it probably took him a long time to reply. My Mother told me that, when he got married, arrangements were made so that he could intone his replies in the marriage service, as stammerers can often intone or sing without difficulty.

Many snide remarks have been made about the so-called "Fishing Fleet", in other words, girls who were taken to the East by their mothers, or possibly a friend, for the Cold Weather. It was generally taken for granted by men that the girls came out with the express purpose of acquiring husbands and, of course, in many cases they did. But quite often the set-up was different. After many years of separation, it was not unnatural that parents

should want to have their daughters with them, not necessarily just for a Cold Weather season, but for a longer period. These parents could be living up-country, though many were in Rangoon, so many girls got an idea of what the life was like outside a city and, if they did marry during their time in Burma, their husbands were probably much better off than if they had married a girl who knew nothing of the country.

It happened quite frequently that a man became engaged while he was on leave and his fiancée came out later to marry him. They were usually married the day the girl arrived, or very shortly after, in which circumstances it was not surprising that the marriage sometimes broke up. There was no guarantee that a marriage would not break up, even if the girl had spent some time in Burma, but the odds were not so heavily weighted against her. She knew something of the climate, the servants, the insects, all the odd sorts of difficulties; but a girl who had never been out of England might arrive with her head full of romantic notions that had no real foundation.

Oh! yes, we saw some mothers who made one squirm; one in particular, who paraded her two attractive daughters in such a way that they became known as Exhibits A and B. I hasten to add that they were very nice girls, and the men who married them were fortunate indeed - and mother-in-law wasn't there all the time.

At the time I am writing about, one of the first things one had to get used to, living in Burma, was sleeping under a mosquito net. Not because malaria was prevalent everywhere (because it wasn't), but because the mosquitoes, even if not malarial, were definitely biters. A net protected one from other things as well, cockroaches, bats, scorpions, &c. Some people used to have so-called mosquito rooms, made of the usual net, but considerably larger than the bed it was used with and long enough to touch the floor. We preferred nets that were tucked under the mattress, thus keeping the net taut and allowing the breeze - if any - to blow through. To my mind, one of the snags with the mosquito room was that, during the day, mosquitoes congregate under the bed and, in the days before Flit, they were still there when the net was put down at dusk and, therefore, safely inside the net, where they could bite the sleeper to their hearts' content.

Another thing one had to learn early was that food must never be left exposed. Flies were obvious enemies, but ants of all sizes, from tiny little red ants to large red or large black ones, found food with devastating speed if it was not properly protected. A meat-safe was almost the first piece of equipment to be bought; this was a wooden-framed cupboard with wire-mesh gauze on all sides, standing on legs. Each leg stood in a small vessel of water in which there were a few drops of Phenyle disinfectant, to discourage the mosquitoes from breeding or the ants from "bridging" the gap. A lookout had to be kept to see that spiders were not making handy causeways for invading ants. As the cook went to the bazaar every day, there was rarely any leftover meat or fish to be kept overnight but there was always a meat-safe in the kitchen, which was some distance from the house, as well as one in the pantry attached to the house. In the pantry were kept bread, milk, tea, coffee, jam, etc., each in its appropriate container, and this was apt to be a problem. Nowadays, many products are sold in glass jars with good screw-on caps and the same is true of most liquids. But in the 20s this was not so. Virtually all bottles were corked, and many products were

sold in tins which, once opened, were anything but air-tight or ant-proof. So, tins with well-fitting "lever" lids were treasured, and the contents of less well-packed tins transferred to them. When travelling, a bottle with a screw cap was a treasure, for corks were by no means ant-proof. Milk was always boiled and cooled as quickly as possible by being put in a jug with wet muslin over it, and stood in a bowl of water so that the muslin remained damp.

The Railway houses in Rangoon had piped water from artesian wells which was considered safe for drinking without boiling but, as we were liable to be transferred where the water might not be so good, we always boiled ours so that the habit was not broken. The water was put in bottles which stood in serried ranks on the meat-safe. The firm of De Bern in Rangoon had a reliable source of water, and made soda-water which was sold in "cod" bottles (i.e. bottles with marble stoppers) in vast quantities all over Burma.

In our early days, "Fridges" were unknown, but we had elementary ice-boxes, which consisted of an inner box of galvanised plate (or something of the sort) and, between this and an outer shell of wood, there was a thick layer of sawdust or paddy-husk as insulation. Into this we optimistically put bottles of soda-water and water, and as much ice as we could conveniently get - also from De Bern's, who had little depots scattered about Rangoon. At YwaTaung, we were lucky if we could get 4 lbs. a day. The pani-wallah used to go with a basket and a damp piece of gunny-bag to meet the afternoon train from Rangoon, and buy what he could from De Bern's man on the train. During the very hot weather at YwaTaung, Val saw an amazing sight. While we were having tea, the side of one of the earthenware chattis, in which we cooled the soda-water before putting it in the ice-box, was blown out by a soda-water bottle exploding inside it. The factory had been over-charging the water, and we heard of several people who had been injured when opening the bottles.⁷

All our cooking was done on charcoal by Indian cooks. The "stove", for want of a better name, was made of brick, about 36" high and about the size of a fairly large side-board. In the top were a number of square wells with metal grids about three or four inches below the surface, on which the charcoal rested. The "Regulo" effect was produced when required with a palm-leaf fan. There was no oven, as such, but, when required, a four gallon kerosene tin, adequately cleaned, would be put on the charcoal fire, on its side, and more live charcoal put on top. Marvellous soufflé,s were produced in this way. Cooking pans were of aluminium, relatively shallow in comparison with diameter, with a wide lip all round. Having no handles, they nested one inside the other - very useful for people who had a lot of "jungle" work to do, and appreciated by us when we had to move.

I can't remember whether we ever actually owned an ice-cream mixer, but there was nearly always someone near from whom one could be borrowed if we were having ice-cream for dinner. I don't think ice-cream ever figured on the YwaTaung menu. Four pounds of ice didn't go far when it came to making ice-cream, not when the temperature was nearer 100øF than 90øF.

Mark Twain is reputed to have said that the funniest thing he saw in India was a man trying to split a rock with a shirt. That's one way of describing how the dhobis did the washing.

They must have developed terrific muscles in their arms and shoulders, for they would take an enormous armful of wet clothes and, with a swing over their heads, bring it down with a THWACK! on a raised slab of stone or convenient rock, very often making a loud grunting noise at the same time. I never counted how often this process was repeated with the same bunch of clothes - quite a number, I think - nor do I know at what stage the clothes underwent a species of boiling or, more correctly, steaming. A fire was made under a sort of mud or earthen foundation and, round this, the wet clothes were coiled and built up to a height of about three feet. I have mentioned elsewhere the twisted lines on which the clothes were dried. With anything up to 100 inches of rain falling between May and October, drying the clothes was a problem; almost certainly, in many cases, they were ironed until they were more or less dry. The dhobis used big charcoal-heated irons with a polished brass base.

As a rule, we had dhobi day once a week, when the dhobi brought back the clean clothes neatly wrapped in a clean cloth and balanced on his head; a large bundle it usually was, and heavy, being often about a two-foot cube. The clean clothes were neatly laid on the beds and checked by memsahib, after which, the dirty clothes were arranged in piles on the floor, with comments on the state of shirts, and so on, from the dhobi, "This shirt very old, memsahib", so it was often entered on the list separately, so that the dhobi should not be unjustly accused of spoiling another good shirt. Even if the wear and tear on materials was considerable, the clothes were always beautifully bleached. When on leave, one could always pick out the sheets that had been laundry-washed from those that had not been used since the dhobi washed them; the same applied to towels and shirts.

Something else newcomers to Burma had to be prepared for was the matter of sanitation. It sound luxurious to say that every bedroom had its own bathroom, but what was that bathroom like? It contained a galvanised iron bath, a large Ali Baba jar full of cold water, a dipper for pouring water over oneself and a thunderbox, more politely known as a "sanitary commode". There was always an outside staircase to each bathroom and at appropriate times the outside door of the bathroom would be opened and the sweeper, with a large bamboo basket, would arrive to remove the pan of the thunderbox and take it to the outside latrine to be dealt with.

When we were up-country, I used to make out a monthly order for "stores" which was sent to a shop in Rangoon. For many years this used to be J A David's, run by Armenian Jews in Dalhousie Street, where my Mother had bought stores for years. They supplied everything, from whisky, gin, vermouth, &c., to tinned butter, jam, chocolates, aspirin, tooth paste, soap and the inevitable Bromo toilet paper. I seem to remember that the case containing stores used to come up under a Burma Railways Pass Number. For ready cash, we used to make out cheques to the Chief Accountant, Burma Railways, up to a limit which I can't remember, nor can I remember whether we got the cash from the station or the office, but it was a useful arrangement in places where there were no banking facilities.

End of Chapter 10

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Returning from leave in 1931, Val was posted as D L O Toungoo, taking over once again from Boeddicker. This time we were prepared. We spent the night in reasonable but noisy conditions in the Railway Rest Rooms in the Station building, but managed, with some difficulty, to persuade Boeddicker that we wanted to get into the house straight away. He couldn't understand why but, eventually, he agreed to tell his servants to put all his furniture into the so-called office-room, so that Margot and Daphne and I could put our stuff into the rest of the house. As he and Val were going out on line in an inspection carriage, Boeddicker wouldn't be in the house and I saw no reason why we should have to put up with the Rest Rooms for a week or ten days, just because he and his servants were too lazy to make a move. When he and Val returned, Boeddicker was astonished to see the house looking like a home already.

One of the first things we did after arriving in Toungoo was to go to the Civil Hospital to make arrangements for the birth of our expected infant. We saw the Matron and Civil Surgeon, and were given a printed list of the charges. Confinement, I think, was Rs 100/-, down through appendix and tonsils, finishing with castration (sic) Rs 10/-, which caused a lot of merriment. As circumcision was not included in the list, castration had probably got put in error.

When Val went out on line, he had a rickshaw standing by at night in case I had to go to the hospital in a hurry, and Toungoo was the centre of the universe compared with YwaTaung. The hospital was only just down the road, our nice little ayah, Ruth Ammall, was with us again, and Margot was with me. We didn't need the rickshaw, for Val was at home over Christmas, and Dennis was born on the 28th December⁸.

When Nancie was born in the Civil Hospital, Mandalay, we naturally wanted to make sure that the birth of this so-important child was properly registered. We were told that this was done automatically, and we duly received a slip of paper containing the relevant details. But, when Daphne was born in our own house, not in hospital, we had to think again, and Val went to the Deputy Commissioner in SaGaing, where he was given a much more important-looking document. He remarked on this to the D.C. and described Nancie's certificate. That was only a municipal one, unlike Daphne's. A copy of her's would be sent to the proper authorities in England. We then had to apply to Mandalay - through the usual channels - and five years later got a proper birth certificate. So, when Dennis was born, we thought we knew the ropes.

Val applied to the D.C. Toungoo, a Burman at the time, but received no reply and monthly reminders fared no better. In April, we were transferred to Rangoon again, and sent weekly reminders. Eventually a letter arrived stating that, as both the D.C. and the Sub-Divisional Officers were Buddhists, the registration of our son could not be effected there, but suggested that we apply to the Commissioner of Excise, Rangoon, who was also the

Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, who might be able to help! He was able, and sent the certificates in triplicate, as we had requested, and sent a rocket to Toungoo.

I am constantly being niggled because I can remember only parts of an incident or happening. I know that I went up to YwaTaung and stayed with Cyril while he was on the construction of the Ava Bridge, and I know that it was opened on my birthday (2nd January) and that I was not there then. So when? And what about Dennis? I don't remember taking him with me, and I'm sure I didn't leave him in Rangoon, as Val was at work all day and ayah always went to her quarters in the middle of the day. So perhaps I went in 1932, when Margot was with us, and she may have nobly held the fort while I was away.

The point of the story is that I was a visitor to YwaTaung and Cyril was a resident. A whole miniature village of "mat and thatch" bungalows had been built for the people engaged on the Bridge construction, and Cyril was one of these. Arrangements had been made for an early morning duck or snipe shoot on Kaungmudaw jheel. Cyril asked Sammy to provide food for us, bread and cheese and beer, and one of his special curries. Sammy protested that he hadn't anything for making a curry and it was too late to get anything. So Cyril just said, "Oh, fix something, Sammy", and Sammy, as usual, said, "Very good, sar." We were up bright and early in the morning and everything was packed in the back of the car. We stopped at a Rest House near the jheel, and the menfolk went off. I didn't, as I had no suitable footwear or anything with me. There must have been someone else who stayed on dry land, but I haven't a clue who it was. When the men came back, we were all hungry and looking forward to our curry which we were sure Sammy, in his remarkable way, would have produced somehow. He had, but the monster Thermos in which it had been packed, had been buffeted on the way, and the lining was in a thousand pieces. We ate bread and cheese, threw away the curry and the glass, and apologised to Sammy for having broken the Thermos. I hope he hadn't gone without his own food to make that curry.

Before the Ava Bridge was built, there was no through rail or road traffic from Rangoon to MyitKyina, but the Railway ran a ferry from Amarapura Shore to SaGaing Shore. The steamers were large paddle boats of shallow draught, but powerful, as they had to cope with the "flats" on which goods wagons were taken across the river. At Amarapura and SaGaing there were winding engines to let wagons on to the flats on one side of the river, and haul them up the other. Each wagon in turn was put on a turntable, so that it could be put on to a track on the slope at right angles to the railway line and the flat lying alongside the shore, and then was controlled by the winding engine until it was in position on its length of track on the flat. The tracks on the flats ran athwart the barge. As each section of track was filled, the flat was warped along so that another section was ready to receive its quota of wagons.

During the rains, when the river was in flood, the distance the wagons had to go was not great, but in the Dry Season it was considerable and took some time; for passengers, it could be quite a hot and tiring walk from the station over the hot and very dry sand to the steamer. But the steamer always felt fresh and cool and there was a refreshment room on board so the crossing, once one got going, was usually a pleasant interlude. The Ava

Bridge, when built from the Amarapura to SaGaing shore, was almost exactly the same length as the Forth Road Bridge, but was over 400 miles from the sea!

In 1927, the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation wanted to move a large number of their elephants from somewhere in Lower Burma on the Siamese border to an area in the MyitKyiNa region. Arrangements were made to take them across the Irrawaddy on flats attached to the Railway Ferry. I don't remember the precise number; I think it was something over 70, including youngsters of three or four years old. The flats were embowered with much greenery, including many banana plants, in the hope of making the elephants feel at home. There was no real difficulty in getting them on, once the senior cow-elephant had made her inspection. She approached the "apron" which linked the shore with the ramp on the flat. There was a gap of about four inches, so she stopped and inspected it carefully with her trunk and then, making a massive stride, cleared the space and went aboard, followed in turn by the rest of the elephants. As each flat was warped into position alongside the ferry, the elephants swung round to see what was happening, and trumpeted their comments but, beyond a certain amount of noise and mess, the manoeuvre passed without incident, and the elephants resumed their journey on foot, once they had been put ashore at SaGaing.

For inspection purposes, all District (Civil) Engineers and their Assistants had trolleys. These were not mechanised, but had a crew of four trolley men, two of whom took it turn and turn about with the other two to push the trolley, running along the rails on their bare feet. When they had got up a good turn of speed they would jump on the trolley, which would then travel on its own momentum for a considerable distance. The engineer, of course, would know when any train was due and be on the alert for it. When it was approaching, everyone would jump off, the superstructure of frame and seats would be removed, and then both pairs of wheels would be lifted off the track.

When "Wullie" Air was taking over as District Engineer of the Upper District from Willie McCabe, they were travelling towards MyitKyiNa on the long stretch of line between NamTi and PidDaung which passes through the Game Reserve. On rounding a rocky curve, they saw a tigress and her two cubs sitting on the track. The only thing they had with them that in any way resembled a weapon was an umbrella and, in any case, neither of them would have wanted to shoot a tiger. So for some time they sat and looked at each other. As the tigress showed no inclination to move, the others decided they would. Orders were given to pull the trolley slowly backwards till they were round the curve and behind the rock, when the trolley was lifted up and turned round and they made their way back to NamTi. Discretion was the better part of valour as there was nothing but jungle for the nineteen miles between NamTi and PidDaung, and a tigress with cubs might have taken a very dim view if they had tried to rush her.

As mentioned elsewhere, one of the major duties of the Loco man at YwaTaung was the inspection of wood fuel stacks and, as these were often in forest clearings between stations, he also had a trolley and four trolley men paid by the Railway. They could hardly be described as overworked so, as they lived in Quarters in DLO's compound, they earned a certain amount of bukhsheesh working as malis (gardeners) or punkah-wallahs.

There were four pull-punkahs in the house, in the dining room, sitting room and in the two bedrooms. The punkahs were beams about 6 or 7 ft. long suspended from the ceiling, attached to which were flaps of matting or material about 16 inches deep. A rope from the beam was taken through an outside wall and over a pulley, and the punkah-wallah pulled the rope, usually with his foot. This caused the beam to swing to and fro, and the flaps to create a breeze - in theory. In actual practice, if it was hot enough to need a punkah, the punkah-wallah lulled himself to sleep until one called out, "Punkah tano!" (pull the punkah) and, for a short time, he carried on. We used to have a punkah during meals, but made no attempt to have one at night. It would have been too much like hard work trying to keep the punkah-wallah awake.

Because the bedroom punkahs were not much used, someone had rolled up the flaps and tied them on to the beams, so that they didn't take up so much room. Bearer and I decided one day that they ought to be undone and shaken out. What we didn't know was that bats had made their home there, and about a dozen baby bats fell on the unfortunate bearer and clung to his clothes with their tiny baby claws. Bats were very difficult to get rid of and horribly smelly.

In 1932 our transfer came, once again, in the Hot Weather and once again we were living in No 10 Ahlone Road. Margot spent part of the Hot Weather in KaLaw with the Proctors, who had been our neighbours in Toungoo. She sprained her ankle rather badly on loose ballast while getting out of the train and Margot was advised to see Kondo right from the start but refused to do so because she had no confidence in "quacks". After a fortnight of conventional medical treatment - hot and cold fomentations, &c. - her ankle had not improved noticeably. She was now desperate enough to consider even a "quack" and went to see Kondo. He examined her ankle, probing with his fingers, and asked how old the injury was. When told "a fortnight", he shook his head and said, "You should have come straightaway. It would not have hurt as much as it will now!" With that, he grasped her foot and ankle between his hands, gave her foot a practised wrench, which made her scream involuntarily, and the ankle was restored almost to normal function. Many of Rangoon's doctors who advised their patients against visiting Kondo, as medical ethics of the time required them to do, nevertheless patronised him themselves when suffering sports injuries.

She and Alan Watson, son of Mrs Joe Watson who had shared a cabin with "Jack" Webster and me in 1922, had an unpleasant experience near the new KyaikKaSan Race Course, some distance out of Rangoon, when a Burman had fired some sort of gun at Alan. The following morning he was sent to have his arm X-rayed. It didn't heal as quickly as we thought it should and, when he went to the doctor again, a bullet about the size of a thumbnail was extracted. A query was then made about the X-ray, which had not been sent to the doctor. When it was, the bullet was plainly visible and, written underneath, were the words, "metallic foreign body". I can't remember whether this happened before or after Margot and Alan became engaged and then, after some months, the engagement was broken off.

We had letters regularly by sea mail from Nancie, but they didn't give us very much idea of how she was getting on. She had measles and, as far as we could tell, had made a good recovery. We were considerably disturbed by a letter from the friend who had Nancie in the holidays, who said that she couldn't be responsible for having her if the school were not more open with her on the subject of Nancie's health. We immediately wrote to the school asking for full details, and were horrified when we got a letter headed "Without Prejudice", saying that, following measles, Nancie had had bronchitis and a streptococcal infection which had "slightly affected her heart". This was the first we had heard of it. What was really worrying was the feeling that we couldn't trust what we were told. They had said Nancie was all right, no mention had been made of bronchitis, let alone any effect on her heart, so we gave notice that we were removing her, and decided that I should go Home and make other arrangements.

End of Chapter 11

CHAPTER TWELVE

So Margot, Daphne, Dennis and I sailed for Home in SS Burma, about March or April 1932. Once again, we headed for Hull, where a pile of prospectuses a foot high was waiting for me. Monica had told me of a school in Wadhurst that she knew of that had a good academic record. I wrote and made arrangements to see the place, leaving Hull at a very early hour, and having made arrangements to spend the night in Harrow with Val's mother. I had a scratch lunch at Charing Cross and duly arrived in Wadhurst and found my way to the school. I saw the Headmistress, who then passed me on to her sister, who was in charge of the Junior School. She asked if I would like some tea and I was taken into her sitting room, tea was ordered and brought and nothing happened. I thought she was one of those who leave the tea to draw for a prescribed length of time before pouring out, so I said nothing. Then she "supposed" I'd like to look over the place, which seemed odd - I'd thought that was the object of the exercise. As that was what I had come for, I abandoned hope of tea and said "Yes".

She was vague about everything, didn't know when the children wrote to their parents, or any of the things that any mother would want to know. I then inquired about trains back to London; no trains from Wadhurst, I should have to have a taxi to Tunbridge Wells. I asked if they could recommend a hotel in the locality where I could spend the night. I decided that, if I was going to have a taxi, I might as well look at a place in Heathfield that had been recommended, rather than go to Tunbridge Wells. So I sent a telegram to Val's mother to say that I shouldn't be coming and shook the dust of Wadhurst off my feet. I went to Best Beech Hotel, where I booked a room and had a cup of much-needed tea, then set off for Uplands, Heathfield.

We'd heard about Uplands from the Byrons, whose twins were there and seemed happy about it, but it was expensive and we wondered whether we could manage. However, the atmosphere was entirely different from Wadhurst. It was a home school that catered largely for children whose parents were abroad, and the number of children was rarely above twenty four.

I managed to get rooms for myself and Dennis in Heathfield and then returned to Hull. Nancie probably remembers at what stage I collected her; the chronology escapes me, but I think Monica must have taken charge of her from Woodlands because we met in Harrow, and I think Nancie had just had chicken-pox. Eventually Nancie, Daphne, Dennis and I got ourselves somehow to Heathfield, I took Nancie and Daphne to Uplands, and Dennis and I settled into our "rooms". To start with, Nancie was supposed to take things carefully and used to go out in a little pony trap but, before long, she seemed quite all right. Once, when I inquired how Daphne was getting on, I was astonished when I was told, "Quite well, except that we have to feed her." Daphne - who'd been feeding herself from the age of 14 months, or thereabouts. But she probably looked younger than she was and was prepared to make the most of it.

It was a lovely summer, and Dennis and I made the most of it. Bedtime was something of a trial for, ever since leaving Rangoon, he had had difficulty in going to sleep on his own.

He'd been frightened our first night on board after leaving Rangoon, and had clung to me like a little frightened monkey, so I did the best I could and stayed with him till he fell asleep. I stayed in England for three months seeing that the girls were settled and then left for Burma. It was rather remarkable that, when we got aboard the boat and in our cabin, Dennis looked relaxed, as though it was familiar, and was less trouble about going to sleep; once back in Rangoon, in the same house and with ayah there, he was quite happy.

We'd been away from Burma five months. One day, when we hadn't long been back, Val suddenly said, "By Jove, I must cut my nails!" to which I replied, "So what?" He then explained that they'd hardly grown at all while I'd been away. I don't know what that proves, but it was rather odd.

Life in Rangoon was pleasant with lots of friends. We danced at the Gym, went to the Boat Club, had friends to dinner, and so on. Val, of course, had his work which he always enjoyed. Unfortunately, he never got round to making notes in my manuscript diaries beyond 1925, so I have nothing to refer to, but I think it was during this period that he had a difference of opinion with the man who was officiating as Loco Superintendent (equivalent to Chief Mechanical Engineer and Running Superintendent). Drivers who had reached retirement age were sometimes given a year's extension, but had to pass a fitness and eyesight test first. One driver requesting an extension failed to pass the eyesight test and Val turned down his request. The driver appealed to the Loco Supt, who told Val that the driver was his friend and that he was to have his extension. Val said that he could not do this. If it was to be done, "Loco" should do it himself. Whether he did or not I can't remember.

Thanks to Monica and some of the photos she kept, and later gave to me, I have pictures of some of the jobs Val had to tackle, going out with the breakdown crane after an accident. Somehow, he always seemed to be called out during the night with the call of a man below our window saying, "Tar hai, sahib." - ("Telegram, sir."). The pictures show the derailment of a mixed goods and passenger train, with goods vehicles on their sides and passenger coaches at an angle down an embankment. A steam crane is hoisting a wagon clear of the wreckage. At this time, he must have been doing "District" work, which meant going out on line, though at some stage he was in a Head Office job which was called "Transportation Officer (Power)". He enjoyed this, even though he wasn't in such close contact with his beloved engines.

Railway telegrams were often a source of amusement. There was one sent by an indignant ticket examiner at NaBa: "Mrs So-and-so travelling on first class ticket from MyitKyina to Rangoon. Booked one dog. Received one bitch and six sons of bitches. Refuses to pay excess."

Breaches on the line were fairly frequent occurrences during the Rains. Arrangements had to be made to tranship passengers and mails from one side of the breach to the other by boat, which obviously entailed considerable delays. On one such occasion, a harassed traffic officer was trying to cope with a crowd of bewildered passengers, when an importunate postal babu demanded to know what arrangements had been made for His

Majesty's Mail. "Oh! - take your damned Mail away!" was the answer that prompted this telegram: "D.T.S. YwaTaung has kicked and damned His Majesty's Mail."9

There were hosts of other telegram stories, as well as letters, many of which were probably written by professional bazaar letter-writers. An indignant passenger wrote to the District Traffic Superintendent to complain that a train had been started without adequate warning, thus causing the passenger to run from the latrine clutching "...his dhoti (loin-cloth) in one hand and his lota (small brass personal water vessel) in the other and exposing his shockings to the female ladies on the train."

Some of the other tales may have been chestnuts that turned up more than once, with different local colouring. One was of two Indian gentlemen walking on a station platform. One of them addressed the other, "Hi! Station Master!" "I am not thee Station Master." "Then why are you walking on platform looking so proudly?" Another was of a man who was applying for a job and was asked if he was married, as this would make a difference to the sort of married quarter he would be allotted. "Sir! My wife is impregnable and inconceivable."

As in the Richmond Road days, family letters were of great importance, and weeks were regulated by Mail Days. Before air mail became general there was only one incoming English mail a week, usually a Monday if one lived in Rangoon and, as far as I can remember, the outgoing mail went on Thursday. As the journey took three weeks each way, news was hardly new when one received it, and by the time a reply came a question could almost be forgotten. On one occasion in her letter Nancie said, "Thank you for your letter. It was funny. It did make us laugh", but I had no recollection of either saying anything funny, or recounting an amusing incident.

Writing to my mother was relatively easy, as she knew the background, but writing to Val's mother was more difficult, as she knew neither the people nor the background. Monica showed me recently (1977) a letter I wrote in 1928, which said that we had been to a meeting at Bishops court to hear about the formation of the Church of South India! Even having seen my own letter, I cannot recall anything about it, but I suppose I'd seized on a subject which I thought might interest Val's mother. Having had the discipline of writing a weekly letter, that had to be written in time to catch the mail, from 1908 onwards, I am astonished at the ease with which this habit disappeared once a twice-weekly air mail was established. We still used the sea mail for a regular thing, but there was always the air mail to fall back on. Why should a good habit lapse so easily, when a bad one is so hard to get rid of?

Looking back on my life, it looks like a life of gilded ease - and so it was for most of us. I did do my stuff at the Baby Welcome, and I made a point of being at home when the children had their meals and probably saw a lot more of them than some other women. In this, as in so many other things, one is largely a product of one's generation and nothing in my upbringing had spurred me to be a reformer or pioneer. Servants therefore played quite a part in our lives and merit inclusion in this account. Most of them I can recall quite clearly, though some seem to have made no impression whatever. One of these is the Karen

nannie who was with us in YwaTaung from 1927 till 1928, a full year I think; I can remember nothing of her at all, not even her name, except that, when we got back to Rangoon, she wanted to get another job, understandably enough. I don't blame her. Life must have been dull for her. Hla Thein, on the other hand, who was with us in YwaTaung when Nancie was born and in Insein, I remember well. Like many nannies, she used to talk about "mummies" she had been with before, who all sounded so marvellous that I felt very inferior.

Val had a very splendid bearer, Mahomed Nazir, before we were married, but he was one of those who didn't care to work where there was a memsahib. But Abdul was with us from the time we were married till the evacuation in 1942. I've no idea how old he was. I was going to say he always looked the same, but by 1942 he was looking frail and we heard that he made no attempt to get to India, but had died in Burma; we never saw him again. He spoke better English than I spoke Hindustani. What I knew as a child never consciously came back to me, though Val used to say that if I got sufficiently angry, moods and tenses got into their right places. Abdul's English was chiefly noticeable for the number of prepositions with which he peppered a sentence, mostly using them as postpositions. If asked what was happening, he would say, "I going to see to for". When we were in Mandalay, a loud sort of chanting used to take place just about 8 o'clock. We asked what it was and he said, "I think making to God bless". Further investigation proved that it was the Burmese boys in the nearby hpongyi kyaung saying the final prayers of the day at the tops of their voices. One instance that we always remembered with affection occurred when we had friends in to dinner. In a not too sotto voce Abdul said, "Please ma, jelly sitting-to down. Cook making-to soufflé,?"

Then there was our pani-wallah, the Biblical hewer of wood and drawer of water. He appeared and disappeared from time to time, probably when we went on leave and he got another job. On flipping through my 1943 diary I find that, when we were in Calcutta, this pani-wallah came to "give salaams", and his name is given here as Kariya. He probably came in the hope of bukhsheesh, which he probably got, but at least both parties remembered each other. He was certainly with us for part of our time in MyitNgŃ, having been with us first in Insein in 1922.

Aye Maung, our Burmese lad, lived in MyitLoung village (this was at MyitNgŃ) which was just at the end of our road, and he and his wife continued to live there during the war. When the children and I were having Burmese lessons, after 1940, he used to stand behind the screen, and presumably learnt a fair amount of English, but I never heard him try to speak it. He had the neatest hands, and could "pot" jam from a preserving pan without any sticky mess. Once, he and the pani-wallah were turning out the pantry, clearing all the shelves and washing all the crockery. Suddenly, I heard a frightful noise and found the two of them fighting, tearing each other's shirts, and Aye Maung had clawed the pani-wallah's back. When a measure of quiet was produced, I found that the cause of the trouble was a broken plate. Each of them accused the other of having done it, and each was convinced of his own innocence. I think what had happened was that one odd plate had been sandwiched in a big pile, and the pressure, when lifting it off the shelf, had broken it. Finally, I managed to make them understand that I wasn't angry and that, if I wasn't, there was no

need for them to make all this fuss. I sent Aye Maung off to his home to find another shirt, and applied iodine to the pani-wallah's back, and peace reigned once again.

Kyi Myin, the Burmese lugal, we had after the war, was a most volatile character. He didn't speak English either, but we had - I don't know whether it was his or ours - a book with Burmese-English/English-Burmese vocabulary, the Burmese of course in Burmese characters. I tried to follow the tales of his various doings and, when he said a word I didn't know, I'd guess its meaning and point to the English word, with the Burmese alongside it. Sometimes I was lucky, more often not, and I'd try again. One expression kept cropping up - "sitt-ma-pyit-kin-ga". I tried all sorts of things for "sitt", to be greeted with "ma-ho-hpoo, ma-ho-hpoo" - "no, no". Finally I got it, and I ought to have guessed earlier, for it meant "before the war" - literally "war-had-not-happened-time". Every Burmese boy learns to read and write while he is in the hpongyi-kyaung (the monastery school), or used to, but not all of them keep it up. In my copy of Mi Mi Kaing's "Burmese Family", I've got the paper on which Kyi Myin wrote in Burmese characters the nursery rhymes that Mi Mi Kaing gives in transliterated form.

It's almost unbelievable now, but when we went to Rangoon from YwaTaung in 1928, and our Karen nannie left, I engaged two ayahs, one to look after Nancie, then nearly four, and another to look after Daphne, then aged about 8 or 9 months. The one engaged for Nancie was large and fat, pleasant and willing, but hopelessly incompetent. She had only to tell Nancie to do something, to make her dig her heels in and refuse to do it - and so, I think, would any self-respecting child have done. She was with us for five days. Fortunately, Ruth Ammall, another Madrassi, half the size of the other one, said she could look after both children, and did so with no fuss and bother. With the exceptions of the times when we were on leave, she was with us until 1936, when we engaged a young Pathan, Mulki Amman, for Dennis 10

This was when we were in MyitNgŠ, and they had the freedom of the place, fishing along the canal bank, hunting for wild honey, and so on. When he first came to us he knew no English, but Dennis soon became fluent in Urdu, and used to think in it. If he woke during the night and I went to him, it was Urdu he was talking, not English. Yet, when he came out to Burma during the war, having been away only two and a half years, he didn't remember a word of it.11

Dost Mahomed Khan, chaprassi, was a Railway employee but, like most chaprassis, he went (as a rule) with a particular officer all his service. So, when Val was transferred from one District to another, so was Dost Mahomed. Then came the Evacuation, and the Burma Railways was no longer a coherent unit, and it was some time before we heard of Dost Mahomed, and I don't exactly remember where or when. But I do know that he was with us in Simla when Val was working on plans for the rehabilitation of the Locomotive Department of the Burma Railways, and Dost Mahomed came to us as a personal servant. We were all glad to see him; he was a link with our happy Burma days, and I think he was glad to be with us. Then, when Val returned to Burma after the war in 1946, Dost Mahomed was also there, once again his chaprassi, and we finally said good-bye to him aboard SS Prome in 1948.

Many are the tales involving cooks and their doings and prices and, did we but know it, many are the tales they probably told about their memsahibs. There was a story Mother used to tell of her early days in Rangoon. Mrs Blake, the wife of the Municipal vet, dropped in one day to see her. She chatted for a short while, and then said she must go. Mother protested, but Mrs Blake said she really must go, she was only taking the mutton for a drive! Mother asked her what on earth she meant. Mrs Blake explained. Her husband, by virtue of his job, was able to see and get the best of the meat in the Bazaar but the result, when it came to table, was disappointing. Investigation had shown that the cook cooked it hours beforehand, then carved it and poured gravy over it at dinner time. Since when, Mrs Blake had developed the technique of "taking the mutton for a drive", and only handing it over to the cook in time for it to be cooked for dinner, and the roast brought to the table for her husband to carve.

Shortly before Margaret was born, Father and Mother PG'd for a while with a Mr and Mrs Nuding, until the Nudings went on leave, after which Father and Mother were renting the house until they could get into a Railway one. They had decided that the first thing they would do, after the Nudings had sailed, was to sack the cook. When they got back from seeing the Nudings off, they came back to breakfast - a really good meal. "Who cooked this?" "Cook, memsahib." "What cook?" "Same cook." And so it was - Solomon, the Nuding's cook, just showing what he could do. Apparently Mrs Nuding had cut his bazaar money to such an extent that he had just spoilt everything as a protest. This was in 1910. He stayed with Father and Mother until they went on leave in 1911, and was with them again until 1919 and again in 1920.12 Sometime, when Mother came back from playing bridge, she'd tell us how the other women always talked as though they could do the housekeeping more cheaply than anyone else. Mother tackled Solomon. "How is it that other memsahibs always get fish more cheaply than you do?" "Missis want rotten fish, I bring." When thinking of meals for the next day, she said once, "What about crabs?" Solomon appeared to be visualising the night sky, then said, "Moon not right." He probably knew at what state of the tide crabs were at their best.

Looking back one realises how very good most of the cooks were. How well their forebears must have been taught by our forebears, to cook so well the sort of food they didn't eat themselves. It was taken for granted that, if he could do nothing else, he would be able to produce a perfect baked custard or caramel custard. This was absolutely basic, but they turned out beautiful hot and cold soufflés ice cream made in a turn-the-handle machine, garnished with spun sugar caramel baskets looking like Venetian glass and filled with mixed fruits - thereby hangs a tale.

A young man on his first spell in the East found himself living a much more social life than he was used to. Dinner parties made him nervous originally, but he got used to them. He learnt how to help himself to the caramel basket by giving it a smart tap with the spoon, taking his share of the caramel, along with the fruit and the cream. Later, when Home on leave, he was invited to a dinner party and was confronted with a dessert, which he attacked with all his acquired social aplomb - only to find that this really was Venetian glass!

Cooks used to present a written account every day of what they had spent on food. Some could write this themselves, but often it was written by someone else, and many and varied were the spellings of spinach, for instance; who could blame them? It's an odd enough word anyway. Acktal = oxtail; biff = beef; bins = beans; bitroad = beetroot. Ispincs = spinach, but so also does esepinece. I only wish I could write a foreign language as well. Both sheep mutton and goat mutton were available in Rangoon bazaars, the goat being cheaper than the sheep. This led to an unsolvable amount of confusion, with sheep being equated with cheap on one hand, and goat with good on the other, with a considerable number of permutations. "Cook, this is goat - not sheep." "Yes, mem, very good, very cheap", and so on.

