

# DOWN MEMORIES LANE

by

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## Chapter 1

**I have been asked by my brothers and sisters to write what I can of our childhood and our lives as we have grown older, for the benefit of their children and likewise their children as well.**

**As a family we all feel that no other children had such a childhood as ours, where imagination had such a scope, and such understanding parents up to a certain point.**

**Family worries were kept from us as children, but as we grew older we often wondered how they ever managed to keep free from debt; to instill into each one of us the honour they did; and to spare the time for our spiritual welfare, the home comforts, the cleanliness and all those little things that go to make up the beginning and forming of character of which they were so particular.**

**My parents were business people and to bring a family of eleven up was no small thing even 70 or 80 years ago, with money scarce and entering a business that had been neglected through drink. Yet they did pull through and before they died there was no one more respected and loved in the place than our father and mother.**

**Of Dad one old man said "God rest his soul Miss, many a dinner he provided for the poor and no one knew". He never let his left hand know what his right did.**

**Of Mother, the Vicar said "Miss I came to give comfort to your mother, but she makes me feel ashamed it is her who gives the comfort".**

**Can you wonder their children have, after all these years, beautiful memories of them.**



**We lived in a house that our grandmother built in the year 1855. They called it "Lark Hill". Never was a house called such an appropriate name as that one.**

There was a public house near, whose back bedroom joined the bedroom where all the girls slept. The proprietor said to mother not long after he moved in - *"Mrs. C. I could not understand why your home should be called Lark Hill until this morning"*. Mother said *"oh why this morning"*. He said *"I heard them at five o'clock this morning singing 'This is my story, This is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long'"*. Then mother said *"I must tell them to keep quite"* but the man said *"No Mrs. C don't, they were real larks"*. However Mother did mention the matter to us but my sister Letty said *"Mother, once I wake up my eyes won't go shut again"*.

Lark Hill was an old fashioned house.

There was the shop, then behind was the kitchen and scullery. Upstairs there was the sitting room over the shop, a bedroom over the kitchen and through that bedroom was another bedroom. As you went up stairs and turned to your right you went down two steps to another bedroom which was over the arch. Through that bedroom you could go across a stair head to the bedroom the girls slept in. They were all big rooms but one, and many very happy memories they hold for us even now.

Underneath the girls bedroom was what we called the back house where all washing and heavy work was done. The outside was walled in - a big square yard. Next to the back kitchen or scullery was the stable, then the slaughter house. There was a small wall, after which came the usual places needed in every home. The opposite side was the byre, a pig sty, a hen house and coal house. That will give you an idea of the size of the yard.

The other end was what we termed the back house previously mentioned, then the large arch or as we called it the passage so big that a horse and wagon could go through. Two bedrooms were built over it. One we had - the other the people in the front house had. Next to the passage was a rain tub or butt. I have gone right round the yard, so I hope I have given you a good idea of the house inside and out.



As I said - there were eleven of us. Samuel Edward who really was only a half brother, but was always recognized as our oldest brother by father as well as the rest of us. Next came Mary Elizabeth known to us children as Bidy. After her was Margaret whom we used to dub as Mug or Meg. Richard commonly known as Dick or Dicky or Dirkey was the next, while Hannah or Pat or Nancy followed hard after. Now it is my turn - Maria Jane commonly called by dad the Wasp, by the others Midget, on account of my size. Letitia came next commonly called Tish or Tosha. Who could forget Robinson known to us as plain Bob, while Janet or Lhen would never be left out. After that there is only Amy and William Attwell. Amy or Yam sticks was ever the baby while William Attwell who was the youngest known as Willie was ever the whittiest of us all. There I have given you the names of my sisters and brothers as they

were born, whether this book finds or provides interesting reading must wait to be seen.

My mother was at first a Wesleyan, father used to attend the then Primitive Sunday School. He was always fond of telling us he was put out for being a good boy. He was like us when he was a child, no angel, what child ever is. He used to plague his Sunday School teachers life out, but he said this Sunday he really was good but was blamed amongst the other boys and was put out.