I think our first cook came up to YwaTaung with us, but was sacked out of hand when he ran amok with a knife, and threatened to kill one of the other servants. In his place came Karim, who had been "waiting in the wings" so to speak, for he considered himself ex-officio DLO's cook. He was a nice little man, very clean and neat and with a small billy-goat beard. Balasundram, a Madrassi cook, was with us for 13 years, and would have been with us longer if he had not died while we were on leave. Ordering meals often produced rather odd results, due to lack of understanding on both sides. On one occasion, I had ordered clear soup, followed by roast chicken, and a cold soufflé, with raisins in it. Cook said something which I thought was a query about the soufflé, so I said, "Yes, cold soufflé, with raisins in it." When dinner came the soup was clear - yes - but cold, with raisins in it. Not iced - just cold. Cook had thought I'd said cold soup plates with raisins in it.

Balasundram's widow married again and had two children by her second husband. Whether he died before the trek out of Burma in 1942, or on the way, I can't remember, but she had a terrible time with her two small children, one of them still in arms. She came to me after the war to help look after Lyn. One day, when we were cutting up parachutes to make baby clothes for the local infant welfare clinic, I asked her if she knew what they were. She did. "Memsahib, if it hadn't been for these, we should all have died." They'd camped somewhere when they had gone as far as they could up the HuKawng Valley, exhausted and with no food, so the parachutes were indeed lifesavers.

What "Waffles" proper name was I don't know. He was our cook in MyitNgŏ, and really a hero in his way. When conditions became chaotic all over Burma after the Japanese invasion, the ordinary pattern of everyday living was disorganised. Onions and salt, for instance, became virtually unobtainable, tinned goods became scarce, and many of the traders left to get to India as best they could. After the Japanese air-raids on Mandalay, things became even more difficult. In ordinary times, our cooks used to go into Mandalay to the bazaar every day, catching the early morning local train, and getting back in time to cook what we called "breakfast" at 11 o'clock, when Val came back from the Works. But after the raids these trains didn't run. Waffles was unperturbed and managed to find food locally. Fish didn't present a difficulty because we were near the river from which MyitNgŏ took its name, but where he found other things I don't know. He made our bread, and very good it was. When the family and I were evacuated from MyitNgŏ, Waffles stayed with Val, and managed to feed him and various people from further south, who stayed at "Powell's Pub", having heard that food was available. I am sad to say that I can't

remember what happened to Waffles, though Val did tell me; I know he stayed with Val till the general evacuation of MyitNgŠ.

Some years before, when Cyril was on the MyinGyan - Paleik construction, he had an idea that he was having too much rich food.

"Sammy, how many eggs in this custard?"

"Two, Sar."

"Too many, Sammy."

"Can't make custard with less, Sar."

"Just use one egg, Sammy."

Next night:

"How many eggs this time, Sammy?"

"Same like master said - one egg, Sar."

"Still too much egg, Sammy."

"Can't make custard with less."

"Oh! yes you can - just beat up one egg, use half and throw the rest away."

Poor dears, they didn't have too much rich food when going over the KyaukKan Pass when trying to get to India in 1942.

In writing about memories, it seems that the things one remembers best are the things that have been talked about and put into words. Other things, though remembered, are hazy about the edges, as it were, or, though they may be clear in the mind, don't want to be put in words. I wonder whether other people find this, or whether it is only me? Perhaps oral tradition is what keeps folk-lore alive.

End of Chapter 12

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In 1934 we were on the move again. Val hadn't been very well, and was told that his heart was playing up, so he was sent home on leave. It must have been fairly early in the year, for he had his birthday on board while we were still in the Tropics. I asked the Chief Steward if a cake could be made for him, which it was. We were having tea on deck and the cake was produced with great ceremony for Val to cut. This he tried to do with conspicuous un-success, whereupon the steward said, "Oh dear! I must have brought the wrong cake!" A solid block of wood had been iced and decorated for a lark, and then the real cake was produced.

This was aboard S.S. Shropshire, and both Val and I recognised the Baggage Steward and Deck Steward, both of whom had been on the Gloucestershire when I travelled in her in 1919, and when Val travelled in 1920. In those days, Bibby crews used to stay with the Line. They were white crews; Henderson had white officers and Chief Steward and Pursers, but the rest of the crew were Goanese or Indian but, to a large extent, they stayed with the Line too.

We went to Upperton Farm House in Eastbourne, which was not out in the country as its name might suggest. Why we went into rooms rather than taking a house I can't remember, but Eastbourne was near Heathfield, so we could see the children reasonably frequently. Whatever Val's trouble had been, rest and taking life easily seemed to cure it. Mrs Scott, who ran Upperton Farm House, was a pleasant person, but had her own ideas about what and how she would cook. I never did find out whether she actually had an oven, but she would only cook what could be done on the top of the stove, which was rather limiting.¹³

Cyril was on leave at the same time, and came to see us while we were in Eastbourne, and we met again in Hull. Where we all slept I don't know, for Margot and Win were both at home. Val, Dennis and I must have been there in term time, for Nancie and Daphne weren't with us then. One of my most vivid memories of that leave is hearing the launching of The Queen Mary by H.M. Queen Mary. Until the actual launching the name had been kept a secret. The sound of the restraining chains being loosed was very dramatic. It was one of the best outside broadcasts I have ever heard.

Nancie was ten and tall for her age, Daphne was seven and smaller than Nancie had been at that age, and Dennis not three until the end of the year. Val's mother used to tell me of daughters (or more probably grand-daughters) of friends who were Nancie's age, "but growing normally, you know, growing normally", till I began to wonder whether she suspected me of giving Nancie some of Alice-in-Wonderland's mushroom. (Now I come to think of it, this remark may belong to our next leave, when Nancie was thirteen and really had grown a lot.)

As always, the end of leave meant buying school clothes, sewing on name tapes, as preliminaries to the inevitable partings, which didn't get any easier. We tried to make the moment of parting as brief as possible. We may have been mistaken but, having seen mothers reduce their children to a state of tears after a lingering farewell, we thought it hard

on all concerned, and may our children forgive us if we were misguided. However, Dennis wrote when he read this paragraph:

"Speaking as one of the children involved, I think our parents were absolutely right. Parting in these circumstances is quite hard enough, without a selfish and (dare I say it?) guilt-ridden parent wringing the emotions. We, I think, were always conscious of being well and dearly loved; kissing, caressing and cuddling were generous, and we did not need last minute excess to persuade us of our parents' love. I suspect that at least some of the parents, who dragged out farewells, did so because they felt guilty about how little love they had shown their child."

Back to Burma with Dennis, in Gloucestershire again. This time to Mandalay, where we had not been stationed before, though we had stayed there just before and after Nancie was born. We arrived just after Christmas and Mandalay, as far as Europeans were concerned, was almost like a city of the dead, as they were all in a state of post-Christmas hangover. Bearer and Ayah were with us again, and Balasundram as cook. The Loco. house was near the station, and only a short distance from the moat round the Palace wall. The roads were un-tarred and incredibly dusty, and bullock carts stirred up the dust in such clouds that the table could never be laid for dinner until we were ready to sit down and eat. Mandalay was a dirty place, there's no doubt about that, but there was a charm about it that grew on one, and the Palace, though only a shadow of its former self, was undoubtedly romantic.

We were only there about three months, then back to Rangoon again, this time to No. 9 Ahlone Road. Nos. 9, 10 and 10A were basically the same but, at the time that they were bought by the Burma Railways, each had been altered in some way so that they were no longer identical. No. 11 had had "English sanitation" for some years and it was while we were in No. 9 that it was installed there. There were three bathrooms upstairs and one down, so it didn't seem unreasonable to expect that at least one would be available for use during the installation, but not so. Each one had several men in it installing a bath and wash basin. When I expostulated, and said why couldn't one bathroom be finished completely before going on to the next, the Anglo-Indian foreman said, "Because lavatory-pans are out of stock", so they were doing what they could in the meantime, which I suppose was reasonable enough.

It was here that we had our one and only burglary. I woke because Dennis called out, put my hand under the pillow but couldn't find the torch, so put the bedside light on. As I was going to Dennis's room, I heard a noise and was just in time to see a figure sliding down a drain pipe. I yelled, "Choor!" (Thief!) and the servants came running, but he got away. Having settled Dennis, I went back to bed and asked Val if he'd got the torch. He hadn't, and then I realised with a sickening feeling that the first thing the thief had done was to take the torch. We had never kept a revolver in the house, for we'd heard that it was always the first thing they took, and I suppose the same applied to a torch. The police were pretty sure they knew who the burglar was - a man who had only just come out of jail for a burglary in the same house. Val's Zenith watch was among the things stolen, which was hard luck. Usually, he wore it at night, but not this night, because the lug holding the strap had broken and he'd left it on his dressing table. I lost my Burmese silver powder bowl, but we were lucky we didn't lose much more.

No. 9 and No. 10 were pretty close together and, with all the doors and windows wide open, sounds carried from one house to another. One evening, Mrs Townshend in No. 10 asked me if I allowed my ayah to smack Dennis - "Yes, if he needs it, but why do you ask?" She'd heard a loud smack in the afternoon, followed by loud crying. I started to say that ayah wasn't there in the afternoon, but didn't attempt to explain what actually happened: Dennis was supposed to be resting, and I saw him go out of his room on to the verandah. I smacked my hands together smartly and said, "Dennis! Go back to bed!" He was startled, and yelled, but Mrs Townshend wouldn't have believed that his bottom had not been touched.

The Swimming Club at Kokine was a great place to go to, and wonderful for children, as the water was so warm. In the early days, we used to go to the Railway Swimming Bath at Insein. For one thing, we didn't have to pay any club subscription there and, for another, at that time it was much cleaner than the one at Kokine. Later, the bath there was tiled, a proper filtration plant installed and lawns and flowers planted around it.

We had been out at Kokine Swimming Club one evening, and came back to find a cable on the drawing room table. It said, "Father died suddenly after operation", which was an awful shock. It was a terrible shock for Mother, for she had no idea that Father wasn't well. He'd had to go into a nursing home and had an operation for cancer of the stomach, but had died a couple of days later. I can still remember part of Mother's letter telling me about this, in which she said, "...and you can imagine how we three poor dears got home..." It was a blessing Margot and Win were at home.

One year, and I can't remember which, as I don't remember which of the Ahlone Road houses we were in, Venus was exceptionally brilliant. I had seen, possibly in "Everybody's Pepys" which I had recently read or in the papers, an allusion to Venus being visible at noon. So, mentally measuring Venus' position compared with the setting sun, I searched the sky at noon, and I too saw Venus.

King George V died early in 1936, and I think we were still in Rangoon, for I remember Margaret Brewitt saying she thought we ought to wear black arm bands. Considering the sort of clothes we wore, I thought this was rather a nonsense, and said that, as I hadn't done this for my own father, I thought it would be a bit far-fetched

End of Chapter 13

PART FOUR - WAITING FOR HITLER'S STORM

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

It came as a surprise when Val was transferred to MyitNgŠ as DCWS (District Carriage and Wagon Superintendent), and we weren't entirely sure that we liked the idea - not that that made any difference. MyitNgŠ, like YwaTaung, had no life apart from the Railway and, in many ways, was even more of an "enclosed order", as, with the exception of the Assistant Engineer who had to go out on line, all the officers were Loco. Dept. men, who had no duties outside MyitNgŠ. Many were the tales we had heard of how constricted life was, especially when Charles Hutton was there as the man in charge as Deputy Carriage and Wagon Superintendent (hereinafter referred to as DYC).

When there was no way of getting into Mandalay to shop, to have a hair cut, to go to the Club or see friends, except by train, men had to ask Hutton's permission, a permission very grudgingly given. Dining in Mandalay had been almost impossible, as there was no suitable train back to MyitNgŠ. I had only once seen MyitNgŠ, and that was in the Hot Weather before Nancie was born; it certainly was hot and very burnt-up and arid-looking, even more than YwaTaung. However, by the time we got to MyitNgŠ, things had altered considerably. Norman Johnson was DYC and his wife, Daffy, was with him. Claudius and Morgan were also married, we all had cars, and the road into Mandalay was, by local standards, good.

MyitNgŠ lived, moved and had its being in the Works. All the goods vehicles of the Railway were built and repaired here, as well as the passenger coaches. There was a Power House in the Works, where all the electric power was generated, for the houses as well as the Works¹⁴. Outside the Works, there were five houses for officers, also houses for the foremen and assistant foremen, and "lines" for all the employees in the Works. There was a Railway Anglo-Vernacular School, there were two churches, Anglican and R.C., but no resident clergy, two Railway Institutes with tennis courts, and that was that.

According to a Government of Burma Handbook, published in Simla in 1943, the population was 5682, which obviously meant the pre-war figure. MyitNgŠ took its name from the tributary of the Irrawaddy called Myit-NgŠ - "little river".¹⁵ The Shan Hills to the east rose steeply from the plain, and the Irrawaddy lay to our west. Our houses looked out on to the maidan which, in the Dry Weather was parched and dry, but became green almost overnight after a shower of rain. We used to notice there, as we had done in YwaTaung, that rain also produce a host of insects in the grass which I called cochineal insects^{15a}, for want of someone to tell me their proper name. These insects were about the size of a little finger nail, and looked for all the world as though they had been made of scarlet chenille. In the years between 1914 and 1936, the trees that had been planted when the Works were built in 1910, had grown vigorously, taking away the barren look it had had before.

We lived by the Works hooter. Chota hazri finished, Val was off to the Works, then back at 11 for so-called breakfast ("brunch"), to the Works again by 12.30 and home by 4.30 or a little later. In the Hot Weather MyitNgŠ was really hot and, as it was in the Dry Zone, rain did not come as early as it did in Lower Burma, nor in anything like the same amount. Though we got comparatively little rain, as a rule there was a noticeable drop in temperature once the rains had broken in Lower Burma. The Cold Weather was delightful, cool enough in the early morning and evening for one to be glad of a cardigan, but the middle of the day was like a really lovely English summer day, though considerably hotter.

What people had said for years was, "What MyitNgŠ needs is a swimming bath!" Some time in the early 1920s, an engineer had submitted plans to the Railway Authorities. It was rather an ambitious affair and it was turned down out of hand, and nothing came of the idea. When he arrived there, Val set to work to see what could be done. He found a contractor who estimated that he could make a bath 30 ft. x 15 ft., during his slack season, for under Rs 500/- (nominally œ37-14s-8d at the then rate of Rs13/4s to the œ. in 1990 purchasing power, about œ800 - œ1000; still very good value!). Permission was given for a bath to be built at a nominal rent for the land, and the water had to be paid for. Val wrote to various people, either living in MyitNgŠ, or liable to be transferred there, asking if they would be willing to buy shares and receive a small rate of interest. The money was raised and the bath built. The earth was excavated to about half the proposed depth, and this earth was built up to the required height. An old four-wheeled first class carriage, that was due to be scrapped, was towed round from the works and made a useful changing room for visitors. Mostly, we got into our swimming things at home and walked across. We changed the water about once a week, and found that a small quantity of copper sulphate crystals kept down the algae. We had many happy hours swimming in the bath, and found that Mandalay friends were glad to come out and enjoy it too.

I can't remember at the moment who it was that Val took over from as D.C.W.S., but whoever it was left Ma Puss behind, saying that she was a house cat, not a person cat, and it was no good trying to move her as she always came back to the house. We didn't mind, as we hadn't got a cat and she was quite happy with us. In fact, we got so attached to her that, when Val became DYC and moved to the Burra Sahib's house, we asked Michael Hadfield, who was taking over as D.C.W.S., if we might take her with us. He was quite agreeable, but said it would be no use, she'd be back again in no time. When it was time to move, Val put her in the car and drove round to our new home, where I buttered her paws, put her in the store room with some food, talking to her the while. Presently, when the house was more peaceful and the coolies had gone, we let her out. She sniffed round the furniture and settled down with no trouble at all.

But in the big outside world, momentous things were happening. The first we heard of Mrs Simpson was through the American edition of the Reader's Digest, which we got every month. We hadn't been long in DYC's house when we heard King Edward VIII telling his people that he quit. Even though we realised that something pretty dramatic was happening, I don't think the idea of abdication occurred to us.

It must have been about this time that Ayah left us, as Dennis was just on five years old and too much of a handful, and a young Pathan, Mulki Amman came in her stead. Dennis quickly became fluent in Urdu¹⁶ and learnt a smattering of Pushtu.

I mentioned earlier that the trees in MyitNgŏ had grown but, in DYC's compound, they had over grown. Along the road frontage of the garden were six or seven rain trees which had grown very big. We had alternate ones cut out, which allowed the breeze to get through. In addition to the rain trees, there was an avenue of neem trees leading from the house to the servants' quarters, and the same technique was used here. When Geordie Thomson, the new Loco. Supt., made his first trip up to MyitNgŏ, he said to Val, "I hear you've had 37 trees cut down. Mind what you're doing." When they came home for tea, Thomson looked round and said, "I thought you cut down 37 trees?" Val said, "So we had", but showed him how it had been done so that the compound did not look denuded. There was a magnificent tamarind tree in one part of the garden, where it was free of other trees, and could grow to its full height and spread without being a nuisance to anyone. There was also a bael fruit tree, with its fruit with a hard outer case. Cook used to make "fool" with this. It was refreshing and was said to be beneficial as well.

During this period in MyitNgŏ, 1936-1938, Val had a series of horrible boils and carbuncles, plus an abscess in the groin and poisoned fingers, over a period of several months. But, in spite of them, he didn't miss a day's work, though on one occasion he did use the car rather than bike or walk. He suspected that an infected comb at the Jap hairdresser in Mandalay was responsible for his first carbuncle, which was on his scalp, so in future I cut his hair. He had cut mine ever since we were married, so it became a reciprocal arrangement.

Dr Daniels, the Indian sub-assistant surgeon, tried everything he could think of, including Prontosil, one of the early sulphur drugs, plus preparations which included copper and tin. One of his bright ideas was an infusion of "chirata", much used for "clearing the blood" of school children. It was usually made with water, but he suggested that it could be made with sherry, a suggestion which we followed. It tasted so revolting that we wondered whether we had got the proper stuff; the next time Daniels came, I poured out a spoonful and presented it to the doctor, who meekly swallowed it. When he came up for air, all he could say was, "Have you got a sweetie that I can have?" He said he thought that was what it ought to taste like, but that treatment was discontinued. It's the only time I've given a doctor his own medicine!

Dennis and I spent the Hot Weather of 1937 in a house called Maisieville in MayMyo, and Val was able to get there for a breather occasionally. I think we must have rented it just for April and the first half of May, by which time the Rains should have broken in Lower Burma, and MyitNgŏ might be a little less hot. I know we were back in time for the Coronation of King George VI (6th June), for we listened to it on Michael Hadfield's radio. We were lucky to have a neighbour who had got a "wireless", for they were by no means universal then. Ordinarily we were quite happy without, as our collection of records had grown, and we could have the music of our choice when we wanted it. We had a good number of classical records, a fair supply of light music, plus items such as Stanley

Holloway's "Albert and the Lion", Jack Buchanan's "Who Stole My Heart Away", Jack Hulbert's "The Flies Crawled up the Window", and so on - something for most occasions.

We treated ourselves to some Dufay colour films. This was a new venture, and it was in the days before colour prints could be made. When processed one looked at the colour transparencies the size of a small postcard in a viewing box; they were considered pretty remarkable and much valued. Among the best that Val took were pictures taken in Mandalay when Lord Linlithgow, then Viceroy of India, was visiting Burma. One shot showed the Viceregal party in the Eastern Audience Hall of the Palace, with a Burmese Guard of Honour holding golden umbrellas (or htis). Another showed the karaweik paung, or decorated barge, on which the Viceroy and party were taken on the Moat, being towed by a large number of dug-out canoes.

Looking at them now, they seem to hold a little of the glamour of Mandalay. There undoubtedly was something about Mandalay. Superficially it was a drab, dusty town but, after a while, one became more and more aware of the moat round the walls of the palace, with their gates topped with multiple roofs and look-out towers at intervals. Inside the walls were the remnants of the Palace of Burmese Kings. Enough remained to enable one to picture to some extent what it must have been like. Carved and lacquered pillars of teak, many inlaid with mirrors, carved roofs with many tiers to betoken royalty; Burmese in their gala dress are always gay - in court dress they were even more so. But it needs a more gifted pen than mine to convey the atmosphere - and many have done so.

Though Val missed his engines, he enjoyed his work in MyitNgŏ in a way he would not have done had Hutton still been in the chair as Loco. Supt. When he had been in MyitNgŏ, Hutton had been an autocrat and had not wanted any interference from inferiors or superiors. But when he went to Insein as Loco. Supt. he couldn't bear to hand over his beloved MyitNgŏ to anyone else, and was constantly making trips there to see how things were going. Geordie Thomson was a different kettle of fish. Having put a man in a particular job and seen that he could do it, he let him get on, and Val appreciated and enjoyed it. In short, life in MyitNgŏ was pleasant. True, it was very hot in the Hot Weather, but the house was a comfortable one, there was a good tennis court, and now there was a swimming bath. We could go into Mandalay to the Club, which had a reasonably good library, where we could meet our friends, and we could get up to MayMyo on occasions. I still feel this, in spite of poor Val's boils and carbuncles, for he felt the same way about it.

Then once again (1938) it was time to go Home on leave. The Dunns were taking our place and, for once, it seemed that the house was going to be completely empty before the new lot of furniture came in. So I told the sweeper to polish the bedroom floors. And he did - or rather he put a thick layer of polish on. But before he had time to rub it well in and polish it, an army of coolies arrived and tracked all over the floors with laterite-dusty feet! How long it took to get the resulting "goo" off, I dread to think. The intention was good.

We travelled Home in the Shropshire and, once again, the question arose of how we got from A to B. I think we landed at Plymouth again - oh yes - we did.¹⁷ We could have

gone on to Tilbury, but decided to spend the night in Plymouth and travel to London in a civilised way, rather than through the dreary outskirts from Tilbury. When we came down in the morning into the lounge or dining room, we saw a large bowl of daffodils on the table. To the astonishment of an elderly gentleman reading his paper Dennis said, "Oh, orchids, I suppose." Orchids he knew, daffodils he did not.

From Plymouth to Harrow, I think, and then probably to Hull. Why that is so vague, I don't know, but Val and I eventually rented a bungalow called Ramsey, on the Firehills at Fairlight, that being about equidistant between Folkestone, where Nancie now was, and Heathfield, where Daphne still was and where Dennis would join her. We'd arranged for Nancie to go to Kent College, where I had been, and the Clarks of Uplands had seen to all the arrangements. Remembering the daffodils, we must have been Home in time for the Easter holidays.

Nancie, who was ten when we had last seen her, was now nearly 14 and was 5ft. 8in. tall, in other words, a lot taller than I was. She seemed to have settled down well at KC I went to an Old Girls' Re-union, where I found myself being introduced as Nancie Powell's mother or Margaret Kendall's sister, as my age group was not well represented. We had some fun with Nancie's clothes, as there were few things available in her size that were at all suitable for her age. Her navy blue school overcoat, made to measure, cost 50/- from the Fifty-Shilling Tailors. So I set to work to make summer dresses for her and, while I did that, Val coped with the cooking. There was no gas in the bungalow and the electric stove was so slow that one of our first purchases was an oil stove, so that we could boil milk quickly.

We did a fair amount of shuttling between Folkestone and Heathfield. The weather for the summer holidays must have been good, for we spent a lot of time on the beach, though it took longer to get there than it had done at Felpham. The tide went out a long way, leaving a large tract of lovely sand. Nancie trod on something one day which proved to be a dab about three inches long. Dennis got himself mixed up in a large piece of seaweed, which gave him a fright, for he came running out of the sea calling, "An octopus! An octopus!"

So far I have written entirely from memory, supported by one or two photographs, and have not appealed to the family for confirmation or denial and, as I write, more details come to mind. Winifred had married Jack Walker in 1937 and Margot had married Alan Watson early in 1938 and they had gone out to Nigeria. I remember now that we heard the news of Win's daughter, Gillian, when we phoned Mother from Plymouth, for the baby had been born on 22nd March, the day before we landed.¹⁸ Whether Mother had actually moved up to Tynemouth to live then, I'm not sure. I think not, but did so a month or two later, and let 55 Park Avenue, Hull. Cyril was on leave at the same time and became engaged to Dulcie Wilkinson. And, as a background to all our doings, was ominous news of Hitler and his ravings.

During the summer term, Val and I stayed with Mother in Tynemouth, and then had a lovely drive along Hadrian's Wall, and then to Castle Douglas; one of those lovely days, when the sky was a deep blue and great billowing clouds were casting their shadows over the landscape. We went to Castle Douglas to see the Craigs. Hugh Alexander seemed taller

than I remembered, which was rather odd, as he greeted me with, "Why, wumman, you've shrunk!"

It seems odd, in such a momentous year, that I remember so little of what we did as a family. Just being together as a family was probably sufficient for Val and me. But what did we do to make it something special for the family? Not much, I fear. The biggest event was almost certainly Cyril's wedding on September 3rd at St. George's, Hanover Square. Dulcie looked really lovely, and they both looked so happy. I can't remember where the reception was held. Mother had come down from Tynemouth for the wedding, and told me later that she was rather hurt that no one had taken the trouble to find out what her arrangements were. I don't know whether she went back by a night train or stayed in London, and I suppose we were much occupied with getting Nancie, Daphne and Dennis back to Fairlight in decent time, but I do feel we ought to have found whether she was comfortably fixed up. On the way home in the dark, Val and I were talking about Cyril's reply to the toast. I said I thought he spoke well, but perhaps a little slowly. A voice from the back said, "I liked the way he spoke. It gave me time to gather it in, like winding it in, word by word."

Then after this everything happened in a rush. The usual end of the holidays chaos of clothes-buying, sewing on name-tapes and so on, and then once again parting - not just for a few weeks till half-term, or even a whole term until the Christmas holidays, but until, as we thought, Val's next leave. So we took Nancie to Folkestone and Daphne and Dennis to Heathfield and, while the European situation grew more and more tense, Val and I prepared for our departure. We'd promised ourselves a few days in London to "do the shows" but, when we arrived at the hotel, we found the place stacked high with luggage and all rooms booked by Americans returning to the States. Somehow Dulcie's parents came into the picture, and we spent the night with them (I think), after having seen a matinee of "George and Margaret" and the film "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". I think it was while we were with the Wilkinsons that we heard the news of Chamberlain's return from his visit to Hitler, and I think it was hearing rather than seeing, though the Wilkinsons may have had T.V. Back to Fairlight, things had been happening with a vengeance - I was going to say - which shows how large the personal looms against the international, for we heard that Nancie, with the rest of KC, had been evacuated to Cornwall. There must have been a telegram or letter waiting for us - there was no phone. (Reference to my manuscript diary written about 20 years ago (1957), says 'telegram', which I think is correct.) While we were away, gas masks had been issued. We must have been among the few people, who were in England at that time, who never had gas masks.

I've just been reminded, by coming across a cutting from The Daily Telegraph dated 19.8.74, of a sight Val and I saw when we were going up to London at the time of the Munich crisis. We were motoring along the coast between Fairlight and Hastings, when we saw five waterspouts towering over the sea. They were so spectacular that we felt sure we should hear something about them on the wireless, or read about them in the paper, but, of course, we didn't, as there was altogether too much news for anyone's comfort.

Abler hands than mine have written about the horror of this time. True, it wasn't war - yet - but there was a feeling of humiliation in the air, and what were we to do? Val obviously had to go back to Burma when his leave was up and, with things as they were, we decided that I should go with him, for KC had moved back to Folkestone. We travelled in M.V. Derbyshire, my first voyage without a child since 1922.

End of Chapter 14

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

There had been trouble in Burma while we had been away, but little had been heard of it in England, which wasn't surprising, with all that had been going on in Europe, but unrest was in the air. We stayed with Cyril and Dulcie for a few days before going to MyitNgŠ. They were living in Windermere Park, not a Railway house as there wasn't one available at the time. They had one or two friends in for a drink one morning and someone spotted a large cockroach on the picture rail. Quite why an air gun was handy I don't know, but Cyril aimed at the cockroach and brought it down. Dulcie had only been in the country about a month but, as to the manner born, she called Sammy, "Sammy! Call the sweeper - Master's shot a cockroach." Collapse of all present. Later, they came to stay with us; I think it was over the New Year.

Having no family with us, I thought I ought to try to learn Burmese. Finding someone to teach me had always been the difficulty, but the wife of one of the Works' foremen, who had been a teacher in a MayMyo school, gave me lessons. I wanted to do colloquial Burmese, but I wanted to learn the script as well. Unfortunately, Mrs Masters found it hard to combine the two and concentrated on the script. I managed to learn it by embroidering each letter on a square of cloth, muttering the Burmese name as I did so. It wasn't until quite a long time later that I realised that the names, that I had learnt the hard way, were descriptive ones. "Za-myin-zwŠ", for example, was the "horse's bridle za". When I was learning this, I had no idea that "myin" meant a horse and it was so much second nature to Mrs Masters, that it didn't occur to her to tell me.

We started an infant welfare clinic, but I remember very little about it, except that we felt rather lost without Norah Ross to refer to. The Government Health Service, in a cheese-paring mood, had not renewed her contract.

That Hot Weather, we slept on the open verandah over the porch, having rigged up wires on which the mosquito net could be pulled back under the eaves during the day or, in case of rain, during the night. We had mattresses on Burmese mats on the floor and, also in case of rain, our beds were made up as usual in the bedroom. Sleeping out under the stars was a wonderful refreshment after the heat of the day and made the heat more bearable; it's one of the aspects of life in MyitNgŠ which I shall never forget. Though our time after we were married was spent almost equally between Upper and Lower Burma, I find that it is of Upper Burma that I think with most affection.

The war clouds had continued to gather and, on the anniversary of Cyril and Dulcie's wedding, war was declared. Their son Colin was born on 6th October. I went down to Rangoon to see them, while Dulcie was still in the Dufferin Hospital, and was told the baby was to be called Michael John. A little later I was in Rangoon again, this time I think with Val, and inquired after Michael. Dulcie looked blankly at me for a moment, and then said, "Oh, Colin's fine!" Apparently Michael hadn't seemed the right name, whereas Colin fitted at once. I remember now, Val definitely was in Rangoon at that time, for we have cine films of Colin at that stage, and a photo Val took of Cyril, Dulcie and Colin was used as their Christmas card.

The cine camera, an 8mm one, was an extravagance in itself and the films cost a lot, but we tried to take films that would tell a little of the life of Burma; our main effort was *The Story of Paddy*, taken over the whole cycle from planting to the mouth - the final shot at the table was not taken till after the war. Perhaps the most successful sequence was of the boat-racing *YadanakupwŃ*, taken on a backwater of the Irrawaddy near Amarapura when the river was in full flood, where competing dug-outs containing 10 or 15 men paddled at high speed along the course. There was a race where women competed against each other, and we have a shot of them cooling off after the race by slipping out of their boats into the water, just as they were.

We used to go to Mandalay fairly regularly to the Club, to change books at the library there and, if necessary, to drop our little bits of pasteboard into the Not-at-Home boxes ranged along a wall. Many have been the jokes about these visiting card boxes but, in Mandalay, the scheme really was *reductio ad absurdum*. In Rangoon, the boxes were put out by the servants at the front gate about 3 o'clock and brought in again about six, so, when one went "calling", one did at least know where the person called-on lived, for their name was on the gate as well as on the box. But in Mandalay, there was the row of boxes, and it gave one not a clue where the person "called-on" lived. So, one just called on all the boxes and, in due course, perhaps, one's call was returned, and there, quite often, the matter ended.

One night we met someone who had just had a week in Rangoon and regaled us with an account of all she'd done.

"But how on earth did you manage to survive all that?"

"Gin and aspirin, my dear, gin and aspirin!"

Another night we had a visiting pianist who gave a recital. Poor man! It must have been as much like Hell to him as it was to me. How old the piano was I don't know, nor do I know when it was last tuned, if it ever was, but, by the end of the time he'd been hitting the keys with venom, I felt as though the top of my skull had been removed and every note was being hammered into my brain.

On one of our trips to Rangoon, I bought a pocket Burmese-English, English-Burmese dictionary, and had a lot of fun trying to make out what station names meant. In many cases I think it was fair to talk about station names rather than place names, for I think it's possible that stations were often built where a construction camp had been, and a village had grown up around it. One such name, I think, must have been *HkwŃYok*. I was never able to find anyone who could tell me what it meant, or if it did mean anything. The nearest I could get to a meaning with the aid of my dictionary was "Spotted Dog". Perhaps the only thing that had identified a particular construction camp had been an odd-looking dog. Another name that I couldn't make out was *Paleik*, but that was explained to me. During the building of the line there had been an outbreak of plague, and *Paleik* was the nearest Burmese pronunciation to it, and *P A L E I K* was the recognised transliteration of the Burmese script . Names such as *NyaungLŃBin* and *PayaNgaZu*, *ShanYwaGyi* and *WetHlaGalŃ* were straightforward enough - *PeeplesFourTrees19*, *PagodasFive*, *ShanVillageBig* and *PigPrettyLittle* - but, like English place names many of them had probably changed over the course of years.

Just when we bought our radio I am not sure, but we certainly had one in 1939, and I think it was this year that the Yankee Clipper and the Mauretania made their maiden flight and voyage. When Val was tuning and trying to find the station he wanted, we heard an American voice saying, "Yankee Clipper calling Mauretania, Yankee Clipper calling Mauretania." I can't remember the details now, but I know that circumstances were such that we were convinced we heard the actual call during the maiden flight and voyage.

1940, and in Europe the Phoney War still existed in the New Year but, by May, things were very different and the threat of invasion was ever-present; naturally, we were worried, without any clear idea of what we ought to do. There was a certain amount of dissatisfaction among the Burmese and, on one occasion, the military were called out, the Riot Act read, and one or two people were shot in Mandalay, after which the atmosphere cleared. We talked endlessly about what we ought to do. On one side, we felt that to be living like their contemporaries were doing was the proper thing for our children. Then, perhaps, I ought to go Home and try and make a home for them, but where and how? It hadn't occurred to us that they should join us in Burma until we heard a broadcast from the Government, asking parents who were abroad and in a position to do so, to have the children join them. Plenty of children were being evacuated from England to the States, sometimes to relatives, or sometimes to join friends. So we started thinking of the idea, and the more we thought of it, the more it seemed that we ought to say, "Send the children." Kent College by this time was at Pembury, but still very near the danger area. Uplands, where Daphne and Dennis were and where Nancie spent the holidays, had been taken over by the Army; Val's mother and sister were in no position to take over the family, nor was my Mother up in Tynemouth. The Clarks of Uplands had had to move to Exeter, and were both of an age to make us feel that we couldn't ask them to take the added responsibility of the change in circumstances. We knew that conditions in the East were none too stable but, if we were all together, we should know what was happening, whereas, if we were in Burma and the family was in England, we'd all be worrying. After many sleepless nights we cabled Home, "Send the children".

And once again, dear Monica came to our aid and made the necessary arrangements. An incredible number of unaccompanied children travelled to India as a result of the broadcast we heard. I can't give an account of this as I only know it at second-hand but, though there was said to be a definite ratio of adults to children, this did not mean that any particular person was in charge of a certain number of children. So Nancie felt herself very much in charge of Daphne and Dennis, she being 16, Daphne 13 and Dennis eight and a half. We had been told that they would be landing at Bombay, so we arranged for Thos. Cooks to look after them to Calcutta, and then arranged for them to fly to Rangoon. Cooks, apparently, looked after them to the extent of booking accommodation for them on the train, but not in the matter of bedding, or soap, or such matters that seasoned travellers in the East either provide for themselves, or know how to get.²⁰

Val and I went down to Rangoon to meet the family, and I can see yet the arrival of the flying boat, and then Nancie, Daphne and Dennis coming up the pontoon towards us. There was so much to tell, so much to see and so much to do. Nancie was worried because

Daphne had had measles while they were aboard Stratheden and she had had to look after her with precious little help or guidance; when we looked at Dennis it dawned on us that now he had got it. This put us in a quandary. Cyril and Dulcie, now in No 3 Hume Road, had offered to put up Nancie and Daphne, and Harold and Dorothy Moody were going to have Val, Dennis and me. But we couldn't accept the Moody offer as their son John, only a little older than Dennis, was a diabetic. It wasn't felt right, at this stage, to expose him to the risk of measles. So what to do? We contacted "Tiny" Carrier, the Railway Doctor, and explained our predicament, and he, kind man, said that Dennis and I could stay in his house, and his servants would look after us until Dennis was well enough to travel. So this was arranged, Val going to MyitNgŔ taking the girls, while Dennis and I stayed in Rangoon. Before Dennis was strictly out of quarantine I heard from Val that Nancie had had a nasty go of fever. I wondered whether it would be all right for Dennis to travel, but Tiny assured me that he was well enough, so off we went to become a united family at last.

Having been without my parents for seven years, which included the 1914-1918 war years, it was wonderful for us all to be together, but we couldn't take it for granted that we had made the right decision. There was the climate to take into consideration; it had always been assumed that children should be in England in their growing years. Then, what about education? Nancie had taken her School Certificate and had been "excused Matric." She taught herself touch-typing on our portable typewriter and, I think, did some shorthand. We sent home for the P.N.E.U. (Parents' National Educational Union) course for home teaching, with which I tried to teach Daphne and Dennis. This was more difficult than it would have been in more normal times. Mails took so long that, when corrected papers arrived (if they ever did), they no longer seemed relevant. However, we all had Burmese lessons together. Mr Singham, one of the teachers in the Railway Anglo-Vernacular School, came to the house and gave us lessons in colloquial Burmese by the Direct Method. No one could say we became really fluent, but the little I learnt then I still remember. If I had had someone like Mr Singham to teach me years earlier I think I might have learnt a lot.

The swimming bath was a great joy, and we all spent a lot of time in it, more than we spent on the tennis court, but we were lucky to have that too. We hired a piano from Mandalay and Nancie played quite a lot, though I don't remember Daphne doing much. Delilah figured a lot in our lives at this time. We used to call her a Prome Tripe hound. She was barrel-shaped, black with brown eye-brow marks reminiscent of a dachshund. (Not to be confused with the kind of dog owned by Po Naing, the Head Draughtsman, who had a Bassein Fishery Hound, liver-coloured with blue eyes.) She originally belonged to Syd and Jack Webster in Rangoon. On one occasion they stayed with us in MyitNgŔ, Delilah coming with them. She seemed to like us and the house so, when Jack said she was worried what to do about Delilah when they went on leave, we asked Delilah if she'd care to come to us. The thumps of her tail seemed to indicate that the answer was in the affirmative. So, when Syd and Jack went Home, Delilah was escorted to us by their Burmese servant, complete with bed and bedding and written instructions what to do if Delilah wandered off in search of exotic food, instructions which included a dose of castor oil on her return.

The day she arrived, we made a big fuss of her and she seemed happy to be with us. Val and I were sitting outside under the stars when we became conscious that Delilah was not with us. We called and whistled with no result. The servants hadn't seen her. We began to worry, remembering that the Websters had travelled by car when they came to see us. Perhaps Delilah had got on to the main road and tried to get to Mandalay? Val got out the car and went slowly north, as far as Mandalay, and slowly south, as far as KyaukSŏ, looking for an exhausted and pathetic black dog, but with no success. We went to bed disheartened, and wondered how we should break the news to the Websters. Next morning we were having our chota-hazri in the garden, when Delilah came in at the gate, tail held high, looking very pleased with herself. We later learnt that she had spent the night in MyitLoung, the nearby Burmese village, where she had enjoyed curry and rice. According to instructions, she had her dose of castor oil.

We used to go for early morning walks along the canal bank, taking Delilah with us. It was a small irrigation canal that took us out into open country between the paddy fields, with the Shan Hills rising steeply out of the plain. We didn't realise then that both Daphne and Dennis were short-sighted, and it has always been a grief to Daphne that she never actually saw the kingfishers that I pointed out to her. We used to see the usual beautifully coloured kingfishers, and also the pied ones; not perhaps really as beautiful, but interesting because they were less common.

Ma Puss I have mentioned earlier. She was followed by Tribby (of the "psychic" foreknowledge) and her son, whose name eludes me (Tabs?). When Tribby was about to give birth to kittens in the store-room, I tried to chase her son away as I thought Tribby was trying to get rid of him, but Bearer said that she wanted him near her, and it really did look like it. So Tribby went into the store-room, while a harassed whatever-his-name-was duly looked on, and Moppet and Mittens arrived. I used to say, "No cats on beds. No cats on laps at meal times", and it is still held against me that I put-putted Tribby when I found her on a bed.

Ted Blanchard was D.C.W.S. at this time. When our family were leaving in Stratheden as part of the largest convoy to leave England up to that time, Ted's wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Joan, were leaving in one of Paddy Henderson's ships. But, whereas our family arrived safe and sound, Margaret and Joan didn't, and there was no news of them at all. It must have been dreadful for him to see us all together and so happy, while he knew absolutely nothing of them. Then, one morning round about Christmas, and I think it must have been Christmas 1940, he came round with a telegram. Would I tell him what it said as it was in French, which he didn't know? And what a thrill it was! It was from the French Red Cross and said that his wife and daughter were "en bonne sante". It was from Charente Inferieure (nowadays called Charente Maritime, a departement north of the Gironde estuary, around the lower reaches of the Charente). We didn't know then what had happened, but learnt later that their ship had come safely through the Mediterranean, but had been seized by a German raider in the Indian Ocean. They had been taken aboard and back to Europe. Somewhere off the coast of France the ship had been bombed by Allied planes and some of the Blanchard's fellow passengers had been killed. Margaret and Joan were taken ashore and interned until the end of the war. We were so pleased that Ted had

had news, particularly as it was Christmas, which was also Joan's birthday. I think it must have been after we'd cabled for the children to come out to us that Val and I went down to Rangoon, probably to see about the aforementioned arrangements for crossing India and flying from Calcutta. We stayed with Cyril and Dulcie and I did some shopping and had some dresses made by a darzee. Val had to get back to MyitNgŠ but I stayed a day or two longer, as the dresses weren't ready. Cyril and Dulcie saw me off by 3 Up, the evening mail train²¹. I had a compartment to myself and went to bed very tidily. Somewhere about midnight there was a frightful noise and the coach tipped over at a violent angle. I remember thinking, "Gosh! It's happened this time", as though I expected an accident to happen every time I travelled. Very soon all sorts of people were walking along the track to see what had happened. Eric Milne, a Traffic Officer B.R., was on the train. His saloon was at the back of the train, and I was escorted there in my dressing gown. I had no idea what had happened in the front of the train and felt that I ought not to get in the way, as I didn't know enough to help. "All Concerned" telegrams had been sent out about the accident, so both Val and Cyril knew about it; Cyril and Dulcie came up to PyunTaZa, I think, by car and took me back to Rangoon. The accident had been caused by the removal of fish-plates joining the rails, and this had caused the derailment. There was considerable political unrest in the area, and it was the work of saboteurs. I left by 3 Up again, as soon as the line was clear, and arrived without incident.

Christmas 1940. This was the first Christmas we had had together since before Dennis was born. By 1931 Nancie was in England, and by 1933 she was joined by Daphne. Dennis had Christmas with us in 1934, 1935, 1936 and 1937, but after that he was in England too. So it was something to rejoice over, though I have little recollection of the way in which we celebrated, except that we all had bicycles. Val had had one for some time and I may have had one too, but we gave each of our young a bike - so now we could say we were completely mechanised. There wasn't a great deal of scope for biking but, with bikes, we could get further affield along the canal banks. It may have been about now that Cyril and Dulcie stayed with us and we had a picnic at the head waters of the canal, the other side of Mandalay. It became a joke between us that I used to say that MyitNgŠ was 10 miles from Mandalay, and Val would correct me and say 9 and the appropriate fraction. I can't say now how far the other side of Mandalay we went, but it was a lovely spot for a picnic beside the water. This was one of the scenes recorded on cine. It happened in MyitNgŠ, during the War, after Nancie, Daphne and Dennis had joined us. We were having tea, and Bearer had made us some very good wild duck sandwiches. These were something of a joke, for Cook (or his letter-writer) had called duck "wild dog" in his account book. Val was late coming from the Works and I'd told the family to hold back and leave some for the hard-working man, which they did, bless them. When he arrived, he shared the Wild Dog joke, and tucked into the sandwiches. When just one was left he looked round and said, "Anyone want this?" and the young, having been warned off, with great restraint said nothing. But the howl that went up must have carried for miles when Val gave it to Delilah, who swallowed it in one gulp. Delilah was a canine vacuum cleaner who could absorb anything.

End of Chapter 15

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I was in grave danger of having an attack of the "GyoBinGauk Syndrome" about the Hot Weather of 1941. (When one knows the setting of an incident which is vividly described, it is all too easy to imagine one has been there personally. This was brought home to me forcibly when we were in Rangoon after the war. Val lost his silver Eversharp pencil, that I gave him when we were engaged. He said he thought it must have been taken from his measuring book when he was in a crowd on the overbridge at GyoBinGauk station. I said, "Yes, I remember, there was a scrum", but Val pointed out that I wasn't there. I found this hard to believe, but my own diary proved conclusively that I was never there after the war.)

I knew the setting of both MayMyo and KaLaw and, as I knew we'd been away, I could imagine us in either setting. After a while, pieces of the jig-saw puzzle turned up, and KaLaw it was. We must have gone there in "Henry Flying Cloud", our Canadian Ford V8, and stayed at what we still called the Railway Hotel, though it was just the Officers' Rest House. Dennis remembers that it was at KaLaw that it was realised how short-sighted he was - he couldn't read the numbers on the room doors. Dulcie and Colin were in the Asst. Engineer's bungalow, or sharing with the Hossocks. Cyril was never Asst. Engineer but, at this stage, the extension of the line from LaShio was being undertaken; this became known as the Burma-China Railway, as distinct from the Burma-China Road. Cyril was one of the engineers working on it and, after the Hot Weather, Dulcie and Colin joined him in his construction bungalow, with their faithful Sammy. Another piece of the jig-saw that indicates KaLaw for this Hot Weather was the fact that we went to see Dorothy and John Moody at TaungGyi, not accessible by rail, but a pleasant run by car. Val wasn't with us all the time, but came up for an odd weekend, to get a breath of cool air.

We got back to Myitnge in the early evening, probably in May, and how Delilah welcomed us! She sang and sang and sang for a full twenty minutes! If she had been able to talk, she couldn't have said more plainly that she'd missed us and was glad to have us back. Whether the cats felt the same, I don't know, but the family was glad to see them.

We were a long way from the war in Europe but, though life in Myitnge had a rural simplicity and peace, events were moving fast. The "Burma Road" was in the news and lorries were going in to China; as I mentioned earlier, a start had been made on the Railway extension from LaShio into China. In the meantime, Val and I enjoyed having the family with us. Whether they found life incredibly dull I don't know but, if they did, they dissembled pretty well, for we weren't aware of it. As far as I'm concerned, and I'm sure Val felt the same, it was a happy time when we "...took delight in simple things and mirth that had no bitter springs...". Birthdays and Christmases to celebrate with home-made cakes, swimming, tennis, walks with Delilah - all very simple pleasures but much enjoyed. Nancie tried her hand at dress making, with considerable success. I remember particularly a pale blue linen dress that she made with the help of a Vogue pattern, and wore for the first time on her 17th birthday.

I've remarked more than once on the curious gaps in one's memory. Getting to YwaTaung from Myitnge was easy, now that there was the Ava Bridge (which was a rail and road bridge) across the Irrawaddy and we had a car. I remember that we went to KaungMuDaw and looked at the pagoda, but I cannot remember whether we took Daphne to see the house in YwaTaung where she was born. If we did, she'll probably remember, but I can't at the moment.

We had the opportunity during this time to see the MinGun Bell - something that I'd always hoped to see since the days when Mother sent us picture postcards of it in the Leeds days. MinGun was up-river from Mandalay, and there was no regular service there. Burma Railways had been asked to send an officer to inspect some Bombay-Burma teak logs for a firm in England and, as the logs were in rafts in the river off MinGun, a launch was provided, and we all went. I ought to be able to give some sort of history of the pagoda and the bell, but have to admit that I have only vague recollections of the details. The Burmese King of the time wanted to be like Suleiman-bin-Dauod in the Just So Stories, and set out to build the biggest pagoda in the world, but shortage of cash and an earthquake foiled him. We saw the model of what the finished pagoda should have been like and, seeing the massive base which still stands (at least 100ft high), it would indeed have been an exceedingly large pagoda. The bell, which is suspended on a large beam, was said to have been cast in 1795. (Here I am quoting from notes in our photograph album, but can't find the source of the notes.) It is 12 feet high, 16 ft in diameter and weighs 90 tons²². It is rung by being hit with a billet of wood, and has a beautiful tone. It is slightly smaller than the great bell of Moscow, but that bell is cracked, is not hung, and rests on the ground. The tale used to be told that, after the annexation of Upper Burma, the British removed the bell with the idea of taking it to Rangoon. The vessel, on which it was loaded, sank in the river and all efforts to salvage the bell failed. Eventually the Burmese asked to have it back and were told that they could - if they could re-float it - which they did.

Val measured the logs, and then we all went to see the model of what the pagoda should have been like, and then went to see the massive remains of the pagoda and chinthès. If the chinthès had been finished they would indeed have been huge. What remained was up to the haunches, and that was as high as a tall tree, so the total height would probably have been one and a half times as high. I think all of us felt that we were more impressed by the bell than the great masses of masonry. As far as I can remember, each of us struck the bell, having made some sort of contribution to the pagoda funds, thereby "acquiring merit".

Among the things I remember with particular affection in Myitnge are the birds - bulbuls, rollers, king crows, purple sunbirds, magpie robins, kingfishers and jo-birds (collared doves). One did become exasperated with some birds, particularly the ko-el in the hot weather, when he kept on repeating "ko-eel" on an ascending scale till he was positively shrieking, when he would start again. The barbet, or coppersmith bird, with his constant "tonk tonk tonk" could be wearisome too. Oddly enough, I don't associate the night-jar with Myitnge. In memory it belongs with YwaTaung, but the little "kiwick" owls were always about.

Also pleasing to the sense of sight were the flowering trees: padauk, gold mohur, bauhinia, silk cotton tree, flame-of-the-forest and mango. The sense of smell gave one the first indication that the mango trees were in flower, with the reminder that the Hot Weather was approaching. The padauk trees flowered more or less overnight, and one could wake up in the morning, knowing by the scent, that the trees had blossomed. Poor Val always knew when the padauk was in flower, for it gave him violent hay-fever²³. Burmans used to say that the padauk flowered three times before the Rains broke.

Sight, sound and taste - big, loose-skinned oranges; MayMyo strawberries, small but delicious; hnetti mangoes, possibly the best, though thon-lon-ta-daung (three-to-a-cubit) ran them very close. The list of fruit is a long one though, to hear some people talk, one would have thought that bananas were the only fruit available. Even if that had been true, there was considerable variety in bananas (never referred to as such, always called "plantains"). There were little but very sweet ones, triangular-section green ones, large yellow ones and ones with deep red skins. Papayas, guavas, sweet limes, custard-apples, lichees, mangosteens, pineapples, pomeloes, they all came in due season and we enjoyed them. We also enjoyed jam made from tiparees (Cape gooseberries), pineapples and strawberries, and marmalade from the local oranges, not the same as Seville orange marmalade but delicious nevertheless.

We were lucky in that wherever we lived, fresh river fish was always available, and our cooks knew how to cook it. Beef and mutton may have been indifferent in quality, but the fish was good - becti, butter-fish, little "mangofish" and, possibly the best of all, nilsa. This was really bony, many of the bones having five prongs at their ends, but some cooks could either fillet or smoke them in such a way that the bones ceased to be tiresome. My Mother used to say that one ought to "live on the country", rather than indulge in cold-storage food, advice which we followed, though we used to keep a certain amount of tinned food for emergency. It always seemed odd to us that the people, who complained most about food aboard ship, were often the ones who paid large sums of money to buy kippers and cold storage apples, when good fresh food was available.

It seems odd when one thinks about it now, but, at breakfast (so-called) after the main dish, Bearer used to say, "Please to order eggs" just in case there were any unfilled spaces. So one ordered on the spot the egg of one's choice, boiled, scrambled, poached or omelette. Val, who said he liked eggs in any shape or form, sometimes had a raw egg, which he would break into a cup with great panache. On one occasion, Dennis too ordered a raw egg and tried to copy Val's style when breaking it. We never managed to work out just how the raw egg flew out of its shell in Nancie's direction, but nothing could have been neater than the way she "caught it in the slips" and deposited it in the waiting cup!

The sense of taste seems to have occupied a lot of room, and sight has had a fair share. Sound has chiefly been represented by bird songs and calls, but there was another sound which thrilled us, and that was the three-note chime whistle fitted to one of the YC Class engines which headed the Mail trains. We loved to hear it as the train approached the Myitnge Bridge - I wonder whether I'm right about the Mail trains? It may have been the fast goods, for I associate it chiefly with night time and, at Myitnge, the Mail trains came

through in daylight²⁴. Another pleasant sound was the striking of the flat bell-shaped gongs that were carried by two small boys when the hpongyis went out in procession in the early mornings, giving people the chance to acquire merit by giving alms or food.

All of this comes under the heading "But it's really very nice". On the debit side were the mosquitoes, but fortunately they were not the malarial ones. We had to sleep under mosquito nets, of course, to avoid the nuisance of being bitten and, in the Hot Weather, that was HOT. There was something comforting about being under a net, though, for it kept off other things too, such as bats and cockroaches. We also burnt mosquito coils²⁵, which were amazingly efficacious; in fact, when we felt mosquitoes biting, it nearly always meant that the coil had burnt itself out and a new one was required.

During the Hot Weather, Myitnge was undoubtedly hot, but it was a dry heat which, on the whole, I think is a lot easier to bear than the humid heat of Lower Burma. A lot of it was a matter of what one was used to. If we went down to Rangoon from Upper Burma, we wondered how anyone ever got used to the constant streaming of perspiration. On the other hand, if one was used to the damp heat, and made a quick trip to Mandalay, one felt as though one's skin was being pulled off one's face by the heat, which felt like a blast from a hot oven.

For a long time I'd wanted to work a sampler of sorts, illustrating the family connection with Burma. Val and I were married in Rangoon, so a map of sorts seemed appropriate, but how to work it out and what to include was the problem. We decided that it must be a Powell map; to include the Kendall connection, as well, I felt would be beyond my powers of design and embroidery. A copy of the magazine "Woman", illustrating a pictorial map of the British Isles, gave me just the hint I needed to start me off. The outline was shown in three rows of chain stitch, one in blue and two in green. So, when we made a trip to MayMyo, we went to Hok Eong, the Chinese shop, where I bought a piece of cream linen, and set to work, embroidering to the best of my ability, various devices to indicate places and interests.

I've written a lot about 1941, probably because it was such a happy time, before the unbelievable happened, the Japanese bombing of the American base at Pearl Harbour. After that, without constant reference to printed matter, it is hard to credit how quickly everything happened. We were told that Singapore would be held, but it fell, then Moulmein, then Rangoon, and so it went. Christmas and New Year were not the joyful time they should have been. Early in the New Year we heard that Chinese troops were coming to Burma from China to be under Wavell's command and, before very long, we saw the troop trains bringing them in. This seemed to bring the war very near us, but what was more distressing was the constant stream of refugees, chiefly Indians, passing through in a northerly direction, trying to get back to their own country. There was no easy way for them to get out of Burma and into India. The railway went as far as MyitKyina, but between there and India there were massive mountain ranges, dense jungle, no real roads only tracks, and absolutely nothing in the way of organised transport. The Hill people in this area were widely scattered and were barely able to supply food for themselves, let alone for the hundreds of poor refugees who tried, by various routes, to walk out of Burma. The

whole position was incredibly difficult for all concerned, the Government, Civil Servants, private individuals, European, Indians and Burmese. It was, in a way, easiest for the Burmese for, not only were they in their homeland, but Japanese propaganda had led them to believe that they were going to be liberated. It was, after all, only half a century since the Annexation of Upper Burma and the deportation of the last Burmese king. In many ways, Burma had been an occupied country, rather than a conquered one²⁶. All the main lines of communication in Burma ran North and South: the Irrawaddy, the railways and the roads running in the same direction. But the Japanese, with their jungle warfare²⁷ tactics, penetrated areas which more formally-equipped troops could not deal with, even if the powers-that-be had known where the enemy was.

The number of Europeans in Burma was very small when compared with the workforce as a whole. For instance, in Myitnge, which was entirely a railway town, the Government handbook gave the population as 5682. This obviously included wives and families, but the number of officers was FIVE. The total number of officers on the Burma Railways, according to the Civil List of 1933, was 77, plus eight Burmese, and the same sort of proportion held good throughout all Government Service - the Civil Service, Post and Telegraph, Police, Forests, &c., - and in the big commercial concerns too. As the Government was in no position to organise mass evacuation, it wasn't surprising that Indians in large numbers decided to make their own arrangements to get to India as best they could, and this led to a very considerable disorganisation in all the machinery of Government in which many of them worked. No official plans were made for the general evacuation of women and children. For one thing, there were no facilities for evacuation and, for another, to have suggested the possibility would probably have resulted in panic and loss of morale. Nor was guidance given, probably because things moved so fast and the situation was so fluid that what seemed right and possible one day, was quite out of the question the next.

When Rangoon fell, there were hopes that the Government could be established further north in Mandalay or MayMyo, and there was talk of the Railway works at Insein being transferred to Myitnge. As no arrangements were being made for the native personnel at Myitnge to be evacuated, it seemed to Val and me that we ought to stay where we were, at least until some official indication was given that non-combatants, or others not in key positions, ought to leave the country by any means they could arrange. We took it for granted that all Railway personnel would be expected to stay where they were. I believe it was some time in February when we heard an unusual noise and saw planes flying low over the Shan Hills. We didn't know at the time, but they were Jap planes on their way to bomb Mandalay. It must have been about this time that a bit of land to the north of the Works was used by American planes. No - I think it must have been before Pearl Harbour because these pilots (were they the Flying Tigers?) were flying "over the Hump" to Chunking, either as private individuals, or attached to the Chinese forces²⁸. It must have been in connection with this that a Chinese general came to Myitnge. He spoke no English, Val spoke no Chinese, but, *mirabile dictu*, they both spoke French!

End of Chapter 16

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Then came the day when Val was called to see the Commissioner in Mandalay, and was told that arrangements were being made to fly families from MaGwè to India, and that he thought the children and I ought to go. I think we were given a couple of days to get ready, to make our choice of what to take with us in one small suitcase each. The agony was there, but I can't describe it. We packed our bags, ready to go at a moment's notice, but MaGwè airfield was bombed, so other plans had to be made.

In our suitcases we packed mainly clothes, sensible shoes and small treasures. Nancie packed the Chinese enamelled brush and mirror that we had given her for Christmas, and Daphne took a jade and silver brooch and a mother-of-pearl box that were gifts to her. I can't remember what Dennis's treasures were, but I took the six silver teaspoons belonging to my great-grandparents Hannah (n,e Oman) and Christopher Botham, that Mother had given me while we were on leave; we have always talked of them as the "Hannah and Christopher" spoons. I also packed my sampler map, as it didn't weigh much more than a handkerchief. Daphne asked me if I'd packed the little Delft Dutch boy and girl that Father brought me from Holland in 1911. I hadn't, and said that I didn't think I could take any more, so she said she'd put it in with her things, which she did, and for which I am very grateful.

I remember so clearly going into the so-called office-room, where Val's big desk was, in which we kept all our personal papers. I took out our marriage certificate and the children's birth and baptismal certificates and then, apparently quite deliberately, put the marriage certificate down and left it for Val. It was a senseless thing to do, but I think everyone who was evacuated from Burma at that time could tell a similar story. We were in no condition to make sensible decisions.

Then word came that we were to go to Shwèbo and fly from there, and, early in the morning of 15th March (1942), we went to Mandalay by road; I can still see, in my mind's eye, Val standing on the platform in Mandalay when we were in the train for Shwèbo, and wondering whether we should ever see each other again. We had left the house just as it was, for, if Val was going to be able to stay there, he might as well be as comfortable as possible. If he also had to leave, the house could look after itself - there would be nothing he could do about it.

It was strange going through SaGaing and YwaTaung and on to Shwèbo, where we had travelled so often in our early married days, but then we had been in an inspection carriage on the end of the train, whereas now, as though to emphasise the fact that we were evacuees, we were in an old Third Class coach with hard wooden seats²⁹. At Shwèbo there were ramshackle Burmese buses that took us to the old Military Police barracks, where the local officials had organised an evacuation camp, and very well they did it. They had an office where we all registered, and then found somewhere to dump our cases.

The building itself was long and low, consisting of a raised floor and roof, with some of the space below the floor being enclosed to make small rooms and offices. There were a few

beds in the big open space, but obviously not enough to enable everyone to have one, so we put our cases down to book a bit of floor. There were one or two long tables, on which were bowls of water, and these were looked after by several zealous little Burmese boys of about 10 or 11. As soon as they saw that the water was soapy, they threw it away and put clean water in its place.

Outside, on the bare dry ground, there were several little huts made of bamboo matting, where one could have a stand-up bath with the aid of a 4 gallon kerosene tin of hot water and a similar one of cold³⁰. The latrines were some way away and were, of course, native-style, no seat and used in a squatting position. Thereby hangs a tale. The day we arrived, when I was giving our names and various particulars required, I said, "What are the sanitary arrangements, if any?" rather expecting to be asked in return if I didn't know there was a war on, and there was plenty of jungle into which we could disappear if necessary. It wasn't until the following day that I realised that my question must have sounded "toffee-nosed". Outside the office there was a slate hanging, headed "Overheard in Camp Today". When we arrived it said, "May I have another fork, please? I've bent this one on the chicken." The day after it read, "What are the sanitary arrangements - if any?" I realised this must have been me, so I went to the office, said I'd recognised myself, apologised and said that I hadn't dreamt for a moment that so much would be done for us, and had been prepared to be given short shrift.

Nancie was asked to give the doctor a hand by marshalling people when he was checking vaccination certificates and so on, but what Daphne, Dennis and I did I can't recall. To some extent we were all in a state of shock and, in consequence, only part of one's faculties was functioning. We knew virtually nothing of what was going on. Planes arrived and departed, new evacuees arrived, presumably one had meals, but I was so numb with what had happened and doubts about the future that I'm left with nothing but a vague over-all impression³¹. Though it seemed right that I should be taking the children out of the country, I couldn't help wondering whether I had done all I could to see that other people were being looked after. Looking back after 35 years (1977), I still don't see what I could have done.

Early in the morning of the 19th, I was woken by a voice saying, "Mrs Powell". I don't suppose I answered, "Present!", but I felt as I used to at K.C. when roll call was being taken during an air-raid. I got up, and was asked whether our baggage was within the prescribed weights. I was told that the light aircraft that brought in the Mail was leaving shortly, and that the children and I and our luggage (if within the weight allowed), would be an appropriate load for the return trip. So as soon as we were dressed, we were weighed with our baggage and were within the limit. We packed our little bits, and went to the dusty "airfield", where the Airspeed Envoy with its pilot and navigator were waiting³². I wasn't filled with confidence as I saw the pilot walk round the plane and tweak lengths of wire, as though he wondered whether it would stand the trip. I didn't say anything then, but later confessed I'd been nervous, when my blasé, young said, "Oh Mother! They always do that!"

Had circumstances been different, it would have been a thrill to be flying over Burma, but I can only remember one scene when we were over the Yomas with a river below us. which I imagine must have been the Chindwin.

End of Chapter 17

PART FIVE - INDIA

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

It was hot and dusty when we arrived at Chittagong, where we were taken to the Club. What a lot of good people were involved in looking after the streams of evacuees, all arriving slightly shocked and content to be handled like parcels, and sent from one place to the next. There were facilities for shower baths, and we were given a meal and told that buses would take us to the station at a certain time, and our luggage collected.

Whether we travelled on the strength of my Burma Railways "Any Station to Any Station" Free Pass, or whether arrangements had already been made for our travelling, I can't remember, but the family and I were together in a First Class compartment - probably a coup,. By this time it was getting dark and we hadn't got our precious suitcases. And then - horrors! The train began to move. This was altogether too much so, for the only time in my life, I pulled the communication cord and the train came to a halt. Of course, there was the immediate scurrying of the staff to find the cause of the trouble, and I explained about our luggage. After which it was realised that it was not only our luggage that had not yet been put on board, but also that of other evacuees who, like us, had been looked after at the Club. What we never did discover was whether the train was merely shunting, or whether it was a genuine start. In Burma, a bell was always rung five minutes before a Mail train was due to start, and one heard the engine's and guard's whistles. When we did finally start, our departure was as silent as before.

In the small hours of the morning we were woken up at Chandpur, as we had to leave the train and board a river steamer to connect with the railway again at Goalunder. I've always thought of this stretch of the river as being part of the Brahmaputra but, according to the atlas, it is the River Padma, where the Ganges and the Brahmaputra have joined. The steamer was blessedly clean and quiet, not so Goalunder, which was enveloped in a sandstorm combined with coal dust. From there to Sealdah was a dirty, wearisome business. By this time it was dark³³.

Once again the machinery for looking after the evacuees came into action, and we were taken by buses to the Loretto Convent in Calcutta. The unfortunate voluntary workers there were not expecting any more evacuees that day, and there wasn't much they could do for us. We were shown the dining room, and sat down hopefully. After an interval a plate of soup was put down in front of Daphne, who politely passed it to me. I said, "No, you eat it, dear. I expect there will be more." There wasn't, but it didn't matter, as we were all beyond food. We were taken upstairs. In the bathroom there was a large blackboard, on which was written, "Please leave the lavatories as you would wish to find them." We should have loved to be able to do this but there wasn't a drop of water anywhere. However, the Convent had something that we were thankful for - serried ranks of camp beds. So, tired and dirty, we lay down and were asleep very quickly.

We learnt in the morning that all the water had to be pumped into the tanks, and the large number of evacuees that had passed through had used all the water, and there was no one there to do any more pumping³⁴. I have no idea how many evacuees had passed through the Convent that day. It must have been a large number, because I think all the passengers on the train from Goalunder were evacuees, for other planes, in addition to our little Airspeed Envoy, had been arriving in Chittagong from ShwŃBo. From what we heard later, our flight was much more comfortable than flights in the Dakotas. The organisation that dealt with us was remarkably efficient. In other circumstances we should probably have made enquiries to find out who was responsible, but we were so numb we accepted things as they came. We were indeed fortunate.

When being questioned by one of the Evacuation Committee, I was asked if I knew anyone in Calcutta. "Yes, Mr Blanchard in the Government Supply Department, who used to be on the Burma Railways." She looked up the number then and there and rang Ted Blanchard, saying there was a lady from Burma who would like to speak to him, and handed the phone over to me. I said, "Mr Blanchard?" and he replied, "Kathleen!", which I thought remarkable. He already knew that evacuees were arriving, but he had not had any warning that I had.

I was asked whether I would prefer to go to a hotel or to a family, and elected for the latter. Did I know anyone else in Calcutta? No, but I believed my sister-in-law, Mrs Kendall, had arrived from Burma a day or two before. On which, records were looked up, and it was found that she was with a Mr and Mrs Butterworth, in Alipore. Would I like to go to Alipore? Like my mother before me, I said, "Yes. Where is it?" To put us all together would be asking much of one household, so it was suggested that Nancie and Daphne should go to Mr and Mrs McLaren, while Dennis and I went to Mr Brodie, whose family were in Darjeeling. Everyone was incredibly kind to us, but it is the oddest details I remember. The Brodie bearer was a majestic figure, and I shall never forget the punctilious care with which he put down the "Indian Tree" pattern china so that it was always the right way up. And we much appreciated the excellent wholemeal bread from Firpo's!

We were much better off than many people were, for Val had been able to transfer some money from our bank in Rangoon to Grindlays in Calcutta, but we had no idea when or where there would be any more. Obviously, we couldn't stay indefinitely where we were and, as Dulcie was in the same position, we tried to make plans, but where were we to go? We didn't think of trying to get back to England, for there was always the hope (though remote) that we should be able to rejoin our husbands in Burma, or that they might join us. But where were we to go? With the thought of the Hot Weather approaching, it seemed sensible to think of a Hill Station. Dulcie recalled that Cyril had enjoyed a stay in Mussoorie when he had been on a course in Dehra Dun. We got in touch with Thos. Cook and booked rooms at the Savoy Hotel in Mussoorie, presumably from 1st April, just for a month, which we hoped would give us time to find somewhere less expensive.

The long journey from Howrah, Calcutta's main station, to Dehra Dun would have been more interesting if we had had a map or someone who could tell us about the country we were passing through. Even with the aid of a map afterwards, I could never be quite sure

which route we travelled, but I think there was something unusual about it. We didn't hear much about it at the time, but there had been rioting and civil disobedience, which had caused much damage to the railway system. Dennis and I were in a coup, compartment, and Dulcie and Colin and the girls in a four-berth compartment near at hand.

While we were in the Plains it was very hot, but it became cooler as we reached the Siwaliks, the foothills of the Himalayas, and we saw peacocks flying among the brown leafless trees, a sight I had never seen before, although the peacock is closely associated with Burma. As we approached Dehra Dun, we became aware of a gaunt stony mountain ridge rising sharply out of the Plains, and I found myself thinking, "I hope that isn't Mussoorie, I hope that isn't Mussoorie." On arrival in Dehra Dun, we had breakfast in the Railway Refreshment Room, which was sufficiently like those of the Burma Railways to induce a feeling of nostalgia for, on the whole, India - what we had seen of it - seemed very different from Burma - and not the better for it.

I suppose the sight of Mussoorie, perched on its rocky mountain, depressed me because it was so unlike the pleasant greenery of MayMyo and KaLaw. MayMyo, at the height of something over 3000ft, was approached by road and rail for something over forty miles, through thickly wooded country, which then opened on to a plateau of open country, green and pleasantly wooded. KaLaw stood something over 4000ft, and was also reached by road and rail from the plain, after travelling about sixty miles through magnificent wooded hills. KaLaw was in an open valley with pine and oak trees. What I did not appreciate at the time was that the very abrupt rise from the plain at Dehra Dun to the height of Mussoorie, and the shortness of the journey, must have been a real asset to the people in Dehra.

Cars, thanks once again to Thos. Cook, were waiting for us when we finished breakfast. My confidence was not increased by the driver's demand, before we started, to say that I had reached my destination safely and was satisfied with the attention given. Not unnaturally I refused to sign. The driver protested, "All memsahibs signing", but I said, "Not this one", and eventually we started the steep climb up the rocky crag. And then we arrived at an open space and were told that the cars could go no further. Here we found that we had to take rickshaws, and had no idea how far we should have to travel in this fashion. How far it was I can't say now, but it really was the last straw when the rickshaw wallahs came to a halt, and indicated that they could go no further, that we must have coolies to take our baggage, and that we must walk to the hotel. This, in itself, was no hardship, as the distance wasn't great, but we were tired and weary and depressed, and not favourably impressed with our surroundings.

But, just as we turned a corner and the Savoy Hotel was in sight, we saw something that I shall never forget, and I hope my children won't either. For there, brilliant against a clear blue sky, were the snows of the Himalayas.

Given happier circumstances, we might have grown to love Mussoorie, but I fear I never did. Our rooms were comfortable enough, with a view to the snows in one direction, and up a craggy hillside in the other, where we could see sticky horse-chestnut buds against the blue sky. We were lucky to be there before the Hot Weather dust and heat haze obscured

the view, which was tremendous, for we could see the Ganges winding its way over many miles of plain. But we were not impressed with the Savoy Hotel food. It seemed to consist of re-cooked meat and little else, and an almost complete absence of any fresh fruit and vegetables. Considering that there was hardly a square yard of flat space anywhere in Mussoorie, this was not entirely surprising but, coming from Burma and our own cooks, we took it hard.

All this sounds as though we were so engrossed in grumbling about our local conditions that we were unaware of how things were going in Burma, but I fancy it was because we were so conscious of how bad the news was, that we fretted over the pin-pricks of daily living. I did get a letter or two from Val, and I think Dulcie heard from Cyril, but obviously they couldn't tell us much of what was going on for fear of censorship.

Dennis hadn't seemed too well on the journey from Calcutta to Dehra, but I thought this was probably because it was so hot and tiring. Shortly after we arrived in Mussoorie, I saw spots on his back which might have been bites, but somehow I didn't think they were. I asked the housekeeper at the hotel if she would have a look. She said she thought he had chicken-pox. As far as I knew, I'd never seen chicken-pox, and then I remembered a child who had sat next to us in the train to ShwŚBo, with a lot of scabby spots on her face which I guessed must have been chicken-pox. So I asked the housekeeper about a doctor, and she said she'd get in touch with Dr Andrea.

He was definitely a "character". There were no cars in Mussoorie, but he covered his practice on horseback, and was a well-known sight³⁵. I was worried about being in a hotel, but he said that it was all right for us to stay where we were, and that meals for Dennis could be sent up to our rooms. At some stage Dennis ran a pretty high temperature but, after that, recovered pretty quickly. Dulcie and Nancie had both had chicken-pox. Not so Daphne and I and, in due course, we succumbed, so Andrea came and looked at us all again. He didn't ask me how old I was, he just put me down as 60. I didn't blame him. I felt every bit as old as that and looked possibly more. Poor Dulcie and Nancie! It can't have been much fun for them but there wasn't a great deal they could do for us.

One day, when Andrea was looking at me, he started muttering about when you do something-or-other with small-pox, something happens, but chicken-pox reaction is different. I didn't really take in what he was saying, but I could easily have believed him if he had eventually told me I'd got small-pox. I remember a night when we had a most dramatic thunderstorm, with such heavy hail that the ground was as white as it would have been with a prolonged snow. The atmospheric effects must have released tension, and I cried and cried, thinking of Val, wondering where he was, and praying that all was well with him, and then fell into one of the most peaceful sleeps I had had for many a long day.

More worries of a mundane character were in store for us. We had booked our rooms in the Savoy for the month of April, after which they were booked for a family from Bombay. We were still nominally infectious, and Dr Andrea said we would be justified in staying where we were until we were free from infection. I was in no position to say whether he was correct legally, but I did not feel that it was right to deprive an unknown family of

accommodation they had booked for the Hot Weather. I therefore said we must look for somewhere else ourselves, in which case, he said, he would have to inform the Public Health Authorities.

Just how Nancie and Dulcie found Luxmount, a boarding house opened by an Indian, I can't remember. We told him that Daphne and I were still nominally infectious, but that we would keep to our own rooms, and he was willing to have us, presumably from the 1st May. We paid up at the Savoy and moved down to Luxmount. The beds were Indian-style charpoys, and mine collapsed when I sat on it as soon as we arrived. We had left before the mid-day meal at the Savoy and arrived at Luxmount at what was literally the tail end of the meal there, for what was produced for us was the very small tail-end of an oxtail!

Then things began to happen. A rather agitated little Indian arrived and asked for me. He was from the Public Health Department and asked whether we would like to go to the Isolation Hospital. I said we wouldn't like to go, but that if he said we must, we would go, at which he looked much relieved. I asked him how we would get there and when he said, "by rickshaw", I said what about infection? He said that was quite all right, everything would be disinfected. I very much doubted this but, as Andrea had said, "It wouldn't really matter if the whole of Mussoorie got chicken-pox." Rickshaws were whistled up, and we were on the move again. We went the length of Mussoorie and then came to a very narrow lane, too narrow and uneven for rickshaws; we had to get out and pay off the rickshaw coolies, and engage others to take us to the hospital. (To carry our baggage, that is.) We climbed a steepish hill and then saw ahead of us quite an imposing building, relatively speaking, the Landour Hospital. Something seemed to tell us that this wasn't our destination. Feeling like a leper, and keeping my distance, I inquired if this was the Isolation Hospital. The look of horror on the faces gave the answer. We then inquired where the Isolation Hospital was, and a building, way down below the road we had come up, was pointed out. We pointed it out to the coolies who had got our cases and away we all went again, all feeling a bit peckish by this time.

When we arrived at the Isolation Hospital which, in spite of its name, was only the size of an ordinary-sized house, it must have been after 5 o'clock. We were all pining for a cup of tea, if nothing else, but the little Anglo-Indian nurse, who was the "Staff", didn't feel she was empowered to give us even that, as the doctor hadn't seen us and prescribed a diet. I am sure Dulcie must have had something for Colin as he was only two and a half, and I have a vague recollection of biscuits. When the doctor arrived and asked us whether we felt we could manage "full diet", we assured him that we could, but, unfortunately, the cook wouldn't be able to go to the bazaar till the following morning. The doctor asked whether I thought a seer of meat each per day would be sufficient. I said I thought it would, though I hadn't the faintest idea how much a seer was, as it was a weight we hadn't used in Burma. I learnt later that it was 2 lbs! By the time dinner-time came on the second day, we really were hungry. As far as I can remember, all we had had until then was tea and bread and a tin of sardines given to Nancie as a joke on the way from Goalunder to Sealdah. The pišce de resistance, when it came, was a shoulder of mutton, almost certainly supported by potatoes but probably not, knowing Mussoorie, by any other vegetables. By the time we had finished, that shoulder blade was picked as clean as a dozen crows could have done it.

The cook came in later to ask for instructions for the following day, and to inquire whether everything was all right. By way of reply, I pointed to the bone. The look of astonishment on that man's face was remarkable, and the other servants - yes, there was a bearer and somebody else as well - all had to come and have a look, by which time we were all helpless with laughter. And so to bed.

The hospital was on the side of the mountain facing the Gangetic Plain, and we could see the road from Dehra Dun, up which we had come in Thos. Cook's taxis. While we were still at the Savoy, Nancie and Dulcie had met people who said there was a trickle of evacuees arriving who had walked out of Burma, and we watched eagerly, wondering whether any of our Railway folk were in the buses and cars that we saw on the road. By this time, Dennis had shed all his chicken-pox scabs, and Daphne and I had only one or two left, but Nancie was smitten with pains amidships and diarrhoea. It was she who needed the doctor, not those of us who were the cause of our being in the Isolation Hospital. It was dysentery, as I had suspected, and, considering what we had seen of conditions at the Savoy, it was surprising that she was the only one to be afflicted. Dr Mathur prescribed isaf gol, and later gave her emetine injections.

On 1st May, Mandalay was evacuated and, on the 3rd May (1942), the Japanese captured BhaMo, so things were grim and our thoughts were very much with Val and Cyril, wondering where they were, and whether they were ahead of the Japs or behind them. One day, the Anglo-Indian nurse asked if we should be all right if she went to the bazaar for a while. We assured her we would, for she had never had to do anything for us. We were having our tiffin sitting on the open verandah watching the traffic, when the telephone rang. Dulcie went to answer it but, in the way of such things, nothing happened when she got to it, so she came downstairs. It rang again and the same thing happened. I hadn't gone before, being nominally still infectious but, when it rang a third time, I went. A woman's voice asked if there was a Mrs Powell there. I said, "Speaking", then she said, "There's a gentleman here would like to speak to you." I couldn't imagine who it might be, unless it was Dr Andrea. Then a man's voice said, "Mrs Powell?" and once again I said, "Speaking." Then a very tentative voice said, "Kitty?" and I yelped, "VAL!", for no one else in the world called me that but Val. Then the questions came thick and fast. Where was he? In Mussoorie. What was the matter with us, and so on? Then he said could he come and see us, and I said I'd deal with anyone who tried to stop him. That was more or less all we could say at the time, and I went downstairs to tell the others the joyful news. I think they'd heard me when I yelped - and yelped was the word - "VAL!", but they didn't know where he was.

End of Chapter 18

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Mussoorie, 6th May 1942

It doesn't take a great deal of imagination to visualise the state we were in, having only just heard that Mandalay had been taken by the Japs; to know that Val was actually in Mussoorie was almost unbelievable, and we were all on tenterhooks to see him and hear all his news. I have no idea how long it took him to get to us, but I can still see him approaching the hospital, looking tired and very weary.

He had arrived in Mussoorie that morning and, having sent a telegram from Calcutta, had expected us all to be meeting him with the metaphorical town band and red carpet. Instead, there was no one there. So he went to Luxmount, having had (I think) a letter from me saying we were going there. But at Luxmount no one knew anything about us, as we had only been there perhaps an hour. He then went to the Police Station, where the native policemen were having their siesta and were no help at all. He then went to the Post Office, and was lucky enough to find a helpful Anglo-Indian Post Mistress, who went to a lot of trouble to solve his problem and gave him a much appreciated cup of tea. Val told her that, originally, we had been at the Savoy Hotel and, though to start with they disclaimed any knowledge of us, they eventually produced information that we were at the Isolation Hospital. Visions of plague or cholera crossed his mind but, after telephoning, that fear was removed, but what a dreadful experience it must have been, after all he had been through!

It took us a long time to hear all the details, in fact we never did. What we did learn was that Val was one of the party that was on the last evacuation train to MyitKyina, where he arrived on the 3rd May. He met Cyril, who was just about to set out with Sir John Rowland and the Burma-China Construction party, who were proposing to walk to India by way of the KyaukKan Pass. One of Sir John's staff had recently returned from India, having taken his family by this route, returning the same way. Val, who had a double hernia, had sat for hours under a bullock cart (the only shade available) while others with higher priority took seats on RAF or USAAC Dakotas to Assam. He flew direct from MyitKyina to Dum Dum, Calcutta's Airport on a CNAC airliner with a Chinese air hostess³⁶. The Chinese air hostess spoke good American, and Val remembered her with affection. Then, having wired to me on arrival, he set out for Mussoorie.

Then we had to tell him what had happened to us since that dark and chilly morning on Mandalay station on 15th March. In the midst of our joy at being together again was our sadness, particularly on Dulcie's behalf, that Cyril was not with us, but we hoped to have news soon, for there was fairly constant news of B.R. officers and staff who had walked through by various routes

So far I have been writing entirely from memory, with the exception of looking up one or two facts in printed publications. I knew I had a diary for 1942, but had forgotten that I had made entries in pencil before I bought a fine fountain pen later in the year. On looking at it I see that it clears up some details about Luxmount but, on the whole, what I have written is basically correct. My main object in buying the diary was to have somewhere to record

letters written and received and, in the case of letters not reaching their destination, to have some idea of what was in those letters.

Considering what was happening in Burma, it is interesting that on 9th April I sent a registered letter to Val "re clothes". Whose clothes? His or ours? I don't know. On the 12th April, the day I knew I'd got chicken-pox, I received a letter from Grindlays saying that they had received Rs 5000/- by Telegraphic Transfer - "...which makes the scene a little brighter. News from Burma, however, definitely not good. YŠNanGyaung and MaGwŠ have gone..." On the 14th I wrote another letter to Val and on the 15th got one from him. In two places I have noted that I took letters to the Censor. Now why on earth should I have done that? Once again, I don't know³⁷. I think I shall try to write from memory, to give an over-all picture, but refer to my diaries if I am at a loss.

On Val's arrival at the hospital, the doctor was sympathetic, and he was allowed to stay with us. There was no great difficulty about this, as there were no other patients in the building. Our next move was to find other accommodation; following up inquiries that Nancie and Dulcie had made with the proprietor of Luxmount, we fixed up to go to another boarding house which he was opening called Brightlands. He thought it would be more suitable for Europeans, like us.

On approaching Mussoorie I had thought, "I hope that isn't Mussoorie" because it looked so rocky and barren. Rocky, it undoubtedly was, and virtually barren except for the trees which, considering the rockiness, were fairly plentiful. There were a lot of oaks of the Spanish or Turkish variety, with prickly leaves like a sweet chestnut rather than the lobed leaves of the English oak, and the acorn cups were prickly too. I have just read, in "Two Monsoons", that, at "...hill stations, such as Mussoorie, where the ground was so rocky that it took two days to prepare a grave, there were always two spare graves dug ready for the next burial..." When we first saw men working on the roads, or repairing the frequent landslides, we were amused to see that the men worked in pairs, one man pushing the spade, the other pulling on a rope attached just above the blade. Hence the family's expression "the man on the rope-end of a spade", which wouldn't convey anything to people who hadn't seen it in action³⁸. Mussoorie was built on a ridge like the back of a spiny anteater, with one side dropping steeply to the Plains on the south and, on the north, to the foothills of the Himalayas and the snows of Nanda Devi and the valley of the Jumna. The houses hung onto the mountain side like swallows nests; it was said that a house always slid down once in the process of being built, and what we saw in our time there confirmed this.

After the agonising time during the collapse in Burma, Val looked anything but fit. However, Dr Andrea gave him massive injections of Vitamin B, which did him a lot of good. What was the next move? He had been classified as "unfit for military service in any category" and, in the general state of flux, there was no idea of what would happen to the Burma Railways. So for a while we lived in a state of suspended animation.

Our accommodation at Brightlands was by no means luxurious, but we were thankful to be together, and tried to make the most of the facilities we could afford. There was a Public

Library where we could sit and watch the world go by and, on occasions, listen to the band of HH the Rajah of Rampur. I wish I could remember more details of one book we borrowed. It was written by an Army officer about the Second Burmese War, I think. The only thing I can remember about it was the account of chasing the Burmese troops to a certain village "...only to find that the Burmese General Ma-shi-boo had once more eluded them..." as though someone had said "...the French General N'est-pas-ici had eluded them..."!

In his very limited luggage Val had brought the cine camera, miniatures of Nancie and Daphne, and a knife, fork and spoon out of our wedding present canteen. Films were very expensive, so we haven't much pictorial record of Mussoorie: a view of the snows from the verandah outside our bedroom (which includes me wearing a blue corduroy housecoat which I still (1977) have and wear) and a wide and comprehensive view of the Ganges plain. Unfortunately, by that time, a heat haze was lying over it, so it was not as crisp and clear as we should have liked.

There were several Railway folk in Mussoorie, and we heard of others who had arrived in India and gone to other Hill Stations, but we anxiously waited for news of Cyril. No one had any news of Sir John Rowland's party and, with the coming of the Rains, our anxiety increased. I see from my diary that on 2nd July Dulcie had a letter from "Wullie" Air of the Burma Railways with news of Cyril, though I have no details of what the news was. Two days later, T D Lee, also Burma Railways, came to say that he had had a phone call from Pat Brewitt (BR) with news that Cyril was waiting for a while to have attention to his leech bites, and that Sir John Rowland's had made up five marches. That afternoon a letter arrived for Dulcie from Cyril himself. They had lived for three weeks on half a cigarette-tinful of rice per day, plus a little Bovril and weak tea with no milk or sugar. Cyril's letter was posted in Margherita in Assam, by one of the party who had gone ahead.

On 8th July we had a telegram from Simla to say that Cyril was seriously ill in hospital in Tinsukia so, after innumerable phone calls, Dulcie set off for Calcutta in the hope of getting to Assam and see Cyril. On the 12th we got a telegram from her in Calcutta, to say that Cyril had died of cerebral malaria on the 8th. Poor darling, she stayed in Calcutta for a few days longer with the Butterworths, who had put her up on arrival from Burma in March. In circumstances like this odd details stick in the memory. While Dulcie was trying to phone to Simla for more details about Cyril before she went to Calcutta, we were keeping Colin amused, or trying to, and what held his attention most was, "Two little dickie birds sitting on a wall, one named Peter the other named Paul" and, like most children, he was baffled by "Fly away Peter, fly away Paul! Come back Peter, come back Paul."

Dear Dulcie! She was so marvellous when she got back to Mussoorie. There we all were - and there was she, and no Cyril. It was the Blanchard situation all over again, only more so. There was now nothing to keep her in India so, as soon as she could get a passage, she went to Bombay and sailed for Home. My diary is a blank until early October, when I started writing in ink, but Dulcie had left before then.

It was a long time before we had news of her; a letter posted in Durban arrived on 6th December. Then, on 10th December, I got a letter from Val, who was then in Lahore, which contained a telegram addressed to The Secretary, Burma Railways, Simla, saying, "Colin and self saved and well landed St Helena. No hope arriving home for some time. Love Kendall." It was not till some time in April, by which time we were in Calcutta, that we got a letter telling us something of their ordeal.

Their ship had been torpedoed in the South Atlantic. They had got into their lifeboat and managed to get away before their poor old ship sank. Colin was little more than three years old. They had thirteen days bouncing about on the high seas. Sailing along they had travelled 679 miles, and were in sight of St Helena before they were picked up; some of the other lifeboats were not so lucky. Dulcie had some photos of Cyril in her "blitz bag", and his diary that he wrote on the trek out of Burma, of which I had made a manuscript copy before she left Mussoorie. I also still have the much-travelled letter from St Helena, in which she told of their vicissitudes.

On looking through my war-time diaries I am surprised to see how long even airgraphs took to arrive. We did not come across airgraphs until we got to Calcutta after leaving MyitNgŹ. They were designed to get the maximum amount of mail by air with the minimum of weight. The airgraph form was a piece of paper about 10"x6", with a space at the top for the name and address of one's correspondent. Below this one wrote the letter in the ordinary way, except that one bore in mind that it was entirely public as it was not enclosed in an envelope. It was handed in at the Post Office and stamped. As time went on one learnt to see that the stamp was franked then and there, for, at some offices, quite a lot of money was made by removing stamps and re-selling them privately. The airgraph forms were fastened together in a long continuous strip and then photographed on cine film; they were then sent by air to a central place to be processed and printed. The airgraph as delivered was about 5"x4", and arrived comparatively privately in an envelope, with a cut-out window to show the address, but unsealed³⁹. Though the films were sent by air, they still took a long time to arrive and very many of them took a month. Air mail, as distinct from airgraphs, was considerably more expensive, so we used airgraphs to give the main items of news and sea mail for less important or more chatty letters. I have a note that an air mail letter from Val's mother dated 6th October 1942 arrived 28th January 1943, and a sea mail letter from my mother dated 17th November reached me on the 20th March 1943. These are typical figures, not exceptional ones but, considering all the hazards, we were thankful to get them.

On an otherwise blank page in my diary, dated 22nd June 1942, I recorded the following facts:-

Airgraph to Mother

Accumulation of letters from Home

Winifred 15.1.42 sea mail

Mother 4.2.42 air mail

" 20.4.42 "

Mrs P and Monica 30.1.42 to Myitnge, air
 " " 26.2.42 " "
 " " 25.3.42 " "
 " " 30.4.42 Grindlays "

Though I didn't specifically say so, the first three letters, like the next three, must have been addressed to MyitNgŠ, for neither Winifred nor Mother would have known where else to send them. One wonders what devoted body of Post Office servants had looked after those letters and enabled me to receive them all those months later. His Majesty's Mail was indeed well looked after.

Judging by entries in a small cash book, we made an attempt to continue Daphne and Dennis's schooling - education would be a high-flown word to use. We bought a dictionary, Whittaker's Almanac, a Bible, English exercises and an arithmetic book. We were well-meaning but possibly not very efficient. The girls and I used to go to a work party at the Savoy Hotel and bring back wool for knitting such items as operation stockings, which were known as "snake's woollies".

Nancie and a friend at the Savoy went to occasional dances run, as far as I can remember, by the W.V.S. for the benefit of the troops. We bought some black taffeta to make a skirt for Nancie. After cutting it out she went to the Savoy, where she was lent the use of a sewing machine to do the main seams. It was a rush job, and we finished the hem, all six yards of it, with Nancie on one side and me on the other, in time for her to wear it that night.

One evening, she came in after a long walk, and collapsed in an inelegant way into a chair. I couldn't help expostulating and got up to demonstrate how unattractive this method of relaxing was. I think my descent into the chair was a fair copy of her's but, unfortunately for me though to the amusement of us all, I forgot that as I got up I had dropped the stocking I was knitting on the seat of the chair. Not surprisingly, I got up even faster than I went down, for a knitting needle had punctured my behind, and there it was, with knitting attached. The needles were so well-used and bright that I suffered no damage, not even minor bleeding, but the needle was never quite straight again.

There was a roller-skating rink in Mussoorie and Nancie, Daphne and Dennis all went there one day. Nancie came home looking pretty rotten, as she had fallen and hurt her arm. We took her to Dr Andrea, who diagnosed a collis fracture. We really were remarkably lucky, for Dr A had his own X-ray equipment. He rang up a woman doctor to give the anaesthetic, and called his receptionist in to hold Nancie's arm and apply traction while he set the bones. The poor girl turned green, so he called on me to take her place.

After the bones were set and plaster applied, poor Nancie was woefully and horribly sick, and I wondered how on earth we were going to get her up the craggy hillside to Brightlands. It was quite impossible to get a rickshaw up, though a dooli could get up with difficulty. I asked if there was any place where Nancie could sleep for the night, and he arranged that

not only Nancie, but I as well, should stay at his house; he sent a servant with a message to Brightlands to say so. When Nancie came round from the anaesthetic and I told her about the arrangements, she looked so relieved, and slept almost at once. Getting her to the room was quite a performance, as she was on the X-ray table, and getting it round corners and down slopes to a downstairs bedroom was a tricky business.

Shortly after this, Val had to go to Lahore on a short trip; later, in October, he was transferred to the North Western Railway, there to supervise the conversion of engines from coal-burning to wood fuel. With coal needed in so many ways it was felt that to use wood fuel would be helpful to the war effort. Val was one of the very few men available who had actual experience of wood-burning engines⁴⁰.

On the whole, Mussoorie must have been a very cold and empty place in the winter. I can't remember whether the proprietor of Brightlands was intending to keep it open during the winter, or doing as most people did, moving to Dehra Dun, but we were fortunate enough to get in touch with Miss Barton-West. During the Hot Weather months, she ran a boarding house, Maple Hayes, in Mussoorie, and another called Ashton Croft in Dehra Dun during the winter, and she agreed to have us there. So, without many regrets, we left Mussoorie by bus, with rather more luggage than we arrived with. By this time, we had acquired the inevitable bedding-rolls, plus sheets, towels, blankets and a certain amount of clothing and books. In cash value we kept our purchases to the minimum for obvious reasons, but we tried to keep bulk and weight down as well.

I have said that we left Mussoorie with few regrets, which I think is true enough but, at the time, after all the happenings in Burma, we were somewhat jaundiced in our outlook. We did take note and appreciate the grandeur of the Snows, something that Burma was not able to offer, and the Hill people were different from those we were used to. They carried heavy loads on their backs, or massive quantities of grass or straw on their heads, which caused Colin on one occasion to say, "Look! Man underneath!"

End of Chapter 19

CHAPTER TWENTY

Ashton Croft was a very different kettle of fish from Brightlands. Miss Daisy Barton-West and her sister, Miss Madge, had run a boarding house in Camac Street, Calcutta, for many years, and prided themselves on "keeping a good table". The house was a single-storey one set in a big compound, with an orchard of, I think, guavas. The general atmosphere of Dehra Dun was not unlike MyitNgŠ though, in comparison, it was a veritable metropolis. Val was with us a short time before he had to go to Lahore. We started making enquiries about schools, and found that Ranbir Hall near at hand could take Dennis, but not Daphne at the moment; however, later they were able to. We felt bereft when Val had to go, but it was a very different feeling from our parting in Mandalay. Lahore wasn't so very far away and he'd be able to join us occasionally. In fact, he was with us for our twentieth anniversary and for Christmas. Daphne and Dennis went daily to school at Ranbir Hall, and we went for long walks together. There were dry river beds that we used to cross and walk as far as the Rollo Gillespie memorial.

Nancie's arm was still in plaster when we left Mussoorie, but she had been good about the exercises that Andrea had told her to do, and the plaster got lighter as time went on. She went regularly to have shorthand and typing lessons with an Anglo-Indian lady, and did a lot of typing in spite of the plaster. Both she and Daphne helped from time to time at a work party at the Gresham. What the Gresham was I can't remember - possibly a hotel - but there was a small room

where a number of us worked hard at making theatre swabs, surgical dressings, dysentery pads and the like for the war effort. Whether as a "new girl" or, perhaps, because I lived nearest, it seemed to be my job to get there first and see that the sweeper had cleaned the place, and I took rolls of gauze home with me to cut up ready for other people to fold.

When the time came for Nancie's plaster to be removed, we went by bus to Mussoorie, where Dr Andrea cut it off and expressed himself pleased with the result. When his bill arrived, Miss West asked how much he had charged. I can't remember how she can have known it was his bill, nor do I know why she should have asked. I said it was for Rs 100/-, at which she exclaimed, "You are not going to pay it, are you? He shouldn't have charged you as much as that!" I said that I certainly was going to pay it, and that I was extremely grateful for all he'd done - the X-ray, setting, the anaesthetist, not to mention putting up Nancie and me for the night, plus chota hazri, and then finally removing the plaster. True, we were evacuees, but she was charging us board and lodging, and quite rightly too.

Tongas were the usual form of transport in Dehra, plus bicycles for those lucky enough to have them. Flipping through my diary, I found that Val must have bought his when he came from Lahore, and that I rode on the back of it when we were in a hurry to get to the bazaar on one occasion; later we bought one for Nancie for Rs 50/-, from someone who was leaving. It was known as Brigitta, and came with us to Calcutta.

"Tiny" Carrier (6ft 7in tall), Chief Medical Officer of the Burma Railways, was at that time with the British Military Hospital (BMH), a tented hospital, in Dehra. We had to take Daphne there after a fall when she injured her elbow, a cracked or chipped bone, which had

to be immobilised for a bit. It nearly prevented her taking part, with Nancie, in a sort of revue being put on for the Troops. They did a Blue Danube sequence in very attractive blue georgette dresses which the darzee had made for them.

We saw in Dehra Dun what I have never seen elsewhere, hibiscus which started the day white but, like the roses in Alice-in-Wonderland, ended the day red; they only lasted one day. We also saw mongooses running about the compound, and squirrels with dark stripes down their backs like chipmunks⁴¹.

In peace time, Dehra Dun was very much the home of retired people, much as many places in the south of England are now. In fact, it used to be said that all there was to do in Dehra was to sit at the gate and wait for the hearse to come. But when we were there, it was very different, with the hospitals, camps and evacuees like us. I think it is some considerable measure of our happiness during the time in MyitNgŠ that we should have found consolation in some slight resemblance of Dehra Dun to MyitNgŠ - the resemblance was more in atmosphere and feeling than actual, and many people would not have considered it a compliment.

1943, and more changes were coming, as Val was being transferred to the Government Supply Department in Calcutta, in place of Norman Johnson, who was going to Simla to plan the rehabilitation of the Burma Railways. Daphne and Dennis had started school with Mrs Carpenter at Ranbir Hall and seemed glad to settle down to lessons again. But what was the next move? Finally, we decided when Val had found somewhere to live in Calcutta that Nancie and I should join him there. Until then, Daphne and Dennis would stay with us at Ashton Croft and go daily to Ranbir Hall, and then go with Mrs Carpenter and the school to Evelyn Hall in Mussoorie. It wasn't perhaps an ideal arrangement, but at least it would get them to the Hills for the Hot Weather.

So our last days in Dehra Dun were back to the old end-of-the-holidays routine of buying clothes, having shoes made, believe it or not (and not without difficulty, for they were rarely "right first time"), marking them, and so on. As most of the furniture and equipment from Ashton Croft had to be taken to Maple Hayes in Mussoorie by lorry, we had to have all our gear ready to leave, more or less as the chairs were removed from under us! One advantage of this was that we had to have everything ready on time, so, when it came to the point of departure, we were smug in our readiness. I had a cane tiffin basket made by a little old man down the road, and thought he was asking a lot when he charged five rupees for it - about 7/6d at the time. In it we took several bottles of water, and food for the journey to Calcutta, but what form that took I can't remember. Daphne and Dennis came to the station to see us off, which seemed the reverse of the usual picture of parent seeing their children off and, though they looked pathetic, they were splendid. There was no one to see them back to school. Did they walk, or had we arranged for a tonga? Sometimes I think I must be an unnatural mother, but somehow they've survived.

The darzee had made outfits for Nancie and me which proved most useful and comfortable. They were made of grey mazri, an Indian cotton material, inexpensive but hard-wearing. The outfits consisted of slacks and "battle jacket" tops (modelled on the British Army's BD

(=Battle Dress) blouse), with which we wore blue scarves spotted with white, and the same material for headscarves. Val was most impressed when his two womenfolk emerged from the train at Howrah, Calcutta's main station.

I have a note in a cash book that our two First Class fares had cost Rs 195-13a-6p (Rupees 195, 13 annas and 6 pies) which, though it seemed a lot at the time seems, on looking back on it, quite cheap for a journey of 900 miles. I wondered at first whether we had had Privilege Ticket Orders, so I looked in the copy of the Burma Railways Time Table that I have, in which I remembered there is a list of fares from Rangoon to all the principal stations, which I could use for comparison. I found that the First Class fare from Rangoon to MyitKyina, a distance of 723 miles, was Rs 74-7a-9p. On that basis, it looks as though we had paid the full fare, which appears to be about Re 1 per 10 miles, or thereabouts - and thereabouts seems to be the operative word, judging by the fraction of an anna. The 900 miles took a couple of days and nights⁴².

Unlike Val's arrival in Mussoorie, when there was no one to meet him, he met us at Howrah and, with the aid of a couple of taxis, we and all our gear (including Brigitta the bike) were transported to Ballygunge Park, where Val had rented a furnished flat for some months. It was a lovely flat, cool and well-furnished, but had an air of being reserved and not quite sure that we were suitable tenants. However, we were very comfortable and were really in the lap of luxury, with a proper kitchen with a genuine gas stove.

Val used to bike into Calcutta proper and, before long, I had a bike too, and used to bike into town to do shopping. I've often thought of myself as being like the Indian babu who said, "I personally am pretty cowardly fellow", but I've biked in Free School Street, which is a hair-raising experience. Marjorie Davy, who had been at the Savoy Hotel in Mussoorie, was now in Calcutta, working with the Chinese Intelligence Wing, and told Nancie that she thought there would be a job there for her too. There was, and Nancie was soon working there and finding it interesting.

The owners of the flat had left their dogs in our care, and we took them for walks on the Maidan in the evening. As we only had the flat till the end of April, we were lucky to find one that we could have from the beginning of May, No 5 Store Road, Ballygunge. The owners wanted to sell their furniture, which suited us as we had none. Here I'll anticipate a little. When we went to Simla and Norman Johnson took over the lease of our flat, he said he'd rather hire the furniture than buy it. We agreed, but what astonished us was that, when he left Calcutta, he sold the furniture on our behalf for a much better price than we should ever have managed. The new flat was slightly nearer both Val's and Nancie's places of work and, oddly enough, I found this flat much more congenial than the Ballygunge Park one. Until starting to write this, I've never given the matter much thought, but now think there was virtually no outlook there. There must have been windows, but the general effect was claustrophobic, which seems an ungrateful thing to say of what was really a lovely flat.

Five Store Road was an ordinary house made into two flats, of which we had the upstairs flat. This gave us the open verandah over the porch on which we could sit and watch the world going by on the Maidan. The garden was full of birds - orioles, kingfishers, bulbuls,

bee-eaters and purple sunbirds, not to mention the usual battalions of sparrows, minahs and crows. Along with the furniture, we acquired a framed photograph of a Babcock and Wilcox - or it may have been a Foster Wheeler - stationary boiler. As far as I was concerned, the really interesting thing about this was that it was just the right size for my map of Burma! The photograph was on heavy card, and I stretched the map over this and put it in the plain wooden frame. When it was hung on the wall the flat became home.

While Val and Nancie were at their respective offices I joined a work party run by Lady Gordon, who lived more or less opposite where we were. Once again I was dealing with many-tailed bandages, swabs and dressings. If many-tailed bandages are used at all these days, I am sure that they will be made with the aid of a zig-zag sewing machine but, in those days, it was heresy to suggest a machine. Some people found them incredibly difficult to make, and life would have been easier all round if they had admitted it, rather than struggle on and leave someone else to re-make the bandage.

I found these parties a source of amusement because of the opinions of one woman in particular. Poor darling, most of her quips were about her daughter and her daughter's affairs, monetary and otherwise. On one occasion she confessed that she thought perhaps it was a mistake to have only one child, on another, that Diana had at last got over her love affair and now a letter had turned up which one (Diana's mother) wanted to burn. Diana had the free spending of her entire allowance of Rs 275/- per month though, when she had the car out at night, they expected her to give the driver some bukhsheesh! She told us that the way to ensure that one's daughter got plenty of twenty-first birthday presents was to invite a lot of Americans to the party, and so on. I suppose it was the air with which she delivered these statements that made them so funny and memorable. Lady Gordon told us that her daughter had a small Sunday School class in Assam. The mother of one of the children asked what she had been telling the children: "Why - the story of the Good Samaritan." As re-told by the child at home it became "a man was badly hurt and lying by the roadside. A Jeep passed by on the other side. Then an American came along and was kind to him."

In addition to Lady Gordon's work party, I became involved in Diversional Therapy, preparing the work at 44 Park Street one or two days a week, and later taking it to the troops in Emtally Hospital. The idea of Diversional Therapy was good enough, but most of the men there were too ill to be interested in the actual work, though glad enough to see visitors. What was really needed there was an army of Florence Nightingales to make an attack on the general filth. Emtally was a Military Hospital, at least at that time, and I don't suppose any of us felt competent to take on the Army, but we ought to have done so. I have read since that infective hepatitis is caused by food being contaminated by the urine of rats, which would account for what we saw. One week there would be one man in the ward yellow with jaundice, next week all of them would be suffering from it.

Calcutta at that time was a town of contrasts, thriving with all the business associated with war and troops, and invaded by thousands of starving Indians who had come there in the hope of food, as the country round was stricken with famine. Starving families lived on the pavements and raided the Corporation dust-bins in the hope of finding food; many of them

died on the pavements. Coming back from the hospital on one occasion, we were held up by traffic for some time. When we began to move, we saw what had been holding us up - the Corporation Corpse Van - the words not just scrawled in chalk but in proper signwriter's letters in gold leaf, so obviously it was something in regular use. There was a system of rationing, but it was generally believed that the bunnias were holding up supplies of rice and grain in order to get better prices.

When Val first went to Burma, he suffered horribly from prickly-heat; at least twice a day I used to paint his back and chest with a special calamine lotion. When we were on leave in 1931, he acquired a good coat of tan, which helped, but he still perspired very freely, and his shirt would be sopping wet in no time at all. We then heard the theory that it was necessary to take extra salt in very hot weather. Unfortunately, Val didn't like much salt in his food and was sceptical about the theory. He pointed out that there was often enough salt on his face for the cats to come and lick it off. Surely that proved that he was taking enough? However, in Calcutta we found a chemist who sold salt tablets and Val was able to take them, with gratifying results. He was able to bike to and from his office, often coming home for lunch, with much less discomfort than before.

He had a number of Masonic commitments, including "Lodge Rangoon in Exile" and all in all we had quite a lot of friends. From our personal point of view, we were enjoying seeing many friends, some new, some from Burma, and Nancie had quite a gay time in her off-duty hours. We were surprised one day when we were told that a sahib, whose name conveyed nothing, wanted to see us, to find that Win's husband Jack Walker had given him our address. We knew Jack was somewhere in India but didn't meet him till later. It was tough luck on Win that Jack had had to leave England before the twins were born in January 1943.

Opposite 5 Store Road was the R.A.F. dental station and, to our surprise, we found that Mr Pym, the dentist from Eastbourne who had looked after the Uplands children (including Nancie and Daphne) was working there; he came over on occasion to have a drink with us. Calcutta at that time was a filthy place, but our own flat was pleasant and clean, and we enjoyed our small measure of social life. It was therefore something of a shock to find that we were to be on the move again. Val was to go to Simla to take over from Norman Johnson, and N.J. was coming to Calcutta to take over some more senior appointment.

End of Chapter 20

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Nancie and I on our way down to Calcutta had been lucky, for we had had a compartment to ourselves all the way but, leaving Howrah en route for Delhi and Simla, Val, Nancie and I were in the same compartment with Jack Eades of the Burma P.W.D. We were then joined by a young captain whose batman unpacked for him, made up his bed in his bedding roll on the floor between the bunks and, before disappearing to his own accommodation while the captain was in the bathroom, said to us, "See that he puts his 'pips' on his shoulder-straps in the morning, will you?" As far as I know, we had never seen the captain before and I don't think we ever saw him again, so I have no idea why I recorded (but didn't remember) that his name was McIlvenna. What I did record and do remember is that the stars and planets were very brilliant during the night.

We left Calcutta on the evening of 4th October 1943 and arrived in Simla some time on the afternoon of the 7th, having travelled from Kalka on the narrow gauge line by train in preference to the railcar, as we felt that the slower journey would give us more time to get used to the higher altitude - Simla is something over 7000 feet. The views were magnificent, though on this route the snows were not visible. I can visualise the station where we got out and had our breakfast in the Refreshment Room, and I think it was called Barogh. The same man had been running it for many years and knew all the notabilities who travelled up and down regularly between Simla and Delhi.

We had rickshaws from the station to the Grand Hotel, and this time we were taken up to the front door. The Grand Hotel, a new building on the top of a ridge, was being run as a Government Hostel, and we had been allotted the rooms that the Johnson's had had. The hotel being on the top of the ridge, we used to say that a drop of rain had to make up its mind very quickly whether it wanted to go into the Arabian Sea by way of the Sutlej, or the Bay of Bengal via the Jumna, for one side of the roof ridge would take it one way and the other would take it in the opposite direction.

Our flat faced south. Whether the ground in front of us fell away at an angle of 45° I can't say, but that's what it felt like. In the immediate foreground were some of the older parts of the hotel, low-lying buildings which did not in any way impede the view. Still lower down were the buildings of G.H.Q. and, over their roofs, we looked down the valley, along the sides of which the railway approached Simla. The view on page 240 of "British Adventure" is almost exactly the view from our fourth floor room. With all Simla lying below us, whatever we did and wherever we went, it was always "uphill home". We had all our meals in the hotel dining room and, as there were no lifts and there were 81 steps to our rooms, we were assured of at least some daily exercise.

Val started work immediately in the plans for re-construction in Burma. He and several other B.R. men had offices in Telegraph Building, near at hand, and Nancie very shortly got a job at Bantony; before I knew where I was, I was told that I must run the Grand Hotel work party, as the woman who was doing it at the moment was leaving Simla. Somehow, we managed to find time to go to Auckland House School and make arrangements for Daphne to go there as a day girl, and to Bishop Cotton School to make arrangements for

Dennis to go there as a boarder. B.C.S. was far enough away to make a daily trip impossible.

The Grand Hotel work party met officially twice a week and there was a distribution centre for work which people took one week and one hoped, optimistically, they would bring back the following week. There was a store room on one of the lower levels of the hotel where we kept the bales of gauze, drill, markeen (nankeen?), calico, tape, etc., etc., etc. It was so black and cold that it was always referred to as The Morgue, and we had to put on coats and gloves when issuing more material for work. Big packing cases were filled and despatched to Delhi. Barring the fact that the room we worked in was nearly always cold, we managed to have quite a lot of fun as there was usually a preponderance of women from Burma; whether fairly or not, they always seemed to be less stuffy than the women who were normally resident in India⁴⁴.

Towards the end of November I went to Dehra Dun to collect Daphne and Dennis and the son of another resident of the Grand Hotel, who was in hospital. It was a wearisome journey, first by narrow-gauge to Kalka, with some of the journey in the dark, then, with an effort, keeping awake till Amballa (or Umballa), where I found a through coach to Dehra Dun. It is said that only the people who live in Amballa ever see it by daylight, as all trains pass through at night⁴⁵. I arrived at Dehra in time for breakfast and took charge of the three Ds - Daphne, Dennis and Derek. What I remember most about that trip is that Dennis was wearing two pairs of shorts, and both pockets in both pairs of shorts were full of conkers! It must have been vastly uncomfortable, but he didn't mind. Coping with three sleepy weary children and their luggage in the dark at Amballa, and finding our accommodation, took a bit of doing, but we duly arrived in Simla, where Val and Nancie met us. Derek's mother was still in hospital, so Nancie slept in her room so that Derek wouldn't be on his own. His mother eventually made other arrangements, but in a very casual manner.

Our flat wasn't a large one but we managed to fit into it, though it meant having a bed in the sitting room for Dennis. The two girls had beds on the enclosed verandah looking on to our view, and Val and I had a small bedroom, from which the bathroom opened. Monkeys were a menace and, if a window was left open, they would be inside in a flash. Fortunately, two of our windows had wire netting screens, so they could be left open.

As far as the family was concerned, the highlight of the winter months in Simla was skating, so boots and skates figured as Christmas presents. Concrete tennis courts at the base of a steep hillside were flooded to a depth of 4 to 6 inches initially, and provided good skating. If conditions were right a "balloon" was hoisted on the Town Hall where it could be seen by most people. There were lights and "canned music", so skating was a popular occupation. Simla also had a little gem in the Gaiety Theatre, a perfect theatre in miniature, where many amateur plays were produced. The Green Room at the theatre was a favourite place for coffee and drinks. It was just as well there was skating as school holidays went on to 15th March!

Jack Walker was in Simla at this time and dropped in to see us quite often. He and a friend often took Nancie and one of her friends to Wildflower Hall, or to a dance or something of that sort. Daphne used to go to the Troops' Canteen, helping with sandwiches and refreshments, and to dances arranged by the W.V.S. I think I became rather a dull person, rather inclined to the All-Work-and-No-Play Syndrome, what with Grand Hotel work parties, and trekking down to yet another work party at the "Chalet" of the United Services Club, and cutting up yards and yards and YARDS of material in our own room, for other people to roll or fold.

Val was very busy indeed, drawing up specifications for the Loco Department, all the way from locomotives to screws and nuts and bolts. He also joined the local Masonic Lodge (Kitchener); he was most impressed that General Auchinleck (the "Auk"), if unable to be present at a meeting, sent a letter in his own handwriting with apologies for non-attendance.

Transport in Simla was restricted to rickshaws and one's own two feet, with the exception of cars for the Viceroy and the C-in-C. Most people seemed to get used to the altitude but I puffed and panted like an old cab-horse all the time we were there. About the only time we used rickshaws was when we went to a "do" at B.C.S., as it was quite a long way there and a steady climb all the way back⁴⁶. I don't think there were any bicycles, nor do I remember any horses in the main part of Simla. In many ways it must have looked much the same in Kipling's day, and we bought some furs at what one could swear was Lurgan Sahib's shop. There was one major difference due to the war. In peace time "Government" left Delhi for the hot weather and went to Simla, returning to Delhi when the cold weather started, and offices, boarding houses and hotels were left to caretakers. Not only were Government officers there, but the military were very much in evidence - I was going to say "of all ranks" - but that doesn't quite convey the true picture. There were many senior officers, but one rank was very rare. Newly commissioned subalterns sporting one "pip" often came up on "commissioning leave", but a subaltern with two pips was rarely seen. There was a smattering of captains, plenty of majors, colonels, and higher ranks in abundance. Or was it only that their uniforms were more splendid, and therefore caught the eye more?

After a spell at Bantony, Nancie joined the W.A.C.(I) - not to be called "Wackie" but, very carefully, "Wack-eye" - Women's Auxiliary Corps (India), at first on local service as an Acting Lance Sergeant, but was later commissioned. She worked in G.H.Q. Daphne went to Auckland House School as a day girl, and Dennis as a boarder at Bishop Cotton School, though he got leave-out on Sundays quite frequently⁴⁷. When we took him there the first time, we saw a boy who had come to school by train and had fallen out of his bunk while asleep, cutting his eye open. This necessitated a stitch being put in at Amballa in the middle of the night. A coach load of boys had been sent, by mistake, from Amballa to Saharanpur instead of to Kalka. Not, perhaps, up to the standards of the tales Kim heard from the boys returning to St Xavier's in Lucknow, but not too bad for a start.

I think we all remember this as a year of coughs and colds. Perhaps Simla had a supply of germs we hadn't met before. The following winter we all took multiple vitamin tablets and were freer of coughs and colds. Whether this was because of these tablets or because, by now, we had acquired some immunity I don't know, but we were very thankful.

We heard that an attempt was being made by the Government of Burma in exile to build up a record of births marriages and deaths to replace those lost in Burma. Both Margaret Brewitt and I had lost our marriage certificates and, as each of us had been present at the other's wedding, this seemed an opportunity to make "honest women" of us. So we went before the magistrates and swore affidavits that we had been present at the other's wedding. What I did not notice at the time, and have only just realised, was that we did this on 22-2-44, a nice date to compare with our wedding date - 22-11-22. In the ordinary course of events, copies of the entries of births marriages and deaths of British subjects in Burma had been sent to England, but it was known that, in some cases, this had not been done or the records had been lost. In consequence, we were glad to have new marriage certificates. When we came home in 1948 we applied for a copy of our original certificate and got it. I know it is a copy of the original, as Margaret Craig is given as one of the witnesses; I had not been sure that she had signed the Register on 22-11-22, so I didn't mention her name on 22-2-44.

Amid all the tragedy of war, some civilian deaths made a particular impression on me. A Mrs Farrell, who used to come to the Grand Hotel work party, had been married for some years and had no children, so everyone was delighted when it was known that she was pregnant and excitement grew when we heard that she was expecting twins. In due course she had twin sons, and it was a great shock when they died three days later. I shall never forget seeing their father in a rickshaw on his way to the cemetery, with two little white coffins on his lap.

Then there was the couple whom we had known when we were in Myitnge. After coming out of Burma, David had been stationed in Hosiapur or Lullindur, so their small daughter had been left at Evelyn Hall, where Daphne and Dennis had been. She died suddenly of measles and, India being what it is, her parents had not even been able to get there in time for the funeral. Just as they heard the news, David was transferred to Simla, and he and Pat came to the Grand Hotel. The first morning at breakfast, David came in on his own and said, "Don't say anything to Pat." I didn't, but what I do bitterly regret is that I didn't have the sense to write to her, a letter that she could have read and cried over, if necessary, something that would have told her that we knew and cared about what had happened.

The altitude may have had something to do with it, or it may merely have been that I hadn't the sense to realise that I couldn't win the war on my own, or that I should have had a better chance of doing so if I had taken time off occasionally, but I became so terribly tired that I eventually went to see Dr Poynder. She was one of the considerable number of splendid women doctors I have known. She said that my blood pressure was a bit low, and that altitude was apt to affect people with either high or low blood pressure - and slack off for a bit. To illustrate how I felt like, I showed a cutting from a newspaper of "A Tired Woman's Epitaph":

Here lies a poor woman who always was tired. She lived in a house where help was not hired. Her last words on earth were: "Dear friends I am going
Where washing ain't done, nor sweeping, nor sewing,
But everything there is exact to my wishes,

For where they don't eat, there's no washing of dishes. I'll be where loud anthems will always be ringing
But, having no voice, I'll be clear of the singing. Don't mourn for me now, don't mourn for me never -

I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever!"

That was on 26th September, so my feelings may be imagined when I heard that Dr Poynder had died on 2nd October. I felt as though I must have been an affront to a busy doctor, and positively the last straw.

After a period on Local Service in the W.A.C.(I), Nancie went before a selection board, and then to O.C.T.U. for a commission on General Service; she was eventually posted to Meerut as an Independent Platoon Commander. It was a tough assignment, as she had been warned, for her predecessor had let the finances get into a horrible mess. She said in one of her letters that " things have been run by God and by Guess. God must have been busy elsewhere, and Guess very inefficient ".

Daphne, meanwhile, was busy too, what with school, helping at the Canteen, dances, and skating in the winter. She came home one day to say that something in the Scripture lesson had struck her as being funny, though no one else had thought so. Of course I wanted to know what it was and, when told, I entirely agreed with her. For the benefit of anyone who does not have an Authorised Version of the Bible within easy reach, I will quote from Jeremiah 5 v8:

When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery and assembled together by troops in the harlot's house. They were fed horses in the morning: everyone neighed after his neighbour's wife.

It was many years later that I came across the expression " the untranslatable Hebrew pun ". What I should like to know is whether, in the passage quoted, there was a Hebrew pun, or whether the translators had taken the opportunity to make one, which I think was clever of them, for I believe a Hebrew pun should have some similarity in meaning as well as sound. The translators of the New English Bible have had no truck with puns:

I gave them all they needed, yet they preferred adultery and haunted the brothels; each man neighs after another man's wife like a well-fed and lusty stallion.

We went to various school functions at both Auckland House and B.C.S. - plays, bazaars, drill displays, the lot. On one occasion, Dennis got a form prize, which he received from the hands of Lord Wavell. I spent a few days in the Lady Reading Hospital, a period which included our wedding anniversary, having a D and C. We were all together for Christmas - no we weren't, for Nancie was in Meerut - but we had exchanged letters and presents, of course.

The New Year (1945) came in with snow, not a great deal to start with, then a strong southerly wind blew up the valley that we faced and brought vast quantities of snow. Soon all the roads in Simla were covered in drifts up to six feet deep and, until channels were cut through them, it was quite impossible to get about. No rickshaws could get about Simla,

and there was no road or rail traffic from the Plains. In fact, we were cut off from the outside world for ten days, except for radio, while urgent dispatches for G.H.Q. were dropped by helicopter. And it was COLD!

We had difficulty getting our ration of coal; when we did get it, the quality was so poor that it gave out little heat⁴⁸. And if we were cold, what about the Indians? They must have been hardy for, provided they had their big shawls to wrap about them, and a good thick bath towel to wrap around their heads, bare feet didn't seem to trouble them. The monkeys looked more miserable. Somehow a monkey in a snow-laden palm tree looked particularly pathetic. Gum boots were the order of the day, but we hadn't a pair apiece, so we shared them and one of us stayed at home while the others went out. After the snow had been cleared away, there was skating again on fine sunny days. The skating rink was on the north side of the Ridge; when the sky was clear and the sun bright there was an up-draught which froze the rink, but an overcast sky made the ice slushy. I'd almost forgotten that I did actually do a little skating in the winter of 1944-45, but I doubt very much whether it became part of me, like cycling. Val, Daphne and Dennis all managed to put in a fair time skating, in the evenings or on Saturdays and Sundays.

We were all working hard in our various ways. We used to tease Val that he gauged the amount of work that he had done by the number of Eversharp pencil refills he had used, but there was an enormous amount of work involved in the ordering of equipment needed for rehabilitating the Railway once the war was over. It was not just a matter of replacing what had been there before, but making improvements at the same time, and trying to convince the authorities in England that changes were needed.

We listened eagerly to the news, both of the progress of the war in Europe and in the East, and it was wonderful when we heard that MeikTiLa and its airfield had been taken by the 14th Army, and that the Japs had surrendered Mandalay. As more and more troops went into Burma, more and more medical supplies were needed. Whether all the dressings and swabs and dysentery pads and many-tailed bandages and surgeons' coats and bandages and - and - and- ever got where they were supposed to, no one will ever know. We certainly got through a lot of work, for I have a note about one consignment of cloth from Delhi of 1350 yards of material of various sorts.

It was delivered to one of the Indian shops on the Mall, where I had to check it, and arrange for a certain amount to be delivered to the Grand Hotel, where I had to find room for it in the "Morgue", and then take what was needed for a working party. At the Grand, we did some of the preliminary work of cutting out and making samples to issue to other people and, in due course, inspect, pack and label all the items in tens and eventually pack them in packing cases for Delhi. All of which entailed a considerable amount of paper work and a mental note of which people could be trusted with particular jobs. Some people liked rolling bandages, but were headed off, if possible, because their results were so horrible. There were one or two special people whose knitting was so beautifully smooth and even that they did all the knitting of "stump" socks for amputees, while lesser mortals were confined to more mundane affairs. Does that sound snide? It isn't meant to be. A little irregularity in an operation stocking wouldn't cause any trouble to a patient, but a sock that

wasn't smooth and even could cause grave discomfort on a stump of a limb in an artificial arm or leg. I had a welcome break from all this, when Nancie got permission for me to stay with her in her quarters. So, on the 15th of February when the snow had cleared away, I went down to Meerut - down to Kalka on the narrow-gauge railway, into the broad-gauge train to Delhi, where I had to change again into the train for Meerut, and saw the Old Fort at Delhi in the early morning light.

Nancie met me, popped me into a tonga while she biked along behind me to the Gillespie Lines. As it was only the middle of February, Meerut was still pleasantly cool, but it was easy to imagine that it could be unbearably hot in the Hot Weather. Nancie wasn't on leave, so had to work as usual but, in spite of that, we found plenty of time for talk and looking round Meerut. We went, of course, to the Garrison Church, with its memories of the Mutiny, and to the bazaar, and for walks. While Nancie was at work, I sat in the garden until it became too hot, enjoying air of standard "thickness", instead of the rarefied stuff up in Simla. It was a treat to look up at birds flying, and not down on them, as we did from the Grand Hotel. The girls in Nancie's platoon were all Indians and she was very much on her own as an Independent Platoon Commander. She said that none of her girls would go beyond a certain part of the building after dark as they said it was haunted. Whether haunted or not it certainly felt eerie and, if I'd had any business there, I think I should have wanted to go in daylight. I had ten wonderful days in Meerut, and then up the hill again, refreshed with all the air I'd breathed and the chance of seeing Nancie.

About the time I got back, we noticed that the Union Jack over G.H.Q. was left flying all night. We thought this was out of order on an official building as we understood that the only place where this was usual was on the Residency at Lucknow, in memory of the time when it had been kept flying during the Mutiny. No one else seemed to think it was odd until Val mentioned it to General Auchinleck at Lodge one night. The following evening the flag was down at sunset.

End of Chapter 21

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

In April I made a visit to Dr Gemmell, Dr Poynder's successor, because I was pretty sure I was pregnant. This was in the "High and Difficult Times" before the early pregnancy tests, so Dr Gemmell didn't commit herself, but suggested that I should come back in a month's time, which I did. She made the usual examination and, after a long silence, said, "Of course, it could be a phantom tumour" and, after another long silence, "Of course, it will get bigger", at which I'm afraid I guffawed. She may have had her doubts, but I knew I was pregnant and that, in the normal course of events, "it" would get bigger. Gemmell looked at me and then said, "What did I say?" When I told her she said "Oh, what a bromide!" I was laughing to myself all the way back to the Grand, But I had to wait for some time before I could share the joke with Val.

As soon as it was confirmed that I was pregnant we should have liked to tell the family, but felt that Nancie should be the first to know. We didn't want to write because, while I was in Meerut, every one of Val's letters to me (all ten of them!) had been opened by the censor. As many of the censors in Simla were women evacuees from Burma, we didn't relish the idea of them knowing the news before Nancie did and, as she hoped to get leave about the time of her twenty-first birthday, we decided to wait.

When she arrived she had with her an attractive little fox-terrier of the name of Nimmo, the property of Norman Ellis. Norman had figured quite a lot in our lives during the time we were in Calcutta and had spent some time in Simla, either on duty or on leave. I can't remember at the moment why Nimmo was with Nancie, probably because Norman was somewhere where he couldn't have a dog. Nimmo was used to a bungalow, with doors open all the time, so a flat four flights up made life a little difficult for him and for us. One evening I was on my own, as the others were out, and getting ready for bed, when I realised Nimmo would need to go out before they came back, so I put on my housecoat and took him downstairs for a walk in the garden. When we got upstairs, however, it became apparent that we should have stayed out longer, so, as the unfortunate animal wandered around in a state of distress, I followed behind with the coal shovel, where he eventually did his big business, which was then flushed down the lavatory.

Chronology has its drawbacks. I happen to know that this incident happened before Nancie's birthday but, by coming first, it seems to have acquired undue significance. Compared with what many parents do for their children's coming-of-age, our efforts looked pretty meagre, but Nancie had some nice presents, letters and telegrams and, in the evening, we had friends in to a party in our flat. Her leave passed quickly, with dances, walks, riding and so on, but, before she left, we told her and Daphne about the baby, and Dennis too, when he came up from B.C.S. Their reception of the news was heartening. For Nancie particularly it must have been a shock, for she was then as old as I was when I was pregnant with her, but they all sounded thrilled; it would have been sad if the family had taken the news amiss. We were in no hurry to tell the rest of the world, and merely told friends when the occasion seemed appropriate. One way and another, Nancie's leave was a mixture for, amongst other things, she had two wisdom teeth out - at the dentist's. Nowadays, it seems to be a hospital affair. At the expiry of her leave she went to Delhi.

We had seen a fair amount of Jack Walker while he was in Simla. He came and told us that he was going into Burma with what was irreverently called The Flying Dhobi - in other words a sort of mobile laundry. We had letters from him from Rangoon in July, so things were moving fast. He was able to see 4 Hume Road, where Win was born, that had been the Kendall home from 1912 to 1927.

Dr Gemmell was quite pleased with my condition except that my blood pressure was still low and I was suffering from what she called "India weariness" - after all, it was nearly seven years since we got back from leave. When I broke the news to the work party, they were good about taking over some of the standing jobs, and gave me a lot of help with the checking, putting-away and eventual packing of the things we had made. The packing was always a frustrating business. To get the packing cases delivered at the appointed time was always a problem. Having got the cases and packed them - in the hotel lounge, as there was nowhere else - a carpenter, already bespoken, might, or might not, appear; likewise the coolies who had to take the cases to the station for dispatch to Delhi. As Gemmell said that I ought to slack off a bit I tried to get somebody to take on the job, but there were no takers. I heard that Lady Tymms, who organised the party from Delhi, was up in Simla, so we made an arrangement to meet. She decided that the work party should be wound up, which I must admit was a relief, but even that involved a lot of work.

Looking back on this period, I seem to remember most the hours spent on Work Party work, but my diary tells me that we had friends to drinks often, that we met others at the Green Room or Davico's for coffee, went to the Gaiety Theatre and saw plays, and to the cinema, so we didn't do badly. Daphne had school and Canteen and dances, not to mention St. John Ambulance Brigade with First Aid and Home Nursing. Dennis came up from B.C.S. for half term, leave-out and occasional cinema leave, and quite often brought a friend with him.

We remember Mussoorie particularly for the "man-on-the-rope-end-of-a-spade". Simla brings to mind the post office coolies, I was going to say, but I think they must have been the post men. A crowd of them would be sitting on their hunkers outside the post office, waiting for the mail to arrive, and improving the shining hour by spinning!⁴⁹ On one occasion I saw several "sandwich women" walking up the Mall advertising a film and knitting inside their sandwich boards as they walked. I also saw, during the winter, blocks of ice being cut and put into ice-houses like those illustrated in "History of Everyday Things in England".

At the end of August, we moved to another flat on the ground floor, in other words, part of the original building near the entrance, so we only had a slope to walk up to get to the main building and the dining room, and no more stairs! It certainly was a relief, even if the view was not so dramatic.

As I said earlier, I have diaries from 1942, but they make dull reading, not having been written with posterity in mind. Being factual accounts of the days' doings, and rarely any opinion or comment, I was rather pleased to see that one day after a tiring morning I had

written, "Not much in this diary to show just how happy I am about this infant." This was just over a month before the infant arrived.

To people in England, who had suffered the full force of clothes rationing, it would probably come as a surprise to realise that there was clothes rationing in India too - a vague sort of system with no coupons involved, but considerable difficulty in getting cloth and wool. At one time it looked as if I should not be able to get material to make nappies, so I bought a dozen or so dusters of coarse hand-made material as an emergency supply, if I could get nothing better. Fortunately, Nancie was able to get some pugri material, which made up rather like Harringtons, and dear kind Aunt Monica actually sent some out from Home, at what coupon cost I don't know. It was a crazy set-up, for I was able to buy "Meridian" type Utility vests with which I made baby nightgowns. Daphne knitted a shawl, which was a real magnum opus, with an incredible number of stitches cast on for each border.

One day, Dennis came up from school and asked if one could have mumps on one side only. I took one look at him and said, "Yes", and unceremoniously sent the poor lad back to the school San, as there were already a number of cases in the school. That was on the 23rd September and, on the 11th October, Daphne succumbed. The doctor said that, in the circumstances, he thought Daphne ought to go to the Ripon Hospital. As both Val and I had had mumps, this may not have been necessary, but our rooms at the Grand were not exactly ideal sick rooms. Val was splendid, for he went to visit her practically every evening, but I didn't, as the Ripon was down by the Lower Bazaar and an awful pull up. Daph was out of hospital on the 29th, and very glad to be home.

I was amused when I went to the doctor's for a check-up on the 8th November to hear that Mrs Rhind had had a son weighing about 7½ lbs on the 5th, and that she thought I shouldn't be able to produce anything weighing more than 2 lbs. Dr Aratoon said she thought it would be about 6 lbs, and she was just about right. On the 9th we went to the Gaiety Theatre, taking the precaution of having aisle seats in case I had to make a hurried departure. In view of Dr Gemmell's remark about a phantom tumour it was odd that the play was "Vain Phantasy" - it may have been spelt Fantasy on the programme, but I spelt it Phantasy in my diary. About 4 a.m. I realised that I should make tracks for the Lady Reading Hospital, so the stand-by rickshaw was whistled up and off we set under a brilliant star-lit sky, through streets that were completely deserted, except for a black cat that crossed our path.

When I was taken to the labour room I found that another patient was already there. I'd often wondered what happened when two babies were being born at the same time and this time I found out. With a lot of moving of screens and scurrying about, the other woman was moved out. I asked what was happening and was told that she was being taken back to the general ward as she had "slowed up and would probably have to have a Caesar". Not so very long after, the whole business went into reverse, scurrings about and screens being moved and then, without a chirp from the mother, she produced an 8 lb son! Not many minutes afterwards, I produced a daughter at 7.38 a.m. on the 10th November, weight variously given as 6 lb 3 oz and 6 lb 10 oz. There had been a lot of discussion about names

but eventually we settled on Rosemary Veronica Lyn, but I think she was called Lyn from her first day. Nancie had leave and came to see me, some times with Daph, sometimes with Val, and Dennis came up from school too. It was lovely to have them all.

Now other things were in the air. Val came bursting in on the 20th, saying that he'd been offered passages on the 15th December, and had to decide by 2 o'clock. What about it? We decided against it but we need not have worried, it was for Val only, not the rest of us. Nan had to return on duty on the 21st and Lyn and I went back to the Grand Hotel on the 24th, after which we had all too short a time to see about getting Val ready to leave. There was lots for him to do at the office, and then the matter of packing. Three years before we had but a suitcase each and now, heaven help us, we had tin boxes (uniform-case style), kit-bags, bedding rolls and additional suitcases, and, with clothes rationing still in force at Home, we didn't feel free to get rid of anything in the way of clothes and material. It seemed odd that Val should be going first but it seemed the sensible thing to do. It wouldn't be too great a strain, we hoped, for his mother and Monica to put him up for a bit, and he could then look round for somewhere to put up his extended family. But how we hated the parting! He left Simla on the 5th December and, on the "Home News" on the radio, we heard that Georgic had arrived in Liverpool on the 27th, which was comforting to know. Christmas, Dennis's birthday, then the New Year and my birthday.

Then, on the 3rd January, I got a letter from Nancie saying that she and Norman Ellis were engaged. They didn't have an awful lot of time together as, on the 18th, I had a phone message from Grindlays offering me passages on Drottningholm (Svenska-Amerika Line on charter to P.& O.S.N.Co) sailing on the 7th February, and wanting an immediate reply. I accepted and got in touch with Nancie, who was "de-mobbed" in time to join us. Life seemed pretty full, making all the arrangements necessary: passports, vaccinations, travellers cheques, booking train accommodation, etc., etc., plus feeding an infant. Daph and Dennis helped in many ways, and very thankful I was for their help. Odd little items appear in my diary that I had completely forgotten. For instance, I packed a box of things to be sent to Burma in readiness for Val's return, the only item mentioned being soap. I have no recollection of having heard whether it was waiting for Val when he got back. Somehow I think it was unlikely.

Somehow we got all our gear down to the station to be booked, and then went down ourselves and started our long trip Home. The train from Kalka to Delhi was a corridor one, the first and, I think, the only one I had travelled in India; I think the one from Delhi to Bombay was the usual compartment type. Nancie and Norman Ellis met us at Delhi, where they had to part and Nancie joined us. Somewhere along that stretch of line Nancie said she would like to call me Mother, instead of Mummy, would I mind? I was delighted, and Daph and Dennis followed suit. I'd always called my mother, Mother, and I don't know why we ever said Mummy to our children, except that other people were doing so. It was somewhere along the journey too that Lyn laughed for the first time, Nancie being the recipient.

My memory of Bombay is hazy, but I remember my thankfulness at Nancie's help and support; one John Gibbs, whom Daphne had met in Simla, took her and Dennis off my

hands, and brought them back at the appointed hour. Our embarkation was a nightmare and, as far as I was concerned, so, to a large extent, was the voyage. Drottningholm, according to Harnack's "Ships and Shipping" was built in 1905 for the Gothenburg- New York run, so wasn't an ideal ship for the tropics. We were travelling tourist and our cabin was very small; there was so little headroom that one couldn't sit up straight in one's bunk. We ran into a head wind going through the Suez Canal and, at one spot where the Canal makes a slight change in direction, we ran aground diagonally across the Canal in the small hours of the morning, blocking the Canal well and truly. And there we stuck for over 40 hours. Various means were used to get us off, but attempts were hampered by the fact that when we were partially freed, we had to be tied up again because other vessels that had priority were approaching. It was cold in the Canal as the wind was from the north and, when we left Port Said, we ran straight into bad weather. Finding a relatively peaceful spot in a relatively sheltered corner was not easy, but Nancie did a lot of exploratory work, and somehow we survived a not very comfortable journey.

End of Chapter 22

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

We landed at Birkenhead early in the morning of a cold, snowy February day, but our hearts were lightened when we saw Val there to meet us. As usual, it is the small inconsequential detail that remain in one's mind. When we were waiting to go through Customs, we found ourselves beside fellow passengers, First Class, also of the name of Powell. There was nothing unusual in that but, where Dennis had painted identifying marks on our luggage of red and green triangles, apex to apex, their luggage had red and green triangles, base to base!

From Lime Street to Euston we probably travelled in warmth and comfort with First Class privilege tickets, and again from Charing Cross to Etchingam, where there was more snow, and from there to Collingwood House, Hawkhurst, where Val had got us accommodation at vast expense. It was a small country house hotel, once the home of Admiral Lord Collingwood, and now the home of a number of permanent, elderly guests; our arrival brought the average age down with a resounding bump.

Though the war was over, conditions were still very difficult. Rationing was in force for food and clothing, and anything that wasn't rationed was scarce and expensive. Furnished houses to let were virtually non-existent and, owning no furniture, we should have had great difficulty in setting up house, even if we had been able to rent or buy one. At this stage, with Val due back in Burma in a few months, should we have wanted to buy one and be liable to U.K. income tax, as well as Burmese? So we paid up, and were well looked after and fed, within the limits of rationing austerity, and enjoyed the outlook over the Kentish countryside.

I took Lyn to the Infant Welfare Clinic to have her weighed, for she looked a pathetic little scrap at that time. I was advised to start her off on National Dried Milk, which I did, and she began to pick up and become once more the lively youngster that she had been before she was born.

Before we left India we had asked Monica - dear Monica, how she has helped us over the years - if she could find out about schools for Dennis. I can't remember, but I'm sure that we must have been in touch with Truman & Knightley as well. Monica talked to Mr Ingle, the vicar of St John's, Greenhill, Harrow, who had been a Housemaster at Felsted. We eventually decided that Dennis should go there if they would have him, and he started there in the Summer Term⁵⁰. We also had endless correspondence trying to find something suitable for Daphne, for neither she nor we really knew what was wanted. In the end she said that what she would really like was to go to an Art School. We made a trip to Brighton, where the Principal was so high-powered that Daph and I felt all we wanted to do was to crawl under a stone and hide our ignorance. Later we made a trip to Tunbridge Wells to the Art School there, and arranged that Daphne should go there twice weekly for the rest off the summer term, and then daily in the autumn.

Hawkhurst, though an attractive place, was hardly the centre of the universe and it was quite a business to go anywhere. However, one way and another, we did all get about.

Nancie went to see Norman Ellis's mother and stayed with her for a while. Val went to meetings of the Institute of Loco Engineers (now re-absorbed by the Mechanicals), and both of us went to some function at Felsted, and we went to see Val's mother and Monica. On the 15th May Val got a wire saying that there was a passage for him on the 25th, and our hearts sank but, on the 21st, he got a priority wire saying that the Government of Burma "strongly deprecated" the idea of going across India. (I don't know why, probably something to do with the state of India in 1946, with the I.N.A. (Indian National Army) trials and the R.I.N. (Royal Indian Navy) mutiny.) So that was off. Between then and the time when Val did actually sail we all did quite a lot of travelling. I can't remember when we heard that Dulcie was engaged and going to be married shortly, but Val and I went up to see her, leaving Nancie and Daphne to look after Lyn for the day.

When Val did hear about his passage it was in Empire Haig, sailing from Hull, and even my diary doesn't make all the moves in the game clear; I think Dennis went to camp at the end of term; bread, which had not been rationed during the war, was rationed now. Daphne had no cake on her birthday, the 24th, but we took the ingredients with us when we went up to Tynemouth and, on the 25th, Val went up to Hull with his luggage and was joining us in Tynemouth. I suppose this was necessary because conditions were anything but normal.

The next day the girls and I left Hawkhurst, Nan and Daph going to Dulcie's wedding, while Lyn and I went to Harrow to see Val's mother and Monica. We decided to go by a night train, optimistically thinking that it would be easier with Lyn than travelling by day and, in a way, it was. All our arrangements were somewhat upset by a terrific storm which put trains out of action. However, the girls managed to get to King's Cross and so did I with Lyn, but we should have been very glad to have had Val with us. We had First Class privilege tickets but couldn't get anywhere near a First Class seat as all the compartments were full. Nancie managed to find three seats in a Third Class carriage so, with Lyn's carri-cot across our knees, we managed. She was at the stage of peering over the side of it like the current cartoon character "Mr Chad" - "Wot? No soap?" or whatever happened to be missing. We learnt later that the extreme crowding on the train was due to Newcastle Races and some other function that I can't remember. Val was at Tynemouth to meet us, and weren't we glad to see him!

Mother had let her house in Hull and bought what was then called a semi-bungalow, but is now called a chalet bungalow, in Tynemouth. Margot and Ian were living with her, and to have Val and me and Lyn as well must have been hard for her, even though we had our ration books with us. Nancie and Daph stayed with Win and family in North Shields. Jack was now home, so their house was full too, with Gillian, Andrew and the twins, Pat and Margie. There was much going to and fro between the two households.

When the time came for us to leave, and we were travelling by night train again, Val came with us as far as York, so that we could have as much time together as possible. This time we had the comfort of a First Class carriage to ourselves, but saying good-bye to Val after midnight in the gloom of York station was a bleak business. So, in a different way, was our arrival at Charing Cross at 6 o'clock the following morning, for it was completely deserted,

but we had sandwiches with us and managed to get a cup of tea before we caught an early morning train to Etchingham.

As we were living in a hotel, our food shopping and cooking was done for us, so we should have had plenty of leisure, but it never seemed like it. After Val left, I moved out of the big double room we had on the ground floor of the big house into the annexe, where the rooms were small but quite big enough for us, though they proved to be damp and cold in the winter. We went for quite long walks with Lyn in the pram, and went shopping by bus in Hastings and Tunbridge Wells. Our main ration cards were handed over to Mrs Robinson but we kept our "Personal Points", which could be used for buying sweets and chocolates. We had a nasty shock when we found that they were only valid for the ration "period". We had thought (innocent Colonials!) that they could be saved so that, when a special occasion came along, we should have some in hand. To see our precious coupons cut off and thrown away seemed an insult.

A kind friend drove us to Burwash to see Kipling's house, "Batemans". The details that I remember most clearly are the clay plaques made by Lockwood Kipling which were used for the illustrations in "Kim", illustrations which, for some unfathomable reason, are no longer in modern editions. Daphne and Dennis made an expedition to Uplands at Broad Oak, Heathfield; I gather that it was very "Ichabod-y", for the glory had definitely departed. The Army had moved out and it had a neglected look.

Some time during the autumn Nancie's engagement came to an end. It was a sad time and somehow seemed unnecessary but, if there was no real prospect of marriage, an indefinite engagement was unfair to both parties. so once again the question of future plans arose. I had my name down for a passage to Burma when one became available, and I applied to have Nancie's name added to it. It seemed probable that there would be jobs available there which would be the sort she might have chosen if she had been left in England.

We made arrangements for Daphne to P.G. with a doctor's family in Tunbridge Wells and to continue at the Art School there; Dennis was at Felsted and was to spend the holidays with my mother. To anticipate, neither of these arrangements turned out as intended. I can't at the moment remember why Daphne left the doctor's house; probably because their children were getting bigger and needed more room. She went to stay with a Mrs Ford, who apparently suffered from an outsized critical faculty and for whom Daphne could do nothing right. Mother found that a 15 year old boy was more than she could cope with in her small bungalow. If he had had his own friends and belongings it might have been different. In the end, he went to Col. Meldrum, who had befriended us in Hawkhurst and who later found a more permanent home for Dennis.

Shortly before Christmas, Nancie was confirmed in the attractive little church at Staplehurst. Some kind person took charge of Lyn for the afternoon so that I could go with Nancie, for it was quite an occasion as the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, Dr Fisher, was conducting the ceremony, but it was still a simple village occasion, with eight boys, seven girls and two men being confirmed.

The weather got colder and colder, fuel was hard to come by and, when the snow came, it felt like the frozen north, and transport became difficult. We managed to have a good Christmas, making our own decorations, which we put on a branch of greenery "planted" in a waste-paper basket, and illumined by night lights placed strategically. Over the Christmas period various local people came to Collingwood House for drinks and dinner, so there was a certain amount of activity. Mrs Cochrane, who lived opposite Collingwood House, told me about one of the nights during the doodlebug period, when Hawkhurst suffered severely. The church, which was very near, was badly damaged, so much so that it was completely unusable during the time we were there. Mrs Cochrane said that she came down in the night to see how much her house had suffered and, by the light of a torch, found she had stepped into something warm and red, which she thought at first was blood but then found that a preserving pan of jam had been upset all over the floor. Later, she discovered a fragment of tombstone on her mantelpiece, on which was the word PEACE. I tried to tell this tale to Val's mother when I went to see her, but she was by then so deaf that the tale was incomprehensible to her; she was irritated at the idea of having anything written that she couldn't hear.

I shall always be grateful for the help that the family gave me. They helped in many ways, by looking after Lyn, shopping, and by being company, though I fear it must have been dull for them. Daphne has sometimes remarked how lucky Nancie and I were when our children were small, for we had ayahs and nannies to help, which is true, unlike Daphne herself, and many mothers of children in this country nowadays who, unless they have relatives living near, have no one to share the load.

In the midst of cold weather, restrictions of one sort and another, 1946 came to an end. For my birthday in 1947, Daphne made me a parchment wallet, inscribed in beautiful red letters: "Letters from my Love", in which I put all the letters that I received from Val since he had sailed from Hull. He actually sent me a letter from Hull, but that hasn't survived, though all the rest, until we left Hawkhurst, have. I read through them at one sitting last night, and not without tears, for they were such moving letters. But they were tears of thankfulness for the many happy years we had together. What was sad was to read of the many marriages that had not survived the war.

End of Chapter 23

PART SIX - BACK TO BURMA

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

This seems to be the point to tell the tale from Val's point of view, as depicted in his letters. Naturally, the letters were chiefly personal and in no way was he setting out to describe in detail conditions in Burma, as he might have done had he been a newspaper correspondent.

Val enjoyed the voyage in Empire Haig from Hull to Rangoon for he was always happy aboard ship. In one of the letters written on board when they were in the Indian Ocean he said, "This evening we witnessed one of the most remarkable phenomenon I have ever seen. Coming up from dinner we were astonished to see a white sea and a dark sky. Everywhere, all round, right to the horizon, was white. Looking ahead the ship looked like an explorer's ship in the Antarctic going through the pack-ice. The sea was so light that one could not see the white foam against it. The skipper got up a sample of the water, and shading the eyes one could see myriads of specks of phosphorescence like a starlit sky. There must have been millions of myriads in the sea. The skipper said that he had seen nothing like it in 27 years at sea. For over 24 hours we were going through it, so it must have extended over 40 miles. About 20.45 we could see the edge of it, and it gradually got weaker till by 21.00 we were out of it. An amazing spectacle." When I read his letter I was surprised that he implied that he hadn't seen such a spectacle before, because I thought I knew we'd seen a similar display of splendour together, but I decided that it must have been when I was returning to Rangoon during the monsoon in 1933, and in much the same area. We were first aware of it during the day, when the sea acquired a rosy hue, rather like a reflected sunset but, as night fell, there was a phosphorescent glow like Val described. And, though I have nothing to prove it, I am confident that this time I have not done a "GyoBinGauk".

Later in the same letter he said, "I didn't tell you, there's a man aboard whose wife and children were in "Kemmine" with Margaret and Joan Blanchard. Unfortunately there is a bust-up. She had already had a kid by someone else and he had forgiven her. Then when in captivity she broadcast for the Germans and is now undergoing 2 years imprisonment after trial at the Old Bailey. A bit different from the Blanchard story!"

Val's letter of the 7th September told of his arrival and his next, dated the 16th September 1946, was written from Rangoon. He wondered when he'd next get a letter as the Post Office employees had joined the Police who were on strike. Their leader was quite candid and said the strike was purely political. Prices had naturally rocketed, though he noted that the cost of living was down 14 points and was then only 40% of Pre-War!

For a time he lived with Billy and Kathie Edwards (B.R. engineer), who had another man living with them as, not unnaturally, houses were hard to come by. Kathie Edwards fed them well, one would never have thought there was any shortage of food or lack of variety but there were plenty of difficulties. Servants were hard to get and, like everyone else, wanted more money. Rows were open, but only Rs 80/- could be spent a month, and only one of each article could be bought a month: one plate or one cup and saucer, etc. Dost

Mahomed was on the wharf to meet him and told him that Aye Maung wanted to join him. Poor old Abdul came back from KaLèWa (during the evacuation) to Myitnge and died there. Val had to go out to InSein to find where the engines were, as his office didn't know. "Trying to run trains when you don't know where the engines are ain't a lot of good."

On the 21st September he wrote, "The Police, who have been on strike for over a fortnight have now been dismissed so theoretically there is no Police Force. The Military Police direct traffic and dacoits suspended activities for the strike so actually Rangoon is better off. The wives of the strikers are very angry. They are not getting all the pickings, hush-money, etc, which police wives (in Burma) expect to get. Too bad. W S Gilbert died far too early. He ought to have been in Burma in 1946."

I think I must interpolate here that Val's letters were either Air letters (the modern Aerogramme), or written on very small sheets of paper sent in an envelope. A fair proportion of each letter was a comment on the most recent letter he had had from me, so everything he said was compressed into the smallest possible space. We both of us numbered our letters. I think he got most of mine, not necessarily in the right order, and I got, and still have, all of his except No.14, which never arrived, and No.58, which arrived in Hawkhurst when all the others were packed and which was probably destroyed in the final clearing-up.

Val's No.7, dated 26.9.46

"I can't give your salaams to Dost Mahomed because with all the other Railwaymen he is "on strike". It started on Monday and they are practically all out including a lot of our Shed foremen, who have been frightened. However with the help of J.S.P. (Japanese Surrendered Personnel) from the 9th Jap. Railway Regt. we are managing to run a train each way daily to Mandalay and on alternate days to Prome. It takes 4 days to MDY (Mandalay) and 2 to PRM (Prome) as trains run only in daylight. We cannot run every day to PRM as between RN (Rangoon) and Letpadan, or LP (Letpadan) and PRM there is no manned crossing station so one day's trains start from RN and PRM for LP and the next day they start in each direction from LP.

"Of course it all means plenty work for officers who are manning the controls and cabins at RN, KMN (Kemmine) and PZG (Pazundaung). The J S P s are just loving it getting back to their own job and I fear are a little over-enthusiastic on the footplate. What price all the bridge cautions, etc. The Pointsmen in the yard do everything at the double. If we had all Japs working for us we could do with 8000 less men. How long it will last we don't know, but the new Executive Council was announced by H.E. tonight, but Burmese politics being what they are anything may happen.

"I am terribly sorry this is only an air letter again, but I am out early in the morning and get back to tea about 18.30 and I'm tired especially today when I wrestled with my Jeep and finally gave up the unequal contest. I'm luckily still with the Edwards. I can't go into my house a) until I've got some furniture, b) until the servants' quarters are vacated and I can get Aye Maung down. Tonight I've been to see some furniture Helen Varley is selling. I

think it is from W.A.S.B. restaurants. (Women's Auxiliary Service (Burma)). Anyway it is very cheap and I've bought 4 dining chairs, 4 lounge chairs, 1 cane seat settee, 3 tables, 3 folding ditto, 2 Basra chairs, cups and saucers, plates and dishes, some coco-matting but NO glass. The whole lot will only be about Rs 150/-. My advice to you is to get what you'll need, as there is little obtainable here."

No.8 of 1.10.46

"The J S P s are having a whale of a time playing trains. Unfortunately we have Ela pile bridge damaged by logs and no engine allowed over, and mid-day Saturday the south abutment of the Thawati bridge was washed away. I cancelled the up train from RN this morning to avoid congestion at Toungoo.

"In the new Executive Council announced last week all members were Burmese headed by Aung San and U Ba Pe. Aung San who induced the Unions to go on strike before he was in power is now urging them to go back. The late Executive Council is urging them to stay on strike so as to embarrass the new Council."

No.9 of 3.10.46

"The rains have broken here again. Yesterday and today it has teemed down all day long and you have to wear a mac in a jeep which ain't exactly watertight. During the strike I knock up 15-20 miles a day, going down early and coming back to brekker and lunch and including going to a daily meeting at Trn H.Q. I hope tomorrow will be the last early morning for a long while. I should like to get a sail on Sunday morning too."

"Fri. Oct 4th.

"Well, the men haven't come back so we are carrying on with J S P s. The new Executive Council have given 'em all they want including pay for the time they are on strike, so why work? This, I think has probably put paid to Burma. The world has done without Burma teak for four years and will certainly not pay the price it will now go up to. It is a political ramp of the worst kind and is done to secure votes for the election next April. Altogether it is a pretty depressing outlook for the country. I'm wondering what H.M.G. thinks of the œ80,000,000 loan now □.

"The new Myitnge bridge has been cantilevered out 120 ft and there it is hanging in the air because the Khalassis are afraid to come to work!

"I dropped a brick the other day. Scales came in to see me and knowing he'd married Mavis Lane, I asked after the family. `Oh! that's all bust up. I've got the custody of the kid. These bloody women couldn't even wait to see if their husbands came out of Burma alive.' One can only surmise that the bond was not very strong before.

"I'm still with the Edwards and getting fat on the feeding. It's lucky I haven't had to run a house on my own during the strike. I shouldn't have had time to see about food."

No.10 of 7.10.46

"The men came back to work today but it will take some time to get back to normal and not a little time to get the engines back even into the condition they were before. On the whole the J S P s have not done too badly. They ran into a standing train at Pyuntaza due to being admitted on a wrong line, and last Thursday we had a derailment at Peinzalok due to the Jap driver not stopping to see that the points were properly set, and the lever latch was out of the notch. The result, two roads blocked, tender derailed, and IS (inspection carriage) next smashed to bits and BIF 093 (one of the two with my bogies) derailed and slightly damaged and two following wagons derailed. Due to having no staff to man the breakdown train the line was not clear until early Sunday morning. Apart from these two incidents and one or two burst points the Japs have done really well considering only about two people speak a word of Japanese. During the strike some baskets have removed Malagon Yard Station, the entire building, telephone etc instruments, furniture and all.

"Fish here, though dear, is good. The beef in the bazaar is excellent. I've had better beef since I've been here than we had at home. Vegetables seem plentiful and good. We've had cabbage, beans, brinjal, Ladies' fingers, marrow, pumpkin, beetroot, lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes and of course potatoes."

No.12 of 13.10.46

"Well, here it's just been one damned thing after another. Before the strike finished Bridge 379 north of Ela was damaged by the log jamb, and no locos allowed over. However we pushed trains across. Strike over and bridge goes worse and can only tranship. Then Bridges 417 and 419 were closed (between Kyidaungan and Pyokkwe) They are open again but Bridge 393 near Ywadow has died and transhipment again. (373 is south of PMA (Pynmana) and 393 north of PMA). Then last night just before midnight 2 Down which, due to transhipment, was 6« hours late, was derailed between Tawa and Kyauktan. Fishplate removed on the south approach to Bridge 46. They had evidently intended to wreck an Up goods and lost it but caught 2 Down instead. We were going to introduce a new Time Table on Oct. 15th but the strike put paid to that and now it is Jan. 1st if we can get engines in order again by then.

"Yesterday I managed to get down to order some furniture. 2 beds Rs 75/- each (wood slats). almirah (large shelf) Rs 195/-, dining table 5' x 3' Rs 75/-, 6 chairs 20/- each. Two meat safes 85/- each. I shall probably get two shelf almirahs from Stores @ 100/-.

"This morning after seeing about Relief Train for 2 Down and informing Government House and Broadcasting House I went to the Sailing Club - too late for a sail, but I took out a dinghy and as there was no breeze I offered to tow anyone home for Rs 5/-. No takers."

No.15 of 26.10.46

"The new Myitnge bridge will be opened in Dec. by H.E. Two special trains from RN (curse it) and much banging of tom-toms. John Hossack has already got the spans across. I shall have to be up on H E's train.

"I doubt whether I shall have time to write tomorrow with moving into 213 (Ahlone Road). By the way, continue to address letters to the office as the about-town delivery is not too good these days."

No.16 of 30.10.46

"I said in my last that I should not be able to write at the weekend as I was moving into 213 Ahlone Road. No, it isn't like the old times being in it because you aren't there.

"Sun. morning I had ordered a lorry for 09.00, so he came at 8.15. As soon as Edwards and Burden had pushed off to the Sailing Club. we loaded furniture in the lorry and started off. We took 2 trips with the lorry and about 6 or 7 with Jeep. All was moved in before 10.00 and I then set about arranging and fitting up. I got one bed erected and fixed up hooks for tooth brush, macs, etc.,etc.,etc.

"Oh! a rather funny thing about a week ago, I forgot to tell you. After my bath I noticed that the hair in my armpits seemed stiff and brittle. I took hold of it and it all `come off in my 'and mum'. Left 'em clean and smooth. I began to get wind up that I might be getting a hair disease, but hair on other parts is tight enough. I suppose my corrosive sweat had just rotted it.

"This evening I have just engaged a cook, a Madrassi, friend of Edwards' boy who guarantees his probity. Tomorrow I must rustle round and try and find a teapot, a frying pan and other little necessities. The trouble is, I've been so busy I just haven't had time to get out in the town."

No.17 of 3.11.46

"As I've crammed quite a lot into the last few days I thought I'd better let you have the dope a) while it's fresh in my mind, b) while I have time to write it. I have left the Hotel Edwards. Not really from choice, but I must set up house some time and as I'm expecting a lodger when the "Prome" arrives (one Mr Buckley, Master Builder, taken on as Asst. Engr.) I thought I'd better get going at least 2 or 3 days before he comes. I don't like it, housekeeping. I haven't done it for 24 years except 5 months in 1933 and then everything went on with its own momentum. Now I've got to think of everything I need, and of course I have no pepper, salt or mustard. Cook seems to think it extraordinary I haven't ordered a case of Worcester sauce and another of tomato sauce. So far he has only cooked one dinner and one lunch for me, as I've been out to other meals, but seems assez bon. Nous allons voir.

"This morning up betimes and to the Sailing Club. Crewed for Bradley, but we were not very successful. I didn't put my name down for the second race as I wanted to get back in good time for lunch. No sooner had I arrived home than, "Sir, Dhobi" Yeah!

"After lunch I was invited for 14.00 hrs to the wedding reception of U Ba Sein's son and his bride. Old Ba Sein was very keen that I should go. His son is a Sub-Lieut. in the Burma Navy and it has made a man of him. At the wedding I met old Mookerdum (of Smart and Mookerdum). He is 89 and remembers the first train leaving Rangoon. He was very chatty and said he remembered me and getting books now and then for my wife!! asked after you. I also met the Senior Trustee of the Shwe Dagon. I had contributed Rs 10/- towards the re-gilding which is nearly completed and he thought it was most broad-minded of me. I said it wasn't really that, but I thought the Shwe Dagon one of the most beautiful buildings and I was happy to help in its rehabilitation."

No.18 of 5.11.46

"Well, the Prome has arrived and with it Bee Air, Doris Milne, Fay Parker, Kathleen Bruce and our Mr Buckley who is my lodger. Today is Bakri-Id and this evening fireworks are popping off all over the place. Dost Mahomed was very pleased that you sent him salaams and reciprocated them. Clarence the Clock has started stopping, if you know what I mean."

No.19 of 8.11.46

"Your No.14 of 31.10 arrived yesterday . I too keep wondering about the how and the when of your joining me . Conditions out here where we are not so bad. We have plenty of good water and our 'Synchromesh' functions. There are the 3 in the 3 bathrooms, 3 fitted basins, 3 English baths with showers. There seems to be quite a number of children in Rangoon now . This is, I think the stickiest night we have had so far. It is just running off my elbows as I write and making dark patches on my mazri slacks."

No.20 dated Lyn's birthday 1946

"Had lunch with Syd and Jack Webster. Connie and Jim Stewart were to have been there but sent a note yesterday that they "couldn't possibly come". Syd sent a particular love and a kiss to his Nancie, 'the loveliest girl I know'. Tell Nan that. "Before I forget I'm going out on Wednesday till next Saturday. I'll have a lot to do to get ready for line before I go so if you don't get a letter for a week you'll know why. I'm going to Toungoo, Myitnge and Mandalay and expect to be back Sat. evening. We can't get our Simla layout for Mandalay station because despite everything too much of the old station is left to warrant scrapping it, so I've been busy over the weekend thinking again, and think I've hit quite a good solution. Needless to say, as in Simla, all these things were left 'till Mr Powell returns'. Anyway I'll leave some dhobi marks in Burma."

End of Chapter 24

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

No.21 of Nov 18th 1946

"Now I must tell you about my trip on line. I left RN by 1 Up (11.40) on Wed. 13th. I had CRC's carriage so was quite comfortable. Geoffrey Fane hitched on at Pyuntaza and came with me to Toungoo. Next morning we inspected Bashas and Barracks which the military are giving up and I went to see the D.C. about requisitioning a house for Fane. (It is absurd at present with the District Mechanical Engineer at Toungoo and District Operating Supt. at Pyuntaza.) The D.C. had had a heavy night. In fact his companion of the night fled into the bedroom as we arrived. I tried to phone the result (of our visit not of the heavy night) to RN but all the wires were sabotaged S. of Pegu, so had to send down an urgent D/O to John Wakeford by train.

"I left TGO (Toungoo) by 339 Up Military train at 14.05, had walk around Pynmana (nothing left) and went on to Thazi. Next morning I had a look at TZI remodelling. Thazi has been completely wiped out except the N. Cabin and the signal gantries at each end, so we can have a completely new layout there.

"I then caught 1 Up on to Myitnge and boy! Oh! what joy! To be at the regulator again! I drove a McArthur 52 from Hanza to Kum, Road. Gee! It was grand. They've got a very comfortable driving position, though the lever reverse is not as good as a wheel and screw. From Paleik we pass over the Myitnge diversion which is a mile and a half up the MIT (Myitnge) River from the permanent bridge and then winds in and out coming out below our house and passing behind DCWS's house, across the maidan, through Jones's compound and joins No.1 line MIT at the N. end. The train is then backed into MIT station.

"That Friday afternoon I went down to the new bridge and found the Vicar of Gloom {John Hossack, Engineer in charge} very despondent. He'd just checked up that he'd still got 10,500 rivets to drive and H.E. is going to open the bridge on Dec.23rd. All four spans are across. They were all joined together on the S. approach and were launched all in one piece. I should like to have seen it done.

"I came back, had tea with Don (Stuart) and then a swim in our pool which is in perfect order. Even the dressing room is there, though it needs a coat of paint and has a bullet hole through one of the roof lamp sockets. The hedge needs cutting but otherwise it is O.K. Don has had a new gate made and some brick steps up out of the bath at the shallow end and brick walks from gate to shed and bath. The Gol mohur trees at each end are nearly as big as the old one.

"After that I went and had a drink and ate chip potatoes with the Morgans. Mrs M. looks better than I've seen her for years. They are living downstairs in Naronah's house with the N's upstairs. I then had dinner with Don who is in DCWS's (now WMCs) with Sandy Simpson and a Burman A.EN (Asst Engineer).

"Next morning I was up early and had a swim (tout nu). After brekker Don took me round to see our house. It is being done up by Mr Bose's brother and will soon be ready now. The

crazy china floor only needs two very small patches. The cassia fistula is, I fear, quite dead, but the o-stut-bin (bael fruit tree) is flourishing and has plenty of fruit. A new garage had to be built but my pit is quite O.K.

"After that I went into the Works. The Engineers have done nothing! Morgan has done everything. They've got one 350KW B&M (Bellis & Morecombe) engine and one 100KW going and 3 - 50KVA Ford V8 petrol sets supply A.C. and have rigged up from a D.C. motor and an alternator a Rotary converter as they are running two overhead cranes and the traversers on A.C. MIT is the only place in Burma, I think, with street lighting. The Saw Mill is still a wreck and the Paint Shop is being used as stores, but otherwise things look very normal. 2 Mallet boilers supply steam to the Power House and an old F Class engine for a couple of steam hammers. I found my ferro-concrete goods brake van and they are repairing it and turning it out. BIF 393 (with my bogies) which was damaged in derailment at Peinzalok is being repaired. One of the bogies is being rebuilt. I hope to have it to take me up for opening of MIT bridge on Dec. 23rd. Several of my steel body frames are in existence. They've found all the gadgets Morgan made for checking up axle boxes and brasses and also the moulds for making battery plates. Morgan deserves a C.B.E. at least.

"On Saturday afternoon I went to Mandalay by Rail Jeep. The station building is repairable and our Simla plan will not be carried out but C.R.C. has tentatively agreed to a revised layout I have put up. None of the other Rly buildings exist.

"I returned to MIT in time to have another swim and then tea with Don before 2 Down arrived at 18.20. Ten minutes before the train came in Aye Maung came and said he was not coming back to RN. His wife was crying. Just like a Burman: no idea that he might come back for a little while till I could get someone else. No, just like that! I came right through to RN by 2 own arriving 7 minutes before time at 18.13.

"Today is a holiday, National Day. I did 2 hours in the office then went to the sailing club and was passed as a 'B' helmsman which means I can now sail a boat myself. This afternoon I gave the Jeep another coat of paint which, being done in daylight, looks better than the first.

I'm taking another lodger, Webb of W & T Avery. It will help with the exchequer.

"We haven't got a radio here and we aren't getting a paper so I suppose the world still goes on."

No.22 Our Wedding Day (what a coincidence)

" I arrived back from MIT and MDY on Sunday evening and on Tues night had to dash out again to STGW (Sittang West) where there was a complete balls up of the crossing {the Sittang River bridge was not yet rebuilt, so a temporary ferry was operating across the river} and the military getting uppish and Wakeford wanted a senior officer to go and play Hell. So off I had to dash but I was lucky for once for on Tues. morning not only did I get 1

Railway Gazette and 3 Model Engineers but No.'s 16,17,18 from you and one from Nan!!!! They cheered me on my way very considerably.

"I got to STGW early next morning and Gosh, was it a dog's breakfast - a Smoky's breakfast! Trying to unload and re-load lorries off and on rail flats and the moment one flat was empty about 6 lorries charged for the ramps to be first on. We are also trying to cross 225 tons of stone a day from Mokpalin Jail. They cross on our self-propelled pontoons, Patience, Pinafore and Sorcerer. Two working, one off. They have two Chrysler Marine Engs. aft, rather like huge outboard motors and can take 12 tippers per trip. For passengers and public lorries we have 2 RCL's but one is laid up at present. eventually the chaos was sorted out, but it was delayed by three military lorries refusing to start on the flats and having to be towed off. The third one's front wheel hit the edge of the ramp, knocked it away and very nearly capsized it. It took 'em about 2« hours of fun and games to get that sorted.

"I went over to STG East and had a look at that. There is at present no train service Mokpalin to Hninpale, there being only one workable engine at MPLN, a Jap C (2-6-0) so there is no bother about reloading motor trolley on rail there. An Fs (engine) is going to be crossed before the end of the month and from Dec. 1st I'm starting one train each way STGE to HPE (Hninpale) to connect with the present Martaban-Donwun train at Belin River.

"I spent two days at STGW formulating plans to segregate the stone traffic and for a fixed loading ramp for motor trolley. I left STGW last night to Pegu and there caught 346 Down this morning. At Dabein we crossed 345 Up which had had a bogie wagon of piece goods looted between Ledaunggan and Dabein. A couple of miles out of Dabein our guard spied bales of cloth beside the line and managed to attract the driver's attention and he pulled up with my carriage about 400 yds beyond the loot. Our Police guard in the brake van had one rifle between them. I was for backing the train, but the policeman said, "No Sir, they have many rifles." He then made a long shot at the dacoits who were visible and they replied with a positive volley. Our policeman raced back to the brake van, the guard waved a green flag and away went our train. The policeman on arrival made a report that he had accounted for 15 to 20 dacoits!

"I'm now hoping for my soul to catch up with my body. It's been way behind for about a week. That's why I've neglected to wish you Many Happy Returns of today in time for you to get it today.

" On Tuesday evening before going on line I called in on Wilf and Gem Butler to give Wilf a message about Lodge and they asked me to send you their congratulations. Gem thinks you are just marvellous, but Wilf thinks it is I who am the marvel!"

No.26

"Today Bellamy, the bookie, came into my office bringing with him the daughter whom we had last seen on the lawn at Government House, Mandalay at the Viceroy's "Do", wrapping herself round meringues, chocolates, etc. But now what a beauty! Dresses in Burmese style, has all the charm of her mother (Princess Ma Hlat), speaks very prettily and if she doesn't make a number of hearts roll clean over and stamp on their owners I don't know what will. She has more upper contours than most Burmese, which does not detract from her appearance and a bit more Western cast of face. Altogether very lovely indeed."

No.27 of Dec. 8th 1946

"I have got another lugale at last, Kyi Myint. Seems quite a nice lad, had a good chit from Kent, B.O.C. who said he was excellent as a bachelor lugale, but "of course" would not do for a married household???? I wouldn't know from what I've seen so far.

"I must say the decreasing bank balance at Home did rather give me a knock. I thought that possibly with Dennis at school, me out here and you in the annexe it would be a bit easier, but œ36753 in 3 months did rather shake me. I'll get the Bank here to send home œ200 at once. Fortunately I'm not spending a great deal, petrol being the chief item. However I've had the front axle shafts taken out of Paddy-the-next-best-thing and the resistance is so much less that I'm hopeful the consumption will go down. When they give me a battery that will start the car I'll start playing around with the carburettor, but she starts easily by hand now and I don't want to spoil that easy start in an effort to make consumption better till I've got a battery that will take the work off me a bit.

"Having two lodgers who each pay me Rs 11/- per day makes the housekeeping a bit easier even though cook averages about Rs 13/8 per day. The Sailing Club costs me 5/- a month, the Swimming Club 3/- and Lodge 10/-. There was no whisky in November so I couldn't buy any. I have a little left but there will be no more in RN till Martaban arrives, everyone hopes, before Christmas .

"It's just horrible not knowing when this damned separation is going to end. At the same time it does not seem the time to chuck one's hand in, with the difficulty of finding somewhere to live at Home. Incidentally, I still want to see some of my engines come out."54

"Please tell our Bits that the Elmo grip wrench continues to prove its worth several times a week. Pretty well all the tools have been used since I got into the house and of not one can I say it is a White Hephallump. I do wish I had been able to get a plane at Home, but I'm afraid it will cost Rs 12/- or more.

"P.S. has Hicomind been paying in the Overseas Pay of œ13-6-8 per month?"

No.29 of Dec. 13th, our engagement anniversary.

"Now I have a confession to make. I've bought a radio. But for only 25/- more than we gave for our Phillips set in 1938. I was in Rowes to collect a pair of white slacks (Rs 17/8)

when I saw they had a contingent of Pye radios at Rs 350/-. I thought this was too good an opportunity to miss, as there had been nothing here before under 675/-, so after hearing it, I fell. I was getting starved of music, not having the music of your voice. It is a 5 valve superhet with band-spread tuning and I can get England, Radio SEAC, Singapore, Melbourne, Sydney (I heard the Test Match direct this morning), San Francisco and other U.S.A. stations, in fact all over the world. The B.B.C. is coming through at the moment as though I were within 50 miles of the transmitter.

"Tomorrow week (21st) starts the circus to MIT Bridge. I go with the Vipers (Very Important Persons) otherwise known as the Guests' Special. We get to Kyaukse at 18.00 on Sun. 22nd and stable till 6.30 on Mon. to let H.E. catch up as he is going to Meiktila on the way. He goes ahead from Paleik Junction to the Bridge where there will be speeches by C.R.C. and H.E. Then I go with him on the engine to instruct him in driving the engine through the red tape on to MIT. Then everyone goes round the Works and sits down to a Burmese Brunch. H.E. goes by car to Maymyo and we get back to RN on Christmas Eve.

"Do forgive me for getting the radio. It is a great joy and should have a sales value later."

No.30 of Dec. 16th '46

"I do love getting your letters. It's the only thing that makes living apart from you at all bearable.

"I'm awfully sorry for you with all the awful weather you're having. For several days now the radio has been full of FOG, FOG, FOG, every one wanting F.F.D.O.F.G.S. (Fog for the disposal of, for God's sake). The commentator at a footer match on Sat. couldn't see the ball and later couldn't talk for fog in the throat. Then this evening's news says snow in Kent and much colder and cuts in electricity. I do hope you are managing to keep warm.

"I hope you and the Bits got my Christmas Air Letters in time to have my Good Wishes for Christmas."

No.31 Dec. 20th 1946

" After all the bundobusts and arrangements H.E. is not going to go up to open MIT bridge after all. His Military and Police advisers have said "No". It is true that Shwemyo station (247 miles from RN, 130 miles from MIT. KP) has been sacked by 200 dacoits and the Asst. Station Master very brutally murdered after he had killed 12 dacoits, that Pyokkwe station has been burnt to the ground, and Simbygyum in between, we can't get any staff to stop at, so we have to run through on line clear from Kyidaunggan to Sinthe and heaven knows how long we shall keep staff there. We may be running Pyinmana to Tatkon as one section. Only Wakefords and the Board are going up from here and Dennis Phelps, Commissioner, MDY is to do the opening. Flop, Anti-climax.

"We shall have quite a few days with Office closed in which I hope to see the bottom of my baskets."

No.32 Dec. 20th 1946

"Well! If Nan would like to come out again, let her. So if you can settle Dennis come right along do. Rangoon is not what it was and all that, but I'll be mighty glad to have the three of you. If Nan could practise up her shorthand I think she'd be certain of a reasonably good paid job, 250/- a month at least.

"Dost Mahd. sends salaams and thanks you for your enquiries about his latest infant and "When is memsahib coming out?" Ah! When?

"Surely I told you about the box of stores you sent for me from Simla? We've just finished the last tin of jam. There is still one tin of cheese and 2 pots of Marmite left. The tea, I'm afraid was mouldy. I used it for a few days while I was alone, but when I got a lodger I had to discard it. It wasn't very pleasant. I've got one packet left. Is there any thing one can do to make it usable? "All the best of Good Wishes for the New Year and a Happy Re-union. Very many Happy Returns of the 2nd in case you don't receive the next letter before then."

No.33 Boxing Day 1946

"Tuesday the Office was officially closed on account of Karen New Year, but I was in as I wanted to see the bottoms of my baskets. Christmas Day I was sailing again. Afternoon I spend grinding up various tools. Evening I was on the Lake again, solo. Home, a very ordinary dinner, listened to the B.B.C. which was coming through particularly well, including the King's speech, and bed by 22.30. I'm just looking forward to the day when you and Nan and Lyn arrive.

No.34 Dec. 27th 1946

"I forgot to tell you in No.33 that on Monday I had dinner with Alan Gledhill. He told me that when on leave he met two people who knew us, Alex and Alys Wood who asked to be remembered to us. Alan's brother is their rector. Then today I got a letter from Alys saying that they had met Alan. She thinks her reply to your letter of January may have crossed you coming home. Funny her letter coming four days after I'd heard about them from Alan. "On New Year's Eve there is a colossal party at the Wakefords, given by 8 Burra Sahibs, each asking 12 guests. There will be a band, dancing in the hall and drawing room, small eats buffet in the dining room and drinks in the hamiana on the lawn. It looks like being one Helluva night. Luckily Jan 1st the office is closed.

If Nan feels like you about coming out to Burma she'd better had. You'd better ask for a passage for her. Don't write to the India Office. Write to the High Commissioner, India House, Aldwych, WC2. There are very few boats coming soon I'm afraid and of course you must have a direct ship to Rangoon."

End of Chapter 25

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

No.35 Kathleen's Birthday

"Sun. 29th 11.00 to station to conduct Sir Gilbert Laithwaite round and show him how the public have to travel. Evening sailing.

"Mon. 30th Walked out with John Wakeford to Bridge 3 between RN and Pazundaung. On the way I stepped wrong on a bit of brick, and fell, and sat on my left thumb. Underneath the thumb was a pile of broken bricks. It split my thumb and it poured out between the flesh and the nail. I went to Jimmy and had it dressed. It didn't feel bad and in the evening I went sailing solo. Tues. 31st My thumb was very swollen and Jimmy Davidson gave me a shot of anti-tetanus.

"After lunch Billie and Kath Edwards and Ken Burden came round to enlist me as Father Time for brining in the New Year at the party at Wakefords. I had to make a scythe, an hour-glass, and a coronet and learn the script. We had a rehearsal at Edwards and then another at Wakefords. The "lusty babe, the next New Year" was my lodger Buckley who is about as hefty as one can find. He looked priceless in a little short shirt and little else. The party was a wow and totalled 169 people. Owing to my anti-tet I did the evening on lime squash. It was as well as my upper arm had swelled up considerably, although I felt all right. I was in bed by 1.50 on 1st. The illuminations were wonderful. Claudius had spread himself.

"Wed. Jan. 1st Morning sailing. I still felt all right although the swelling on my arm had gone down to the elbow. After lunch, however, a headache started and then we got news that the Pay Train had been attacked between Wanetchaung and Pugyi, derailed, all the pay stolen and the Ticket Inspector, Permanent Way Inspector and Pay Clerk taken away as hostages. So most of the rest of the day I spent on the Control phone in Mission Road station getting news and giving orders. By dinner time I was exhausted and my head was suffering atomic disintegration I had a cup of Marmite and went to bed.

"Today I'm better. The swelling has moved down to the forearm, the thumb is exuding a little puss (sic!). Jimmy squeezed it this morning. Not nice. I've fomented it again this evening and a little more puss has come out, but I think it's better.

"Interruption for dinner and servants' pay. Bombshell. The cook will cook tomorrow and then go. He can't do on Rs 80/-! Well, he's not a particularly good cook, only if we don't get another I don't know what we shall do.

"I'm sorry to have written so many woes in this letter, but I suppose I'm feeling just damned lonely and cook giving notice has just put the lid on it."

No.36 of 3.1.47

"My No.35 of your birthday was rather a chronicle of woes; my thumb and the cook leaving, so I must hasten to correct an impression that we are too downhearted. i) My thumb is a good deal better. No puss out of it this evening and very little this morning and I can waggle the end joint today. ii) The effect of the anti-tet shot seems to have worn off. iii) The cook has left, but on asking what we were going to do for tomorrow, Buckley's bearer said, 'I can make a bundobust'. So we shall see what we shall see.

"This morning I went out with Kyi Win and two Army Officers to Kanbe to see about a siding to the Engineer Supply Depot (ESD). On the way we passed the old R.D.T. (Rangoon Development Trust. KP) Workshop where there are five of their old locos. Judge of my surprise when I saw amongst them the old A02, sister engine of A01 which still survives on No.1 platform RN. I had always understood that she had been scrapped many years before I got to Burma. I certainly never saw her working an R.D.T. train.

"Did I tell you that I got a genuine Thermos at Rowes (the Civil Supply Shop) for Rs 5/-?"

"Two more bits of line are being opened on Jan. 15th. The S.S.S. (Southern Shan States) line from Pyinyaung - Heho and the Mu Valley from Sagaing - Shwebo. We are literally making bricks without straw or train service without engines and coaches. However we've got over double the amount of line opened that was planned in Simla for Jan. 1947."

No.37 Jan. 5th 1947

"How sweet of you to take my extravagance on the radio so nicely. I'm sorry if I caused you any anxiety over making a 'confession' about it. What did you think might be coming? If I hadn't got it when I saw it I shouldn't have, as next day they had sold out all the 200 of them."

No.39

"No, I didn't go to the opening of the Myitnge Bridge. There was too much to do getting out all the altered arrangements. Only Wakeford and two of the Board went. H.E. was there to see it and MIT Works yesterday having flown up to Meiktila and special train from there ."

No.40 Sun. Jan. 12th 1947

"As regards OUR map of Burma, wouldn't it be possible to work in a thin line from the tree running round D.K.P. to R.V.L.P. in India thus:-

"Yesterday evening I was swimming at KoKine, my thumb now being better, only the nail looks a bit yellow. I was afraid I was going to lose it but fortunately not so.

"Did I tell you that I had a visit this week from Princess Ma Hlat (Mrs Bellamy) and her very charming daughter June Rose. Ma Hlat is just as charming and vivacious as ever,

although she has just recovered from a serious illness. She also asked to be remembered to you."

No.41 Fri. Jan.17th 1947

"I haven't written to you for several days (since Sun. to be exact) as I've been out on line. Mon. night I slept in the carriage in RN station as 7 Up leaves at 07.00hrs. The carriage was 20393 (formerly 393), one of the eight 36'6" ones I built and one with my bogies. It had been completely stripped inside, all the nice panels and everything removed. Then during the strike it was derailed at Peinzalok and was done up at MIT in time for MIT Bridge opening. The interior is definitely austerity, being grooved and tongued varnished, but the layout and equipment is substantially as designed, except zinc instead of English bath. However it is the best carriage we've got and far and away the best riding one. 7 Up and 8 Down really take the place of the pre-war 13 Up and 14 Down.

"I didn't see much of Prome as it only gets there at 18.20 and I returned to Letpadan on the back of the Amb Train at 23.00 I arrived Letpadan about 4.00 on Wed. morning and went on by 151 Up at 6.00 to Henzada. The Railway has 2 RCL's (?) for a ferry. The river was very pleasant with a cool north breeze. At Henzada Shore the river has cut in and cut our station in half. We shall have to make a retirement; at the moment it doesn't much matter, as the train is very short, there being no wagon ferry. Henzada has suffered very little and looks much like it did 26 years ago. Wali Mahomed's bazaar and cinema had a direct hit which also removed the Station Master's house.

"I got back across in the afternoon and had a look at the two wagon loading stages which are high and dry at Tharrawaw Shore. They expect to float one in about a week and the other 10 days later. They will go to Sagaing at first, where we must have a ferry for the next two years. (The Ava Bridge at Sagaing suffered severe damage during the war - K.P.) I got back to Letpadan by 154 Down and into RN by 3.00hrs yesterday morning. No transport to meet me as there were no drivers, all having joined a "National Day" procession, so I stopped 300 Down at Mission Rd Station and got all my stuff out.

"There was no work throughout RN except on the Railway yesterday. What a country! Really it makes one feel often that one doesn't feel like doing another thing for them. Let them stew and let's go home. Govt. have failed to govern: unofficial "armies" march about as they like, stop buses and make all occupants pay up and all Govt. does is to evacuate British troops."

No.42 Sun. 19.1.47

"Before I forget, Dr Tin Maung is at Henzada and asked to be specially remembered to you. He said you were so kind to him in Myitnge and did such good work at the Infant Welfare Clinic.

"All the same, it is as well, I think, that you are not out here this month as a spot of trouble is expected before the end of the month while the delegates are in London. There are

almost daily processions, either on foot or in buses, shouting slogans and all that sort of thing. The Police, of course, who are now nearly all Burmans, can't be depended on, and they've sent most of the Army away, so what? If there is trouble I think it will probably come this month and I hope by the time you can get a passage something or other may be settled. Tonight's Radio News Reel was all about Burma, Maurice Collins and George Appleton both speaking. Some of it correct, some not."

No.43 Tues. Jan.21 1947

"I loved your little joke on the 'matter' and the picture of the 'puss' being squeezed out of my thumb. It seems to have cleared up without any other ill effects.

"I see you have written to Hicomind, but I suspect you won't have a chance of a boat for a bit and for some reasons I'm not sorry. It will be as well for you not to be out here till things get a bit more settled. If we get through this month without a big flare up, it may be all right. The Communists are doing their best to make a real good row while the delegates are in London. While Aung San's away the Communists play. Yesterday and today there have been rows at the Secretariat. Yesterday the Police and troops turned hoses on them but today they used lathis and laid 'em out in tens and dispatched them to the General Hospital. How far the thing will go is of course speculation, but the Burman loves riding round in buses waving flags and shouting slogans.

"Just to make a little extra work we are running out of coal. On Fri. Letpadan will have 8 days' supply, Rangoon 4, Malagon 4«, Toungoo 7, Thazi 10, Mandalay 12, so I've been up to the eyes getting out a curtailed time table, which I hope will make our stocks last to the end of the month. A coal ship is due Feb. 1st, but we may get 2000 tons from a ship due tomorrow, always supposing there's no interference with labour for handling. Really it does seem as though every possible snag is being placed in the way of our getting things back to normal.

"The news has just announced widespread fog in England, London having a 'pea-souper'. On Saturday black clouds rolled up and it poured with rain. In fact we've been saying, 'Have the rains broken or is this the chota barsat?'"

No.44 Fri. Jan.24th '47

"This week had its quota of "things", curtailment of Train services due to shortage of coal (RN today has 3« days' supply), Communists trying to get into the Secretariat; yesterday Indians had a beano to celebrate Subras Chandia Bose's 54 birthday (they refuse to believe he is dead); any number of lorries full of people careering about the town with red flags with white star (AFPFIL), red with hammer and sickle (Communists) and red, white and green (Indian Congress). Today the curtailed train service came into force."

"Apparently you are having fun and games too, the radio has just said that in Kent, Surrey and Sussex frost succeeding wet has made the roads dangerous for motorists. It does seem a dreadful time to be apart, doesn't it? And one can't see the end of it either. I hope to

goodness someone will get something settled in this blighted country before long. If they want us to clear out, that'll be that, but if we are to stay, I wish to Heaven they'd settle down.

The radio is a boon. It makes me realize that there is another world other than this crazy one here, where coal coolies, who are already getting Rs 4/- per day, are threatening not to discharge another ship unless they get Rs 5/- per day."

No.45 Sun. Jan. 26th

"It's not really hard on me that Michael (Hadfield) will become Chief Mechanical Engineer. I should have retired in February anyway, and it is only because they wanted me as Chief Operating Superintendent that the Board sanctioned 2 years extension. I should not have got an extension if I had remained in the Mech. Dept. Of course when the Burma Govt. gets full power they may tell me to go anyway when I'm 55.

"Yesterday and today (and tomorrow and Thursday) I've been sitting with the Public Services Commission to select candidates for Probationary Asst. Operating Supt. We've 56 to vet. So far we've seen 32 and there are two I feel I could do something with. One candidate said that when he became a Railway Officer he would "tell the Railway Board where they ought to construct new lines for the benefit of the poor public"! Beat that.

"Here things are in a mess. About 13,000 people on strike. Burmese marching about in uniforms and shouting, all getting worked up. We are rather anxiously awaiting today's statement in the Commons on Burma, as on it will depend whether there will be real Trouble with a capital T.

"Last Sunday week Ken Burden was out for a walk and got caught up in a procession, who surrounded him shouting, 'We don't want Thakin Ba Sein' (one of the deputation to London). Ken with great presence of mind said, 'Well, I don't want him either', whereupon they all cheered him! Incidentally we hear that U Saw and Thakin Ba Sein are 'extending their stay in England'. Very diplomatic no doubt .

"P.S. Have just heard the result of the London talks. I hope Aung San will be able to convince his followers that it's O.K."

No.47 Fri. Jan.31st 1947

"I've just finished my sittings on the P.S.C. It would be very amusing if it were not so pitiable that all these B.A.'s, B.Sc's and B.L.'s know so little of their own country and surroundings. My boys in Standard VI at Myitnge could have answered our General Knowledge questions far better than 50 out of these 56 graduates."56 "One, asked what was the chief freight traffic carried by the Burma Rlys. said, 'Rubies and tin!' Another, asked what junctions there were on the Railway, did not know what junction meant, so was asked what the principal towns on the Railway between Rangoon and Mandalay were, said,

`Prome, Myingyan and Sagaing'!"57 "Only about 5 knew what it was that kept Railway vehicles on the rails ."

End of Chapter 26

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

"At the moment the general feeling seems to be disappointment that the London talks have ended so satisfactorily. It has taken the wind completely out of their sails. They were getting all worked up for a really good row and now they've got to think of something else to make the row about. Even this week's strike was not by any means been universal and Rlys. were not affected. We are even getting our colliers discharged and will soon have as much as 10 days' supply of coal!

"Still it's just as well that you were out of all this mess at present. I hope that by the time you can get a passage things will be more settled. You know that I would not have you apart from me another minute, nay second, longer than necessary, but things have looked very ugly more than once and it is well that you've not had that anxiety."

No.48 Mon. Feb.3rd 1947

"Please thank Nan for her letter. It's very good of her to write so often for I'm not very good at replying to my children. I hope they will take into consideration that I spend most of my time in writing either with pen pencil or blue pencil.

"Well Aung San is back and has so far only said that they've done the best they can and hope the Burmans will accept the settlement. That, they don't yet seem like doing, so strikes continue today and coal coolies stopped work, so though there are two coal ships in port we can't get the coal. RN has 4 days' supply, Letpadan 3."

No.49 Fri. Feb.7th 1947

"News item: I went today to Jimmy to be vetted for extension of service: sound in wind and limb. Blood pressure 132, urine excellent, vision and colour vision A1. Comforting to know, isn't it?

"Dick Coward is doing very well. He backs up well and appears to bear no malice that I've been brought in over him. He's very amusing and it's wonderful what one can learn of 'private lives'.

"Aung San & Co arrived back last Sunday, but the strike engineered by the Communists went on. We got a small consignment of 2000 tons of coal unloaded but there are 2 other ships in with 7000 tons for us and we can't get at it. Last evening Aung San addressed crowds from the City Hall. It was quite a sensible speech. He said they've got practically all they wanted and asked them to back him up and in 12 months Burma could be independent, but they must get back to work and make up for lost time. What a hope! Those who 2 or 3 weeks ago were saying 'We don't want Thakin Ba Sein' are now shouting 'We don't want Aung San'. They now accuse Aung San of having been got at by the British. What a country. If the coal ships are not working by 9.00hrs tomorrow I have a press notice prepared stopping book of all traffic but one passenger train a day on each main

line, Branch lines having a train every other day only. I'm afraid the situation has got beyond Mr Aung San. He as good as told Wakeford so mid-day today.

"On Wed. morning we took the Rly Board out to Insein to see what the Works are doing. My BIF 20393 with my bogies was used, attached to a local. For the return journey a new Garratt GD866 {a War Standard Light Garratt} was used (an elephant to draw a mouse). I drove her and took Robert Bruce on the footplate. I think he was very impressed as I handled the 136 tons of locomotive. It was the first time I've had one of these huge 4-8-2+2-8-4's under me. I should have liked a big load behind her, as the chief trouble was to keep the speed down. But she ran very sweetly.

"8th P.S. No work on the coal ships yet. So all Goods stopped and drastic cuts in trains from Mon.10th. What a life!"

No.50 Sun. Feb.9th 1947

"Well Saturday came and went and no sign of any coal coolies going back to work, (the Indians want to but are terrified of the Burmans) so I had to spend the day getting out a still more drastic cut in train services. Only one train each way of any sort between {Rangoon and} Prome and {Rangoon and} Mandalay, only 1 local rake to do a morning and evening to Insein and Togyauungale. We may be able to keep running 3 or 4 days like that. There are hopes that on Tuesday the Army may be able to assist with a company of Pioneers. If that is so we might get some coal into the nearest Sheds on Thurs and might just hang out, but that's all. I should like to get a few months straightforward work, instead of the eternal b--ing about that it's been ever since I've been back. I've seen the bottom of my baskets twice since I started, once in the Rly strike last Sept., once just after the Christmas holidays.

"Let's stop this. John Wakeford told me today that there are four or five ships coming out in March! So pump India House again."

No.51 Tues. Feb.11th 1947

"What richness! Your a/m 39 of 31/1 arrived yesterday and today came your a/l 40 of 3/2. Judy Wakeford came into my office today after I'd got your letter and she asked me if my news was good. I suppose I must have sounded happy, because she said, `I do envy you people who are in love'!

"Things are still very uncertain in Burma. U Saw has arrived back and announced that he is ready to lead any party in opposition to Aung San. Typically Burmese of course; never mind what the policy of the party is so long as it is in opposition. Who said Burma was the Ireland of the East? I think Aung San realises that he has sown the wind and is reaping the whirlwind. He rushed up-country, I think to get the adherence of the Shan States, but in the meantime the Communists have been getting more and more people out on strike. When Aung San gets back I think he'll find his work cut out. The Labour Govt. at Home of course have no realisation of the volatility of Burmese Politics The delegates in London may have

signed an agreement, but whether they'll ever get the hotheads out here to implement it is quite another matter.

"I had not seen the divorce case you mention. But if the use of an F.L. {condom} with a wife is not marriage presumably its use with someone other woman is not adultery, and if thus the marriage is not consummated, is the woman still a virgin? It's marvellous!

"C- B- is back. Nice chap, but poor quality grey fluff."

No.52 Fri. Feb.14th 1947

"Your No.41 with Birthday wishes arrived this very morning and so did one from Monica. Yours was the more remarkable as it only took 7 days, whereas most lately have taken 10 days. How I should like to see Lyn in her early walking efforts. I'm glad the inmates think her walking is a personal triumph for them. It doesn't do us any harm, and if they are pleased !

"Things don't look too rosy here. We are getting a trickle of coal as Japs are working one of the ships and we may be able to keep one train a day going for a bit. But the general situation gets worse. They've intimidated all the clerks in commercial firms and the Banks have had to shut. Aung San, I'm afraid has not proved himself the strong man he would have like to have made out. I'm afraid if he's not careful he will be repudiated and then where will the Burma-British agreement be?

"They threaten a complete stoppage including the Railways on Monday. I wouldn't mind that so much seeing we have so little coal, but it always means looting and damage to our very scanty coach stock and brass fittings off locomotives, damage to stations and all that. If they don't get back to work the 'Pegu' and half-a-dozen other ships with hundreds of tons of much needed stores will leave port and discharge at Colombo, Singapore or Madras, and then we'll have had it!"

No.53 Sat. 15.2.47

" I'm sending various stamps for Dennis, three very good specimens of the Burma 1« anna Victory issue.

"Sunday morning Feb 16th. An awful shock just now. Before breakfast I was listening to the B.B.C. news at 7.30 and heard that 3 people were killed in a head-on collision between a bus and a lorry, among them being Mr A H A Andrews, Headmaster at Felsted. I am sorry. I liked him and felt that Dennis would do well in a school under his guidance.

"I hope I shall be able to get this letter posted. There is a threat that the strikes will become general tomorrow.

"19.30 Just had a bath after returning from the Sailing Club. I arrived too late to take part in the race and all boats were out so I didn't get a sail. Pity as there was a lovely breeze. I've written separately to Nan, enclosed in this, so here's love to the other 3. P.S. Trains are still running this morning so the general strike has not started yet."

No.54 Mon. Feb.17th 47

That's just what happened to my heart when I read your cable. It went up, and turned over completely and came down blomp! It is difficult to make out if your cable was sent on 13th or 14th. It arrived at 12.45 today. I consulted John Wakeford and he said, 'If anything serious is going to happen it will be in the next week or so, so there would be plenty of time to cancel it'. So I have cabled you after lunch, 'Yes, accept, Love, Val' If you leave mid-March you won't arrive before mid-April and by then the elections should be over and we hope whoever gets in will take a strong line. The only insect in the pomade is, what are you going to do about Dennis and will you be able to get something settled for him in the time? I've got to go to a meeting tonight to settle refreshments after the installation meeting on 27th and how I'm going to talk sense when my heart's been jumping up and turning somersaults all afternoon I don't know.

"Actually, in cabling you to accept I have not been guided entirely by my heart though you might think so from this effusion, but I have asked a number of people including Burmans, because I was afraid of my heart ruling my judgment. Whether they are all incurable optimists I wouldn't know, but this afternoon old U Ba Pe, Commerce Minister, told Hamilton that the strikes will be called off tomorrow. That we shall see when tomorrow comes.

"April is not the ideal month for you to arrive, but these days if you are to come out at all you've got to take advantage of what boat you can. This cable of yours has made me all ooshy at the thought of seeing you again earlier than I expected really, and our Nan and the little Lyn poppet. It won't of course be the Rangoon you used to know. You can't just go and buy stuff for dresses as and when you like, in fact there's precious little shopping to be done (This sounds like Val passing on someone else's advice. I've never been one of the memsahibs who made a habit of daily bazaar hunting. He knew I'd been happy at YwaTaung and Myitnge where there were no shops or bazaars - K.P.) but there's no reason why we shouldn't swim twice a week, say in the long day and go to the Sailing Club on Sundays ."

No.53 Fr. Feb.21st 1947

"Hoo! Bloomin' Ray! Your No.42 arrived this morning with Daph's photo. Very many thanks for both. It is a very good one of Daph and she looks very nice and very distinguished, although people who've seen it say she looks like me!

" Well, the AFPFL strike has ended, i.e. the Docks, BOC, BTB, RET, etc are back at work but the Communist strike of the Commercial firms, Banks, etc continues and yesterday they

brought out the Supplies Dept. However we are now getting our coal out and we hope that ships with our much-needed stores will not now leave the port unloaded.

"Tin Tut the other day told Wakeford that he was so fed up with his countrymen that he seriously thought of chucking it and leaving Burma for good. The Dobama Party have announced that they will boycott the elections which are to be on April 9th. Anyway, with a spot more coal I have restored local services and started a daily up-goods, mostly coal and essential supplies. It is rumoured that the Banks may re-open on Monday after 10 days stop.

"Today 5 Burmans on 2 Down attacked a chettiar in the train. The Military and Police guards on the train shot one and captured another. The other three escaped when the train slowed down for a caution. I've just been up to the Broadcasting studio and given in a communiqué which was broadcast at 20.15.

" I do hope you've been able to make arrangements about Dennis. Will Daph be able to stay on at T.Wells? I'm all agog to hear what ship you have been offered passages on. I shall not get really excited till I hear you are on the way and then I'll have to get busy with the furniture people. I had a letter from Daph dated 9th by this mail. Only 1/- stamp but it got here by air.

No.56 Sun. Feb.23rd 1947

"I had meant to write today to Nan, Daph and Dennis today as well as you, but I was wakened about 4.00 by the phone. 2 Down had been derailed and capsized between Hnggethaik and Nyaunglun. From that time until 17.00hrs I've not been half an hour off the phone, even while I was lunching at Wakefords. To shorten a long story, engine and 21 vehicles capsized, all engine crew killed and 7 passengers, 10 passengers injured. Cause - 72 feet of track removed. 2 Down, due to the coal shortage was running as a mixed train and 7 vehicles put out of action were bogie petrol tanks. That's 7 out of 25 gone west, just when the B.O.C. want more tanks.

"We've just started to get some coal in and I had started a daily goods train and then this happens. It is discouraging, but dammit, we won't give in .

"Poor darlings, still the radio is reporting more and more frost and cold in England and ice floes in the North Sea. I don't ever remember hearing of that before. I do hope it will let up soon and let you know what it feels like to be warm again."

No.57 Tues. Feb. 25th 1947

"Thank you for your No.43 of my Birthday telling me of the passage offer. I guess you are all of a hoo-hah. I think something will blow up here either this week or next. The dock labour etc. has gone back to work, but the clerks in Commercial houses and Banks are still out. We are all right for money in the Railway, but if the Banks don't open by the end of the month whole lots of people are going to be in queer street for money. Last night the

Rangoon news said that Govt. were going to take drastic steps to end the series of strikes in RN. It didn't say what they were and there was no sign of them being put into force today. There were still processions of strikers going round and round. As a result of 2 Down derailment Wakeford decided to abandon between Prome and Mandalay {i.e. between Rangoon and each of these towns}. It was as well, because Toungoo drivers just refused to take trains on at night but that meant more work for poor old C.O.P.S. and his Deputy. However, another temporary timetable is out and in operation, as long as we have coal. The ships are discharging but we never know how long the labour will stick at it. Doesn't sound very inviting to ask you to come out to, but I trust it will die down after the elections are over.

"I wonder what you'll be able to do about Dennis. I do hope it will be somewhere where he can be happy and have something he can do during the holidays. And will Daphne be able to stay where she is for the holidays.

"If any of those ex-RAF watches are still about would you bring one out for me. I'm afraid my Rolex is now so corroded it will go but I can't wind it! Also one Dunlop or Schrader tyre pressure gauge would be much appreciated. None in the country."

The foregoing are verbatim extracts from Val's letters, extracts which give some idea of conditions in post-war Burma. His letters also contained many references to the family, whom he missed very much, and accounts of sailing at the Sailing Club, swimming at Kokine and Masonic affairs.

End of Chapter 27

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

Meanwhile, in Hawkhurst, we seemed to be living in a sort of limbo: food rationing, clothes rationing, power cuts, snow and frost. Looking back on this time, I seem to have been continually facing situations where decisions had to be made, and not knowing where to get the information on which to base decisions. Hawkhurst was a pleasant enough place in which to live, but hardly the centre of the universe, and transport was difficult. Having a year-old baby to cope with didn't make things easier.

Eventually, we decided to apply for a passage to Rangoon for Nancie, as it seemed probable that she might be able to get a job there, the sort of job she might have applied for if we were still in England. Daphne was at the School of Art in Tunbridge Wells, living with a doctor's family and during term time Dennis was at Felsted. But what about the holidays?

Lyn was finding her feet meanwhile, and the elderly guests at Collingwood House were boasting as to which of them had seen her take her first steps. As Val said when he first arrived there, we had brought the average age down with a bump. One incident we kept to ourselves. We were leaving the dining room when we heard Lyn crying, and I set off to bring her in from her pram, but I was detained by one of the house staff about something, so Nancie and Daphne went to collect her. When I did get outside they said, "Guess where we found her?" I couldn't imagine what they meant, for we had left her in her pram in the walled kitchen garden, but they'd found her on the snowy icy ground, 25 or 30 feet away from the pram. How she had got out of the pram without hurting herself we never found out, but she had apparently crawled out of the kitchen garden and was by a tool shed. Fortunately her hands were completely covered, for I had let down the hem on the ends of the sleeves of her cloth coat and sewn them up, while her feet were protected by little chamois leather slippers I had made. I don't think she can have been out of her pram much longer than the time it took her to cover the distance, or she would have been much dirtier than she actually was. Though she was crying, I don't think she was as scared as we were⁵⁸.

After Val left, we all moved to the Annexe, converted stable buildings and not very warm. Nowhere was warm then but the Annexe was damp as well as cold. The room Lyn and I shared to start with had three outside walls and the inside of the walls felt wet to the touch. We were able later to move into another room.

Val's letters told of rail services having to be curtailed for lack of coal and conditions were similar in England. What with the arctic weather and power cuts, trains and ships loaded with coal were unable to move; Austins and Cadburys had to shut down because of lack of fuel. According to Val's letter No.53, on Sunday morning 16th February, he was listening to B.B.C. news at 7.30 a.m. and heard of A H Andrews (Dennis's headmaster) death. My diary for the same day says, "The Sunday Times was late, and when reading it at lunch had an awful shock for A.H.Andrew died on Saturday night as the result of a car accident." In other words, Val heard the news at 1 a.m. G.M.T. and I didn't read of it till twelve hours later.

My diary for the 13th February records an iron-hard frost and dull black sky. "There was a hint of sunshine a few days ago, but the last time we really saw the sun was on Monday 27th January." The next day was Val's birthday. I went up to the Top to do shopping and debated whether to send him a birthday wire and finally decided to do so⁵⁹. " had only just got back to the Annexe when Rhoda (the maid) came to say there was an important message for me on the phone - a wire from Hicomind offering me passages for the middle of March. Was I in a flap! I couldn't make up my mind what to do, but after lunch sent off more telegrams, another to Val asking whether I should accept, and one to Hicomind accepting."

From then on we were on the go the whole time, so much to do and arrange. Nowadays (1978) telegrams are of little use except as a form of protest to the Prime Minister or one's M.P., or, with due notice, to be delivered on an elaborate form as a congratulatory message for a wedding or birthday. But in 1947, in spite of post-war difficulties, they still performed a useful function in an emergency. My diary for 25th February records a day of alarms and excursions. Nancie and I went to the doctor and had our T.A.B. injections, after which I sent off an express wire to Capt. de Briesay making a date to go to Aldeburgh on the 27th, as this was one of the places I had heard about where Dennis might spend his holidays. Then a wire to Monica to ask if she could put me up - her role appears to have been that of the Fairy Godmother waiting in the wings to give a hand whenever we got stuck. This was followed by a phone call to a Mrs Ackers in Banstead for an appointment on the 26th, another possible holiday place for Dennis. Yet another wire that day, but in reverse one might say, for it was from Mother, offering to have him for the holidays. I rang her in the evening, and she said Margot had got it all worked out and they could manage. In view of this, and the fact that both Nancie and I were feeling the effects of our injections the next day, I spent most of the morning phoning and wiring, cancelling arrangements at Aldeburgh, Harrow and Banstead. Mrs Ackers sounded so nice that I felt I should like to meet her but I never had the chance. It was a marvellous relief to know that Dennis would be O.K. for the holidays, but there still seemed an incredible amount to do. I suppose this was partly because we were never really warm, and everything took longer than one expected; or maybe I am just not a good organiser⁶⁰.

My diary records " snow, snow and more snow. It seems the elements are against us. A train from Manchester to London took 21 hours ", and there were threats of gas cuts, certainly pressure was lowered. In spite of this we did manage to get about. Nancie went to Harrow for a day or two to give Monica a helping hand with her mother. Nancie came back full of wrath at the way Mrs P imposed on Monica. I made a trip up to Town, where I bought a trunk and an expanding suitcase for £2-12-0; the latter was a twin of a Marks & Spencer one we bought for 4s/11d in 1931. I also bought clothes for myself and Lyn; anyone who was in England then will know that that was quite a job, complicated by the difficulty of finding clothes suitable for the Rangoon climate in the middle of an English winter. I went to Bumpus's to buy a Bible or prayer book for Daphne, but it was almost impossible to see anything as there was a power-cut - the assistant was doing his best with a bull's-eye lantern!

We heard from Paddy Henderson that Glasgow was to be our port of embarkation. With the weather as it was, and traffic taking so long, I had my doubts about sending luggage in advance. On the other hand, travelling with all our heavy baggage and a small child was rather daunting. Alan Cobb, late of the Southern Railway, lived close by and he and Val had swapped many a railway yarn, so I asked his advice. Kind man that he was, he said that he would arrange a van to collect the baggage from Charing Cross and take it to Euston. So in due course we got our packing done, and the boxes either sewn up in canvas or corded, and I went to Roberstbridge, saw it weighed, and had to pay œ6-18-0 for excess weight⁶¹.

We were due to sail on 15th March. I asked Henderson's whether there would be reserved accommodation for travellers from Euston to Glasgow, but was told that there would not, as there were so few passengers from London. So I decided to leave Hawkhurst on the 12th, and booked accommodation for us at the Central Hotel in Glasgow. I felt that Henderson's might hold the ship for a party but were unlikely to do so for one family, and I should be happier to wait in Glasgow than miss the boat. Nancie, Lyn and I eventually managed to leave Hawkhurst, once again facing separations. It was particularly hard for Daphne and Dennis, for they were on their own, whereas we were going to join Val.

The journey to Glasgow was a fitting prelude to what became known as "Paddy Henderson's Mystery Cruise". The arrangements made by Alan Cobb for getting our baggage across London worked well. Dorothy Moody met us and gave us tea, and Monica saw us off on the night train from Euston to Glasgow. The train was packed, of course, as all trains were at that time. I have vague memories of having some sort of food with us, which included Shredded Wheat which we shared with our neighbours on the train. Certainly I had something for Lyn, then 16 months old.

When we woke, we looked out on a wintry landscape; when Nancie said, "Where do you think we are now, Mother?" I replied that I had a horrid idea that we were still in England. This proved to be true as we had not yet reached Preston. When we did get there, there was an immediate rush to the Refreshment Room. I had hold of my precious Thermos and was about to make the effort to get some hot water in it, when a permanent-way man came to my rescue. He said he was sure his mate in the signal box would have a kettle on the boil and he'd get it filled for me. And bless him, he did. Mentally, I've paid homage to that permanent-way man and the signaller when passing through Preston since but, in the re-modelling of the station, the signal box no longer exists. At the time when we arrived in Preston, we should have been in Glasgow for at least an hour, and we still had over 200 snow-covered miles to travel before we got there, including the climb over Shap Fell and many stops for frozen points. We had left Euston before midnight on Wednesday 12th March and did not arrive in Glasgow until 1 a.m. on Friday 14th March, over 24 hours - not a comfortable journey. How glad I was that I had booked a room at the Central Hotel, for it took us 10 hours to get to Carlisle.

It was after 1 a.m. when we eventually arrived in Glasgow, and some time later before we had coped with the luggage. Many of the passengers made straight for the hotel dining room, but Nancie and I were beyond wanting a meal and I wanted to get Lyn to bed. I asked at the Reception Desk whether it would be possible to have a cup of tea. "Oh, yes,

just ring for room-service", which I did as soon as we got to our room. A rather shocked little noise came from the other end of the phone, as though there was something slightly improper in such a request in the small hours of the morning. I hastened to say that we had just come off the London train, couldn't face a meal, and had a small child who needed to be put to bed; the very welcome tea arrived quickly with some biscuits. It was then 3 a.m., but we were all asleep in almost less time than it takes to tell.

We had a day in Glasgow before the 'Burma' was due to sail. We had no difficulty filling it, for we did not get up early and spent much of our time writing letters to our family and friends, letting them know we had arrived safely. We went for a walk in the sunshine along Sauchiehall Street. It was, in a way, slightly galling to find that there had been reserved accommodation on the train for 'Burma' passengers, in spite of what Henderson's had told me; this train had had a more normal journey than we had. However, we were there ready to embark and, whether we had been in Glasgow or Hawkhurst, we should have been paying for hotel accommodation.

As far as I can remember, we went aboard some time in the morning but did not sail until the evening, and there was some excitement wondering whether some passengers would arrive in time. When travelling with a child, it seemed an absolute law of nature that everything of interest, such as leaving or arriving at port, happened either at children's meal times, or when one was in the midst of giving a child a bath. So it was on this occasion. We left Glasgow at dusk and, as I was putting Lyn to bed, felt something of a bump; I thought, "Someone must have put his `left hand down' rather more than a bit", but didn't know what had happened. Next morning, when I went up on deck, to my astonishment I saw we were sailing straight into the rising sun. Nobody to whom I spoke, but Nancie, seemed to think this was odd, but we shouldn't have been sailing East until we were near Gibraltar - so where were we going? Later a notice was put up that we were putting in to Milford Haven for " technical adjustment ". Actually, we went to Swansea where, so we understood, concrete was put in our bows that had taken a knock as we left Glasgow. This was, as it were, the prelude to the Mystery Cruise.

When we left Burma in 1942, I don't think I thought I should ever go back there. I'd hated leaving by the "back door", and our journey home from Bombay in 'Drottningholm' had been something of a nightmare. But S S Burma felt so familiar that it was almost like coming home. Many of the passengers were, like me, going out to re-join their husbands and taking small children with them, but I was one up on them as I was taking a grown-up daughter with me as well. Ennis Bryant was on board with her daughter, much Nancie's age, but not with one of Lyn's age. Ennis went out to Burma for the first time in 'Gloucestershire', when I went out with Father and Mother in 1919.

We coaled at Gibraltar, we coaled at Port Said, we coaled at Aden and we coaled at Colombo. It was a long time since we'd had to suffer coaling, for most of the ships latterly had been oil-burners - a shade smelly, but nothing like as dirty and noisy as coaling. Inevitably, we went ashore, if for no other reason than to get away from the mess. We were able to take the pram ashore at Gibraltar which was a help, for though Lyn was walking, she was hardly up to the amount we did there.

If 'Drottningholm' had been a nightmare, 'Burma' was almost a dream; a familiar ship, congenial passengers, warmth and food, the like of which we hadn't seen for a long time. Coaling, as mentioned above, provided a dark contrast, but only for a limited time. Nancie played deck tennis and skittles, and was glad to have the companionship of young people again. Lyn' walking developed rapidly and she got her "sea legs" at the same time.

Looking back after all these years, it's difficult to separate one voyage from another. We went ashore at Port Said and, of course, went to Simon Arzt62, not, I think, because we really needed anything but because one always did go. Whether it was on this occasion I'm not sure, but a man peddling red roses held them to our noses and said, "Smell for nuffin". Smell was about the only thing one could get for nothing in Port Said, but not all of it was as pleasant as the roses.

Walking round the deck one evening with the Chief Officer, when we were in the Red Sea, I made some remark about its being good to see the Southern Cross again. "Oh, you can't see it from here," he said, "That's the False Cross." I didn't argue, after all, the navigating officer should know about stars. I did make a note in my diary that we were about on the same latitude as Upper Burma, and I knew I'd seen the Southern Cross from Myitnge. The following day, Number One came up and said, "Yes, that was the Southern Cross", which I thought was sporting of him - many a person would not have bothered.

I wasn't a 'young mum' but, being the mother of a young child, I was in the company of an attractive bunch of young women, and we helped each other look after the infants. Lavender Machlachlan, whose son Mike was a week or two younger than Lyn, is one I shall always remember. In the way one recalls inconsequential details, I remember the day when she said, "I've got a tin of Nescaf, - let's have a party!" It was the first time since the war that most of us had seen such a treat, so it really was a party.

One hot lazy Sunday morning, poor old 'Burma' came to a standstill, though not for very long; we never heard what caused the stoppage, but it was just another incident in an unusually leisurely voyage. We coaled again at Colombo - I expect we went ashore but, without referring to my diary, I can't be sure. What I do remember is that, when we were leaving port, we were in the dining saloon giving the children their mid-day meal, and someone said, "Next stop Rangoon", just as we were passing between the two lights at the harbour entrance; there was a general feeling that this was tempting Fate. We sailed on, dropped the pilot and then, not long after, I looked up and saw the blue and yellow striped flag letter G at the masthead - "I want a pilot", and realised that we had stopped once again. So back we went to Colombo again having, so we were told, "blown a gasket". However, we eventually reached Rangoon without further incident.

End of Chapter 28

PART SEVEN - ENVOI

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

It was a sad-looking water-front that we returned to, but I don't think most of us took in much of what we saw, being excited at the prospect of seeing our husbands, and occupied with looking after children, and coping with landing formalities. We'd been away from Burma for five years and so much was the same and so much different. One thing was the same - the Shwè Dagon pagoda, but there were many signs of war damage. Val met us, of course, and how happy we all were to be together again, though conscious of the absence of Daphne and Dennis.

It was a very odd feeling, driving up to 10A Ahlone Road, a house we had lived in 17 years earlier. Val had been living in it for some months with very basic furniture, which he had managed to get with some difficulty. It felt as a house used to feel when we were on transfer - some furniture, perhaps, had arrived, and one was waiting for the coolies to arrive with the rest of it. In view of all the damage that had been done in Rangoon, we were lucky to have a house that was in good condition and had lavatories that worked. Because of the housing shortage, and also to have a little extra cash, Val had had a couple of men lodging with him; before we arrived, one of them had been able to make other arrangements. The other, Steve whatever-his-name-was, was still there but remarkably unobtrusive.

Val's letters (Chapters 24-28 incl.) give a better idea of conditions than anything I can write, because he was out and about more and had more sources of information and rumour. What I think all of us felt was that there was a greater feeling of rapport between us and the Burmese than there had been before the war. This was rather odd because, however you look at it, we had run away and left them to the Japs. Perhaps we had learnt a little humility and tolerance, and perhaps they had decided that we were no worse than the Japanese. I am thinking in social terms. On the political side, there were many points of view and differences and opinions. The aim of the Government in Burma was to repair the war damage and to prepare for the handing over to the Burmese as soon as possible. Everything was in such a state of chaos that I was never able to understand exactly what was happening, so must confine myself to what I knew and saw personally.⁶³

Food was expensive, as was to be expected. For some reason that I cannot remember now, we had white American bread, the nearest approach to white foam plastic that it has been my misfortune to eat. Why we didn't get ata (local wholemeal flour) and make our own I don't know. Hens' eggs were hard to get but ducks' eggs were plentiful. Lyn had hens' eggs, but the rest of us had ducks' eggs all the time, with no ill effect. I have often read since, in this country, of the danger of eating ducks' eggs but, in spite of the anything but ideal conditions in and around Rangoon, we had no trouble.

As I mentioned earlier, Rogani, the widow of our cook, Balasundram, came to us as ayah for Lyn. She was very worried about her small son, who was in hospital. Looking back, I think he must have had polio. At the time, little was known about this and the poor little boy's body was encased in a plaster cast, and had been for seven months. Our cook cannot have been much of a personality, for I cannot recall any details about him. Our two Burmese lads, on the other hand, I can recall. Kyi Myint, the senior one, was a chatty likeable chap, not over-fond of work but prepared to do enough to get by, and much attached to Lyn. Maung Hlat was pleasant enough but was more in the background.

Our means of transport was a Jeep bought, presumably, from the Army. Some adaptation had been made to it to make it less expensive on petrol and, possibly, easier to drive. Occasionally I went into Rangoon with Val, and then drove to the shops through the war-damaged streets, and then home. It still astonishes me when I think of it.

The Sailing Club and Kokine Swimming Club were both in good order, having been used and well-maintained by the Japanese; the Clubs were a great blessing to us. When we had lived in Rangoon before the war, we had done no sailing for, in those days, people had owned their own boats; with the ever-present prospect of transfer, and our other commitments, we hadn't joined. Now, a pool was made of the boats available but I can't remember how they were shared or allotted. I had done no sailing before and couldn't be said to be a 'natural', not automatically reacting to the injunction to "fall away", but sailing was something that Val really enjoyed, as did Nancie. The Swimming Club was great for Lyn. She jumped and splashed with scores of other small children aged between one and five years old. When the water and air are warm, small children become water-babies very quickly.

Nancie soon became involved in the Theatre Club and, almost at once, was rehearsing as one of the four characters in 'On Approval'. Later, she was the bride in 'Quiet Wedding', a play that was produced under considerable difficulties, what with prospective bridegrooms being sent Home on leave in the middle of rehearsals, the curfew following the assassination of Aung San, and the general lack of co-ordination of affairs - but more of this later.

I have been reading my diary for 1947, in the hope that it will give me some idea of our life at the time, but it is of little help, being concerned with whether the dhobi had turned up, the sewing I had done - or not been able to do because the machine had rusted up overnight - and details of Lyn's daily welfare. She was not much over 15 months old when we arrived, so she took up a lot of my time; Val was thrilled to see how she developed. Apart from our sheer joy at being together again, it was something of a relief to Val not to have to cope with household affairs. The only time after we were married that he'd been on his own was when I was at Home in 1933. Then the household was wound up to go, as it were, with Abdul, cook, pani-wallah, etc. who carried on as usual in a normal atmosphere.

The atmosphere in post-war Burma was anything but normal. The country had suffered during the invasion by the Japanese and by the "scorched earth" tactics of the retreating British, followed by the activities of the RAF and, finally, by further destructions by the

retreating Japanese. The Burmese had been short of many things during the Japanese occupation but, as part of the "Britain can make it" campaign, manufactured goods were arriving in Rangoon, although ordinary household goods were expensive and rare. As can be seen by Val's letters, great efforts were being made to get the Railways functioning properly, the Burmah Oil Company was making good the damage that had been done, and the Rangoon Electric Tramways and Supply Company was coping with the electrical supply, but not the tramways.

After our rather circumscribed conditions in Hawkhurst, it was a pleasure to meet old friends and live a more social life than we had been able to lead there. Nancie got a job in the office of the Chief Engineer of the Burma Railways, so she and Val used to go off to work together. My day-time jaunts were mostly confined to visits within walking distance to the homes of "young mums" with children of about Lyn's age. In the evenings or at the weekend we went sailing or swimming.

It was on the 19th July that Aung San and four others were assassinated in the Council Chamber. As Norman Swan might say, I don't understand Burmese politics "in depth", so cannot fully explain Aung San's position. He had, as far as I can remember, been at the head of the Burmese Independence Army and, when the British had re-taken Burma, had become the spokesman for the Burmese, and had gone to London for talks about Independence. However, there were many factions, including Communists, whose sole idea seemed to be to stir up trouble. Just which faction was responsible for the killings I can't remember. Because of the general unrest, a curfew was imposed, originally from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., though the actual hours were varied from time to time. One of the minor effects of this was to make the production of 'Quiet Wedding' even more difficult than it had been. As mentioned earlier, a succession of "bridegrooms" had fallen by the way, either by being demobbed, sent Home on leave or, in one case, as a result of an accident and consequent concussion. In fact, it looked as though the play would never be produced. However, it was decided that it would be, if only matinees on Saturdays and Sundays. Nevertheless, produced it was, and Val and I were very proud of Nancie's performance.

To go back a bit - I see from my diary for 25th July that " Cook had brought two day's bazaar in readiness for Saturday's day of mourning. Steve (our lodger) came home early and had his lunch and was off before Nan and Val got back. At tea time he said that the Army had got the wind up properly and that the police stations were being barricaded. He also said that the Chamber of Commerce had rung up to say that tomorrow Europeans should stay away from public places of amusement. He seemed to think this showed that things were in an unpleasant state of affairs. It seems to us a matter of taste rather than danger."

I don't know whether my Burmese had become more fluent, or whether Kyi Myint's English had improved, but, according to my diary he said , " that there were a lot of people at the Club, including the Governor." I said, "Were they playing football?" "Oh no", he said, "it wasn't football. It was played with a ball like a duck's egg." He'd apparently never seen rugger before. More diary: "No more slaughter of beef after Monday - the cattle are

needed for cultivation." Later: "Kyi Myint seems to think there'll be a black market for beef all right. I guess he knows his own people. We'll manage without."

One day Val and I were guests at a Rotary Club lunch and there I met K.A.Naidu, Chief Permanent Way Inspector of the Burma Railways. He was on the trek with Cyril from MyitKyiNa, and said that Cyril quite definitely saved their lives, that he did the cutting down of the jungle so that they could see to follow each other, and so on. From what we had read in Cyril's diary, I can well believe that this is true.

In spite of the political unrest, the marches and demonstrations and the curfew, life went on much as usual, with no personal animosity shown to Europeans. Val was still struggling to get trains running. From time to time, trains ran at night between Rangoon and Mandalay, then trouble would flare up, and trains would travel in daylight hours only. He had told me in his letter No.47 of the efforts that were made to appoint probationary officers for training. By the time we arrived, four had been chosen and, in addition to their more formal training, Val had them into his office for general talk and discussion on a wide range of subjects, and railway matters in general, not merely their own departmental work. We used to refer to these as "Poppa's Pep Talks to Probationers". One of them, at least, was grateful, and wrote to me after Val died to say how carefully Val had trained them, and how much they appreciated it.

Before the war, engines for the Burma Railways were built in the United Kingdom, dismantled, packed in crates and re-erected at the Locomotive Works at Insein. After the war, the engines that Val had ordered when we were in Simla were sent out from Home already erected, shipped aboard "Heavy Lift Ships", and we went down to the wharf to see them offloaded and come ashore. Some of the engines, as far as I can remember, were types that were in use before the war, but some were built to his special specification, and he was very pleased with the results⁶⁴.

When Nancie, Lyn and I arrived, there were no curtains in the house so, when the chance came, we bought a sewing machine. Poor thing, it gave endless trouble, though it was a new one. If I hadn't been in Burma before, I might have blamed the climate, for the mechanism that held the bobbin rusted and, not unnaturally, the machine wouldn't work. So back it went to Singer's and, for a while, all would be well, and then the trouble would start again. I kept the machine in the same place that I had kept one when we lived in that house, all those years ago; we had spent many Rains in Rangoon and had had no trouble. We never did find the cause of the trouble but, when it was working, I made many curtains and sheets, not to mention dresses for Nancie, Lyn and me.

In addition, Rogani and I would sit on the verandah and cut up parachutes to make little shirts or vests for the Infant Welfare Centre. After all she had been through, it wasn't surprising that she wasn't strong. A visit to the Railway Chief Medical Officer showed that she was very anaemic and had to have liver and iron injections, and was told that she must have more rest. On one occasion when she was going by local train to see the doctor in Rangoon, I warned her that the trains were apt to be running early. The station was in a slight cutting at the bottom of the garden. I heard the train coming, picked up Lyn and ran

to the bank, held up my hand firmly to the guard, and wouldn't let him start till Rogani was on board. Even so, the train arrived before time in Rangoon. We engaged another ayah for Lyn, a pleasant enough woman, but not so much of a personality as Rogani, who used to come and see us frequently.

In October, we had a trip up-country that I had hardly dared to hope for. Val had a lot of inspecting to do, including the arrangements that were being made for the transport of goods and materials across the GokTeik Gorge. The GokTeik Viaduct was a wonderful piece of engineering and, in addition, was an interesting phenomenon, as it was built on a natural limestone arch connecting the two sides of the gorge. The viaduct itself was over 2000 feet long and the height of the tallest pier 320 feet; the height of the natural bridge at this point is 550 feet from the river level, where it disappears into a deep cavern, to re-appear a mile or so further on. The Japs had destroyed three of the piers on their retreat from Burma, so rails were run along the natural bridge, with winding engines at either end. These hauled the wagons up the steep slopes to connect with the main line, in much the same way that wagons had been handled on the river banks of the Irrawaddy at SaGaing and Amarapura.

There had been much discussion about whether Nancie, Lyn and I would be able to accompany Val but, to our joy, we found that it could be managed. We had an inspection coach, as in the old days, but fortunately a longer one, with the usual bathroom, kitchen and servants berths. Night running had been resumed, and we left Rangoon in the dark, turning out the lights so that we could see the rails disappearing in the distance. It all seemed so nostalgically familiar.

The next day we arrived at Myitnge. After leaving it as we had, it was hard to believe we were really there. In spite of all that happened, and all the damage that had been done, it still retained its air of peace. The bridge over the Myitnge River had been destroyed and, for a time, a temporary bridge had been erected and the line had been diverted to the east of "our" house, to rejoin the main line further north, just beyond the station. Now the bridge had been rebuilt and the line, in its old position to the west, re-opened. We went to the Works, where Arthur Johnson was in charge, and then went to tea with him in what used to be our house. Some of it had been damaged but had been repaired. The swimming bath was intact but empty, and there was a "Do" at the Railway Institute which completed the feeling of old times; so did the bird noises of the jo-birds (doves), golden orioles, 'ki-wick' owls (little owls) and nightjars.

The following day we were off to Mandalay, going through Amarapura, where there are very many ruined pagodas. In Rangoon, Lyn often sat in the back of the Jeep with Kyi Myint, and copied him when he made shiko to the paya (pagoda) by putting his hands, palms together, up to his face (as in the Indian namaste). She started to do this now saying, "Paya shiko" when she saw the pagodas, then, seeing the number of them, she gave up and said, "Mummy do". She wasn't quite two at the time.

Arriving in Mandalay would have been a sad business, except that it was so unlike the old place that we might have been arriving in somewhere quite unknown. I couldn't recognise

the road where we used to live, but the view up to the Shan Hills was beautiful; so were the views up the Ghats on the way to MayMyo. After leaving MayMyo, Val took Nancie and me, in turn, on the footplate of our Garratt engine - quite a thrill, as they are big powerful engines, built for steep grades and curves⁶⁵.

We stopped for the night at NaungHkio, which was then as far as trains could run. It was about thirty miles from MayMyo, about 3000 ft up, and in thick and apparently uninhabited jungle; in late October, definitely cold at night. In the small hours of the morning, Nancie had some sort of accident. We couldn't make out just what had happened, but we came to the conclusion that her narrow berth, on the level of the wooden venetian shutters, must have got very cold and, in turning over, she had dislocated her shoulder. We were in a quandary. There would be no doctor at NaungHkio and the next train to MayMyo wouldn't be for hours. So in the end, as Nancie (as much as any of us) wanted to see GokTeik, we decided to carry on with the original plan. A motor trolley was being sent for Val from GokTeik and, after making Nancie as comfortable as we could, we set off in the chill morning. When we arrived, Val asked the engineer in charge whether he knew of a doctor anywhere. To our great astonishment and relief, we heard that the wife of one of the staff was a doctor! She was petite, Indian or Anglo-Indian, and gently put Nancie's arm back, Nancie first having had a tot of Black Label whisky.

So Val went off to have a look at the "slides" and winding engines, while Nancie, Lyn and I had a look at the Viaduct. I don't know how Nancie did it, but somehow we scrambled down to the base of the nearest pier. I had been down to the bottom of the Gorge with my father and mother but, at the end of the Rains (as it was), that would have been impossible, even if Nancie had been fit and if Lyn had not been with us.

The next day we returned to Mandalay, where Val went off in a rail Jeep to Amarapura Shore, presumably to look at the working of the ferries there, installed again because the Ava Bridge had been war-damaged. He had arranged for a station wagon to take us to Amarapura itself, for I wanted to see the Chinese Joss House again and show it to Nancie. But it was another war victim and, in its place, there were a number of looms weaving the silk for which Amarapura had been famous.

MayMyo and GokTeik were in the Northern Shan States and the next day we left Mandalay at midnight, en route for ThaZi Junction and the Southern Shan States. Val and I stayed up to see the country through Myitnge till we got to PaLeik. We were at the end of a long unbraked goods train headed by a Garratt, driven by a driver whose name should have been Jehu, " for verily he driveth furiously ". I may be wrong about the train being unbraked, but I seem to remember that stopping was an uncomfortable process⁶⁶.

From ThaZi to KaLaw was always an interesting trip, climbing up the steep escarpment by means of four reversings and travelling through densely wooded hills, before opening out into the valley of KaLaw. Val and I had honeymooned there and, later, the family and I had spent some hot weathers there. A friend of Nancie's had arranged that a station wagon should meet us. It had been hoped that there would be time for us to go to InLe Lake and see the leg-rowers there. That wasn't possible, but we were able to go to the canal that leads

into the lake, where we saw some of the leg-rowers. Then up the steep climb to TaungGyi, the home of the SawBwa (or Prince) of the State, who was the President-elect of the Burma Republic-to-be. Back, then, to the carriage, which had gone on to HŠHo to be ready for us, and back to ThaZi, from whence we headed for Toungoo, where Dennis was born. I have a note in my diary that, at one station, Dost Mahomed and the cook did a frantic hunt round to get some vegetables, not what one expects in this country, for at most stations there were food stalls of various sorts. They hadn't managed to get any when I saw them but, at tiffin, they served up a marrow-like vegetable they had bought for themselves earlier. I fear my diary does not record whether we had all of it - I hope not. Toungoo had had a battering. The hospital, where Dennis was born, was no more, and a new house had been built where ours used to be.

End of Chapter 29

CHAPTER THIRTY

Before we went away, Kyi Myint's dog had behaved in a peculiar way, and then had died. Val took the dog's body to the Pasteur Institute to be examined and the verdict came back - "rabies". Fortunately, we had not been in contact with the dog, but Val took Kyi Myint to the Institute to have the injections. Waiting for us, when we got back, was a note from the Institute to say that Kyi Myint had not been for his injections while we were away⁶⁷. After this, we ensured that he went.

What I haven't mentioned about our trip was how sad it was to see the bombed bridges and battered engines lying by the line, a lot of it necessary damage by the RAF, but nonetheless sad for all that. Naturally, we all wanted this damage to be repaired and the country handed over in running order; virtually all the officers of the Burma Railways were prepared to stay on under the Burmese Government until this stage had been reached. It was something of a shock, therefore, when Val came home and said that we should all be out by January. Later, he heard that Government House had been asked to arrange passages for us in January. So that was that! As Val was already over the retiring age for B.R., and Daphne and Dennis really needed us at home, we felt the decision had been made for us

Later, the Burmese asked Val and many others to stay on as they realised they needed help, but we didn't then think that we could change our minds, although Val hated the idea of leaving things undone. This was in October but, in the middle of December, he was approached by Tun Thwin, and asked to stay on as Chief Mechanical Engineer. He came home quite exhausted, as Tun Thwin had been trying for an hour and a half to change his mind; in the circumstances, I think he was right to decline.

For some reason the wheels of narrative seem to be on dead centre, and disinclined to turn. Perhaps this is because Nancie and Norman were also in Rangoon at the time, and their impressions were probably more acute, and their memories more accurate than mine, which makes me even more distrustful of my ability to tell the tale. Nevertheless, having got as far as this, I must try to fill in the gaps and round-off the Powell, as distinct from the Swan, Burma saga.

We'd been in Rangoon for two months before we had a drive round the Royal Lakes, something that in times past had been a regular feature of life. But times had changed and so had the park-like banks and, in many places, the view of the lakes (always referred to in the plural though, in reality, only one) was obscured by the bashas built on the roadside. The Shwe Dagon on its hill, however, still provided a lovely spectacle in the sunset.

Considering how open our houses were, it is rather remarkable how rarely snakes came inside but, on one occasion Maung Hlat pinned down a small snake with the handle of a fly-swat. He'd found it behind the cushion on one of the easy chairs. I have no idea whether it was a poisonous one, but the idea of sitting on a chair and finding that one was sharing it with a snake was not a pleasant one. Maung Hlat was prepared to let it go. I wasn't.

One of the Burmese weddings we went to at this time was that of the sister of Mi Kaing and Sett Kaing. Sett Kaing was one of the first Burmese Officers on the Burma Railways, and Mi Mi Kaing was the author of "Burmese Family" written in English (of course!) during her time in India after the Japanese invasion of Burma. (It shames me when all I can say in Burmese is, "Yesterday the cook went to Mandalay and bought nine oranges.") Bride and bridegroom, as was customary, wore longyis - or rather, she a tamein and he a paso - of the same silk, either pink or apricot but, at this stage, I can't remember which. The tamein was like the old court dress, longer than a longyi and split at the side; the man's paso had a large amount of extra material in it which was gathered up in large folds at the front.

We nearly missed the second wedding, that of Tun Aung, one of Val's probationers, partly because we had a late start, and partly because it was at the Girl's School in Kemmendine, which should have been easy to find but wasn't. Finally, we kept a look-out for anyone wearing a wedding garment, and happened to see a Burmese couple appropriately attired; asking the way, we found that they were also headed the same way, so we followed them and were in time for tea!

1947 - The last few months in Burma

My diary is of singularly little help in giving a picture of those last few months, though there are events that stand out: Lyn's second birthday, Princess Elizabeth's wedding, our Silver Wedding Anniversary and Christmas. But most entries are taken up with trivial entries concerning household affairs, the late arrival of the dhobi, or the number of buttonholes I had to make before a certain dress was finished. One thing that becomes noticeable is the number of times Norman Swan's name appears. We listened to the radio broadcast of Princess Elizabeth's wedding, which came through very well, especially the part in the Abbey. As soon as that was over, we got ourselves dressed to go to a celebratory Cocktail Party at Government House where, not unnaturally, there was a terrific scrum and some very nice clothes. My diary tells me that we went in the Jeep so that we could get away at a reasonable time, as we were dining out. At this distance of time I can't remember the significance of this. If we had not gone by Jeep, how should we have gone? Should we have walked? I think that's unlikely, knowing how Val felt about walking, but we had no other vehicle, so why did I bother to record it?68

Two days later we had our Silver Wedding celebration, which started with a tremendous surprise. Nancie, in collaboration with Monica, Daphne and Dennis, had managed to organise a wonderful gift for us - the equivalent of the canteen of silver plate that Val's parents had given us as a wedding present, and which had been lost (with the exception of a knife, fork and spoon) with the rest of our belongings in 1942. And there they were - a dozen of everything in Mappin & Webb's best Mappin Plate, Old English pattern! What writing to and fro, and getting of permits had been involved I don't know, but I do know how much we appreciated the thought and the spoons and forks themselves. What a treat they were, after what we called the "Pennyweight Silver", which we had bought in the bazaar in Calcutta. (Whitaker's Almanac says that 1 pennyweight = 24 grains (or 1/20th of an ounce Troy), and a tablespoon from the kitchen drawer tells me that there were 5 dwts to a dozen tablespoons, so the silver was not very thick!) We had a party of about 30 people

in the evening, many of them being friends of pre-war days, but also friends made since our return to Burma.

Nancie had decided that, if she could get a suitable job, she would stay on in Burma after we went home. There were a number of reasons for this. I think that Burma held more attractions than post-war Britain. Val rang up from the office one morning and said, "Prepare for an important announcement" and handed the phone over to Nancie, and an excited voice said, "I've got it!" Studely, the Trade Commissioner (I think), had phoned to her as soon as he had got back from leave, to ask her how soon she could start work. She had been working in the Engineering Department of the Railways, but had been under-employed and was glad, I think, to have more work to do.

This was the time when the slogan was "Britain can make it", and we kept a look out for china and household things which we might be able to get, but were hard to get at Home. We didn't see much that we liked; a can,-projector which we bought was not exactly trouble-free, and the showing of home movies rather lived up to the popular idea of it. However, it was good to be able to see the films that Val had managed to bring out of Burma in 1942. We had Kyi Win and Yone Mo and their wives to dinner one night and showed them some of the films, which they enjoyed. There's a rather pathetic note in my diary - " it was nice having them to dinner and I only wish I'd asked them earlier."

On Christmas Eve, Rogani came to see us, looking very happy, as Chandra could now walk a little and she hoped his plaster would be removed next month. When sorting Monica's papers after her death in 1979, which takes us out of strict chronological order, I came across a wedding invitation which we had sent Home and which Monica had kept; it was to the wedding on Friday 1st February 1929, of our cook, V.M.Balasundaram Pillai, to Loganayakay - but we had always heard her name as Rogani69.

We took some movies of Lyn opening her Christmas presents, and one of them I always find interesting. One of the parcels contained a knitted gollywog and, as he emerged from his wrappings, she greeted him with a cry of recognition, "Gaga!" She had lost a Gaga when we came ashore from "Burma" in April, when she was one year and five months old, and it was now eight months later; I think it proved she actually remembered him. On Boxing Day we went to a party at the Wakeford's - he was Chief Railway Commissioner and lived next door - quite a party, with the garden floodlit, and dancing inside to the Burma Navy Band (none of the bandsmen either being in the Navy or Burmese, being either ex-Royal Navy or Karen!) The Governor and Lady Rance were there also.

We finished the year with passport photos, cholera inoculations and re-vaccinations, and trying-on of a winter coat that was being made for me and was horrible! I don't think I've mentioned that Val's mother died on the 13th October. I think she was 83, but I cannot find any record of her date of birth. She had been ill for some time and the strain on Monica must have been considerable, and we weren't there to help.

This has been in abeyance for eight months since April 1979, when I wrote that I was having difficulty about life in Rangoon. I was writing of small domestic details and was

unable to depict in any way the feeling we all had of the crisis Burma was living through. I have just finished reading "A Kind of Fighting" by Patrick Gruttwell, which is virtually the story of Aung San, thinly disguised. It conveys, in a way I should never be able to do, the atmosphere of the evacuation of Burma in 1942 and the return there in 1945/46, and finally the granting of Independence. My sympathy was very much with the Burmese. Maybe, according to our way of thinking, they were muddlers, but they wanted to do things in their own way, without other people's efficient interference. As something of a muddler myself, I'd hate someone else to organise me.

The last few weeks of 1947 had been punctuated with Lyn's birthday, Princess Elizabeth's wedding, our Silver Wedding and Christmas, but the really big day was to be early in 1948 - the 4th January. New Year's Day, my birthday on the 2nd January and then, on the 3rd, a sad day when all the Burma Railways officers "signed off". Those who would be staying on would be having new contracts, though they didn't even know what the terms would be. Val was very sad, for he had hoped to have seen his Simla plans brought to fruition, and I was sad on his account. If things had gone differently, and we had not been told originally that the British staff were not wanted, I think we might have stayed on, but Val was already on an extension; the family at Home needed us, so we left, but not without many happy memories. Val had been in Burma for over 26 years. No, that's not strictly true. It was over 26 years since he first went to Burma but, after the Evacuation in 1942, we were four years in India. Burma had played an even larger part in my life, seeing that I went there in 1905 and, though I was in England from 1908 until the end of 1919, I was still linked to Burma through my parents.

I forget what was deemed to be the propitious hour in the early morning of the 4th January, but Independence was ushered in with fireworks, hooters and sirens, to be followed by the official ceremonies at 6.30 a.m. at Government House, when the Union Jack was slowly lowered and the Union of Burma flag was run up briskly. Just how Kyi Myint and Maung Hlat celebrated their independence I don't know, but naturally they had the day off. It was strange to go to bed that night in a foreign country, though in familiar surroundings.

We were due to sail in S.S.Prome on the 16th, and every day was busy making final arrangements, saying good-bye to friends who were staying, dealing with Customs officials, making plans for Nancie and getting permission for her to come aboard and see us off. Then, the "last time" phase - the last sail, the last swim and so on. Finally everything packed, furniture disposed of, servants paid, chits written and farewells said. I can still see Nancie leaving the ship and turning to wave to us, but we knew that Norman was there; we knew their feelings for each other, so we knew she wouldn't feel as bereft as she might otherwise have done. Dost Mahomed and Ayah saw us off too. They were in tears, and not the only ones.

At least, we were leaving Burma by the front door and not by the back door, as we were in 1942. So the Shwè Dagon was our final sight of Burma.

End of Chapter 30

APPENDIX A

Caught between two cultures.

At one time in YwaTaung, one Captain Scott-Higgins was the Ferry Skipper on the ferry between Amarapura and SaGaing Shores, and had been for many years. His wife was Burmese and they had one daughter, Heather. Scott-Higgins was persuaded by his sisters in England to send Heather Home to them when she was about 13. She had almost certainly been attending an Anglo-Vernacular School in Mandalay, so she probably spoke English, but she was sent to a very good English school and spent her holidays with her aunts. When she returned to Burma she was about 18, and no longer remembered Burmese. We often wondered how she got on as her mother was still living in Mandalay and spoke no English; she must have been living a very different life from the one Heather had been living for about five years. Heather can't have seen much of her father, as he lived on the Ferry so, when she came back from England, she was neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring; one couldn't help thinking she might have been happier if she'd never left Burma or, having stayed so long in England, had made her home there permanently.

I don't really know why I have written so much about this, except that Heather's case highlighted a common problem. Many European men in Burma had lived with Burmese women. Any children born to them were brought up as Burmese, until a Government edict went forth, that these unions should be legalised and the children brought up as Europeans. After which, children, who had been happily accepted as Burmese, found themselves in many cases not accepted as either Burmese or European.

Party Piece

We were a party of eight, having dinner with Harold and Dorothy Moody. It was a festive occasion, Christmas perhaps, or a wedding anniversary, and the table was set with all the trimmings. Between courses, I was tempted by the dish of crystallised ginger in front of me, and succumbed to temptation. It served me right - it didn't taste as good as it looked. I didn't say anything, but surreptitiously removed it from my mouth and put it on my side plate. I thought I had been unlucky in getting a piece that had accidentally been in contact with Lifebuoy soap, and I didn't want to make a fuss. Later, when we really had arrived at the dessert stage, Mr Eggar, sitting on Dorothy's right, suddenly started blowing bubbles. We all stared at him, wondering if he had been taken ill but, with a wicked look in his eye, he continued to blow them. Then Dorothy realised what had happened. The "crystallised ginger" was a practical joke and what she had thought was merely sugar-coated rubber was actually solid soap. Mr Eggar was a barrister-at-law and Government Advocate, and something of a wag. His dry wit, bonhomie and tact were well known, and we were all left with the feeling, "Good old Eggar". Fortunately the soap did not have an emetic effect!

APPENDIX B

BRIEF NOTES ON HIS EARLY LIFE

by

EDWIN VALENTINE MURRAY POWELL ("VAL")

These notes by Val Powell were all that he wrote in my mother's manuscript diary. They are, in fact, my transcription of a transcript by my mother, Kathleen Powell, so the accuracy is not guaranteed. In one or two instances, I have interpolated extra information but this is identified by being enclosed within curly braces {}, either within the text or as a separate paragraph, as this is. DKP

1892 Feb 14th Edwin Valentine Murray POWELL born at 4 Milton Villas, Marlborough Road, Wealdstone, Middx, son of Edwin James and Florence Susan Powell. EJ was 2nd son of George and Ann Powell {one time} of Ludlow. {There is no record of the family in Ludlow, after the baptism of Julia, George and Ann's daughter, in 1856.} Florence Susan Powell was the eldest child of James William Murray and Susan {nee Collins} Dagnall of Wealdstone, formerly of Dulwich and later of Ashted and Sutton, Surrey.

1899-1901 Educated {sic} commenced in Kindergarten at Wealdstone Vicarage. (Governess, Mrs Downs)

19012-19062 Orley Farm School, Harrow. First term in the original Orley Farm of Anthony Trollope's novel. In cricket eleven 19062.

1903 Feb 8th Monica Winifred Powell born. {Although Monica was their second child to survive into adulthood, there was one other live birth, Francis George Powell, who died within weeks of his birth. Other pregnancies there were between 1892 and 1903 but they all ended in miscarriage or still-birth. DKP}

19063 Entered Harrow School in Lower Shell. To 19091 on classical side. Then after did Maths specials instead of Greek and Latin, though remaining nominally on classical side till leaving Easter 1910.

1910 May. Started at Crewe Works, London and North Western Railway as Premium apprentice in Nut and Bolt Shop, Old Works Fitting Shop, No. 8 Erecting Shop (Repairs), No. 9 Erecting Shop (New Work), Millwright's Shop.

1913 No vacancy for pupil, so worked 6 months in Crewe North Shed as journeyman fitter.

1913-14 Pupil of Mr C.J. Bowen Cooke, C.M.E., Pattern Shop, Iron Foundry, Brass Foundry, Boiler Shop, Electric Shop, Saw Mill, Testing Shop and Locomotive Running.

1914 Entered Crewe Drawing Office. After outbreak of World War I, was engaged in work for submarines and then on armoured trains.

1915 May Temporarily left L.N.W.Ry. and granted commission in Army Service Corps (Mech. Transport). After training at Grove Park Depot, posted to 274 M.T.Coy, Plumstead (Arsenal Transport Coy) given charge of Foden and Mann Steam Wagons.

1915 Oct. Ruptured myself starting up a lorry. Operated on for Hernia (left side) in Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich. Given 6 months Home Service.

1916 April Posted to 689 (M.T.) Coy, mobilizing at Hungerford for service with Royal Serbian Army. Sailed from Avonmouth in S.S. Trevilly (Ham Steamship Coy) for Salonika, unescorted to Gibraltar and Malta. Escort of yacht to Doro Channel and then unescorted to Salonika. In "Trevilly" I was in charge of 6 N.C.O.s and 40 men and the 106 Albion 3 ton lorries of the Coy. Encamped at Mikra Bay until remaining personnel of Coy arrived. Then Coy moved up to serve 2nd Serbian Army at Vertekop.

1916 Sept. Sent in command of half-coy. to assist a French M.T.Group at Mikra Bay for three months. (O.C. Capitaine Rainier.)

1917 Returned to Vertekop to find Coy. completely bogged, but supply taken over by 60 cm. gauge D,cauville Rly Coy. Transferred to Banica (a a) on Monastir Plain to serve 1st Serbian Army.

1917 Summer. Had my first flight in Henri Farman piloted by Lieut Renard Chef d'Escadrille, wind up. Later went up with him in *450 H.P. A.R. (Andr, Renaud) very comfortable, enclosed cabin.

* Pencilled note on back of photo says "260 H.P."

1917 Sept 14 days leave in Stavros in Gulf of Orphano {? Gulf of Stimçn ?} where I first sailed a boat.

1918 (mid) Promoted Captain and transferred to Salonika as Workshop Officer 938 M.T.Coy. 38th M.A.C. later taking on command from Captain Andrews.

1918 Sept. 14 days leave in England, travelling by train to Bralo, lorry to It,a {north shore of Gulf of Corinth}, thence by S.S. Timgad (C.G.T.) to Taranto (awful rest camp), by train via Bari, through Castellamare Adriaticus (sea bathing) to Faenza (finest rest camp in Army) - Bologna - Milano - Genova - Cannes (sea bathing) - Marseilles - Lyons - St. Germain-au-Mont d'Or (Rest Camp) - Cherbourg (Rest Camp) - Southampton in "Caesarea". Returned by same packet but by train from Lyons by Mont Cenis route through Torino - Bologna - Faenza to Taranto. Thence to It,a by S.S. El Kahira (Khedivial Mail Line).

1919 Mar. Transferred to 913 Coy. at Bralo and took over command.

1919 May 913 Coy. ordered to Athens. Half coy. there in 2 days. Then move stopped. From Bralo visited Delphi and the Temple of Apollo, the olive groves of Amphissa and the Pass, and bathed in the hot springs, of Thermopylae. From Athens visited Piraeus, Sharamanga on Bay of Eleusis, Corinth and Corinth Canal.

1919 Aug. Ordered back to Salonika and then posted to Constantinople, travelling by train through Makedonia, Bulgaria {the Bulgaria he travelled through has been Greece since the Peace Treaties, Bulgaria having picked the wrong side in the war} and over the Chatabja Ridge as O i/c Stores Base M.T. Depot (O.C. Col. Kirkcaldy). Did trip up Bosphorus to Rumeli Karak.

1919 Dec. Left Constantinople in S.S. Orotavo via Malta and Marseilles, by train to Boulogne - Dover & Home. Demobbed on Christmas Eve.

1920 Jan. Returned to L.N.W.Ry at Crewe in the Drawing Office. Later employed on Outdoor Experimental work on trials of the "Scarab" Oil Burner on Precursor Class 4-4-0 No. 2585 "Watt".

1920 May Stationed at Camden for the oil-burner trials, living at home at Harrow and going up to Camden on my 2 H.P. Douglas. While at Camden answered advertisement for Asst. Loco. Supt. for Tanganyika. Had just been called for interview when I saw advert. for Asst. Loco. Supt. for Burma Rlys. As I had some knowledge of Burma* I abandoned the Tanganyika job and was called for interview by Sir Seymour Tritton.

* EVMP was acquainted with Houldey of I.C.S.

1920 June Appointed Asst. Loco. Supt. Burma Rlys.

1920 July 2nd Sailed for Rangoon in S.S. Gloucestershire.

1920 Aug 3rd Arrived Rangoon. Put up by Craigs at Insein.

Aug 5th Taken out on tour by H.A.Craig (Loco. Supt.) for a fortnight, visiting Toungoo (Dudley Ward), Mandalay (Boeddecker), Ywataung (Wharton) and Maymyo {part of Mandalay District. KP}. On last named trip I had my first experience of articulated engines 0-6-6-0 modified Fairlies and 0-6-6-0 Mallets. Going up the ghfts, the former broke a valve spindle - 6 hours delay.

1920 Aug. Posted as Asst. Loco. O., Rangoon under R.H.Mackie. District extended from Prome to Martaban (& soon to Y.).

1920 Nov 5th. Attended Auxiliary Force dance at Jubilee Hall. There met Kathleen Kendall dressed in a beautiful dress as a Shan Princess. A happy memory of the smile with which I was greeted on introduction.

Most Saturdays went to Insein to swim in Railway Swimming Bath, usually accompanied by Kathleen Kendall with tea, subsequently, at the Craigs, who held open house on Saturday afternoons.

1921 Feb. For one month relieved John Wharton as Dist. Loco. O., Ywataung (Upper District), afterwards returning to Rangoon as Asst.

1921 Nov 12th "First Moonlight Band Night". Punt No 12 with Kathleen Kendall. Very much in love, but parted without anything definite.

1921 Dec 13th With Kathleen Kendall to Royal Lakes after tea. Punt 13. At last we are engaged. "It is well." Back to 4 Hume Road for dinner.

1921 Dec 14th Morning. Bought the ring, which had to be enlarged. Collected it later and placed it on the proper finger at the Gymkhana Club before dancing.

1922 Jan. Ordered to travel on footplate of Prince of Wales train, Rangoon to Toungoo and back, as the D.L.O.L. (Dudley Ward) not considered suitable.

1922 Feb. Awful business of parting with Kathleen when she went Home with her Mother and Father in S.S. Martaban.

1922 June 5 days in Rangoon General Hospital with mysterious pain in the middle. Pain left me, I left hospital.

1922 During this year, the first J Class {4-6-0 tender locomotive} converted to superheater came out, and I went on the trials with her. Craig, Loco., wouldn't believe her economy at first. He promptly ordered equipment to start converting all J Class to Js.

1922 22-11-22 K and I married in Rangoon Cathedral. We enjoyed our wedding. No sloppy hymns. All over in 20 minutes. After the reception, we left by 3 Up Mail in the Loco. Supt.'s carriage, having taken the precaution to lock our suitcases, defeating the confetti vandals.

During the time I was at Insein - Rangoon at Saturday teas at the Craigs, I argued at length on the advantages of Beyer-Garratts for ghft work, apparently with little success but, one day in 1922, H.A.C. came up behind me on Rangoon Station, slapped me on the back and said, "I've orrderred one of yourr Garratts."

1923 March Transferred as Dist. Loco. Supt. Ywataung (Upper District, Sagaing to Myitkyina and branches, and Sagaing - Amarapura Ferry). The whole of the District was, at that time, on wood fuel, which all had to be measured by the District Officer; days and days of trudging round fuel stacks with a 100 ft tape measure.

Nothing but the 0-6-0 outside-framed F Class on the District, the older ones, built prior to 1900, being at Ywataung and Kanbalu, and more modern {!} ones (1901-1903), with wheel

reversing and adjustable horns {axlebox horns} at Naba Junction. Had a fair amount of trouble with Foreman de Silva at Naba, who could never keep his transactions with Stores straight. This took a lot of my time, both at Naba and at H.Q.

The work of the Ferries I found very interesting. We had two ships - P.S. Daga and P.S. Bassein. The latter was the newest ship in the B.R. fleet. There were also four Wagon Flats with 10 tracks taking two wagons each. There were permanent loadin ghfts with steam winding engines. Two flats could be taken at a time, making a maximum of 40 wagons {four-wheelers} per crossing., though this was only necessary in the busy season.

During my time on the Upper District, to ease the wood fuel supply, a light line was run into the forest at Kyaikthin. The forest was laid out in 20 coupes, one to be cut each year, i.e., a 20 year cycle. Unfortunately, the contractor, U Ba Din, was not a big enough man for the job, and there was continual trouble to get him to keep to his contract. Further trouble was caused by the Chief Civil Engineer interfering on U Ba Din's behalf. This made matters very uncomfortable for me, especially as there was very strong suspicion that the dealings of U Ba Din with certain officers were not straight.

Made many suggestions that the F Class, which were notoriously over-cylindereed, should be superheated. Nothing done at once, but the first one did come out superheated in 1926 - Fs 103.

1924 8th June Nancie Ruth Powell arrived about 12.40 hours. I was able to see Kathleen and Nancie very shortly afterwards. A lovely babe and Kathleen in very good form and happy.

The first Beyer-Garratt came out in 1924 and, at the end of the monsoon, I had 2 or 3 days leave to go over to Mandalay and have some trips on the Ghfts on B21, Driver Barrow. Very impressive with 230 tons on 1 in 25 {uncompensated for curvature}.

My father, Edwin James Powell, died at the age of 72. He had only 2 years in retirement.

1925 March/April Transferred to Insein as Engine Shop Manager for 2 months. Then reverted to A.L.O. Rangoon.

One evening we heard 10 Down Mixed {i.e., freight and passenger in the same train} coming in with the loco, a Js, coming in, working in full gear; there were also continuous bumps as of a steel wagon being bumped. It was, for it had come nearly a mile and a half with no wheels under it. Its leading wheels had been thrown aside about 150 ft into a paddy field, and the other pair was being trundled along by the head stock of the leading coach. Only hard pulling of the engine kept the wagon from complete capsiz.

{ Full gear: steam admitted to the cylinders for 65%-75% of the cylinders' stroke. This would be apparent to an observer, from the force of the locomotive's exhaust up the chimney. Normally, unless working very hard against a heavy load, the driver would "notch up" by adjusting the valve-gear to cut-off steam at less than 25% of stroke, which, by allowing the steam to expand more before exhausting, would soften the force of the

exhaust blast. The BBC's "All Purpose Steam Locomotive Sound Track" ignores this effect, so that the viewer is often presented with a view of an engine working at 10% cut-off (when the exhaust note would be quiet) making a noise like one working in full gear up a bank, with a heavy load!

Home railway practice with mixed trains, in the days when they still ran them, was to marshal the wagons at the rear of the train. In those days, even quite small stations would have a yard shunter which could readily detach or attach wagons to the train as required, obviating the need to uncouple the train engine. On colonial railways, the situation was different; the train engine would have to do the shunting and marshalling of wagons. On a single track railway, there might be time to spend at the station, anyway, while a train in the opposite direction crossed at the station. Hence there was no advantage to be gained by placing the wagons at the rear. DKP}

APPENDIX C

Notes on Family Sampler, page et seq.

Extract from *The Peacock and the Swans*, page 53:-

"A Family caught in the Tentacles of Violence"

"Dare we ask Nancie, only just 16, to bring Daphne (13) and Dennis (8) by sea, during the war, all these many weeks of dangerous travel from England to Burma? Could we put all our precious children to hazard this way? That was the terrible decision which faced Kathleen and Val when the British Government appealed to parents overseas to take their children to join them."

From page 6 of *The Rhino and the Swans*:-

"Nancie was then told that she had to escort her sister Daphne and brother Dennis on this hazardous journey."

After reading these extracts, I turned to my own account, which would probably bear expansion, of our dilemma in 1940, when we heard a broadcast from the Home Government. This urged parents who were in a position to do so to have their children join them in the East. As we understood it, this was a Government sponsored scheme for unaccompanied children, but dilemma it still remained as there were many problems, not least of which was the unstable condition of Burma

I think the remembrance of my seven years separation from my parents from 1912 to 1919, which included the war years, influenced our decision. At the time, there was no knowing when we should get back to England; in the event, it was not until 1946. {Had the children stayed in England, their separation would also have been seven years.}

As we understood it, we had asked for arrangements for THREE unaccompanied children. Nancie was fourteen when we said Good-bye to her in 1938, and we could not know how responsible she had become. I fear we unwittingly laid a very heavy load upon her, for she had become a very responsible person (much more so than I was at the same age) and, no doubt, advantage was taken of this. With hindsight, I can imagine that at Home people may have said, "You must look after Daphne and Dennis." But it grieves me to think how little we showed our appreciation for the way she had shouldered the heavy load of responsibility that had been laid upon her.

Nevertheless, we were together and, as a family, we lived through the agonising experience of the Japanese invasion of Burma, and our subsequent evacuation to India.