He was an only son and he went to school in those days until he was sixteen years of age and was thoroughly spoilt.

He used to say he loved drinking spirits and dancing.

I remember him telling us one night he wanted to go to a dance several miles away and his father would not let him have the horse. Dad went to bed, grandfather and grandmother and his three sisters retired as well. Dad waited until they were all asleep then got out of the window taking his boots or shoes with him, muffled the horses feet led it out of the yard and went to his dance. Grandfather remarked the next morning he did not know what was the matter with the horse it had no life in it.

Mother evidently was no angel either for she was always in trouble as a girl and would not go to school.

Once an old woman got mother a good thrashing off her father when she declared to him that she was not even there. Mother told her father she would have her own back.

She gathered some little pebbles and hid them in her bedroom. When her father and mother thought she was fast asleep she crept out of her little window and sped to this old woman's cottage. It was nine o'clock at night. She knocked on the old woman's door and when she came to the door with a lighted candle, mother blew it out never spoke and let her pebbles trickle from her apron which she had put on and ran for all she was worth. The old woman had an idea who it was and came to see mother's father. He told her mother was in bed asleep. She would not believe it until he took her upstairs to mothers room where mother appeared to be in the land of nod. Mother said she got the satisfaction of hearing her father tell the old woman off.

We as men and women loved to get them to tell us of their early days. What a good thing for us we never knew what they did while we were children.

## Chapter 2

After father and mother married, father was attracted by the Salvation Army and got what we say and mean in the S.A. - 'soundly converted'.

**Whatever would have happened to us as children if he had not done so God only knows, for mother said he was an awful handful and liked drinking spirits too much.**

**Mother thought he would link up with the Wesleyans and said as much to him, but he said to her, Rie you can still go to the Wesleyans but I must stick to the bridge that carried me over.**

**My mother was a very wise woman. She sunk her own feeling and went with him, although it must have been an awful sacrifice for her in those days because my mother was a lovely and dainty woman and the Salvation Army 65 years ago was not what it is today.**

**Soon after they were married dad fell out (or quarrelled) with his own people over money matters. He left mother at home and went to work in London. Mother followed soon after.**

**I have heard him tell us of the rotten eggs, tomatoes etc that were thrown at them as they marched the streets in the Salvation Army. Mother used to say it took her all Monday cleaning his clothes.**

**One day coming home from work, Saturday night to be precise, some ruffians shouted after him - "Starvation Army" - they kept shouting until dad pulled out of his coat a leg of mutton and said not much Starvation Army there mate. You come with me and you will be able to do as I do.**



**After six or seven years in London my father's father took ill and father and mother came home with what family they had then. The business was in a shocking state through neglect and drink. Add to that there was a strike in the district.**

**When we got older and in those lovely evenings when we were all gathered together and they were speaking of their experiences, Mother used to say - yes we reckoned it a good day if we took eighteen pence. Imagine that with a family of six and soon there would be the seventh.**

**The place was mortgaged. The lovely garden which ran the length of the back five houses was sold while grandfather was drunk one night. My parents at that time went into debt for only a while. Before I was old enough to remember much he had worked and paid it all off. How he and my elder brother worked.**

**They cemented the yard and out buildings which are good to this day, they laid the bedroom floor that had rotted, made a flat cart because they could not afford to buy one, made hen houses, built walls up, did their own plastering and while neither had had any knowledge they stopped at nothing.**

**Workmen a few doors away cemented the yards belonging to some private houses, and they have been done several times since, yet a good forty years has passed and what dad and my brother did still stands after wagons, etc have rolled down the passage into the yard.**

He always said, if a job was worth doing, do it properly. A penny saved was a pound earned. He spoke from experience.



You will no doubt wonder what has this to do with our lives and childhood.

As I write no doubt it will reveal itself, how unconsciously influence is felt and helps the forming of character in a very marked degree on the lives of their children. Let me just add this. One of fathers favourite sayings was, do right, even if the sky fails do right.

All what I have wrote before I can remember anything but as a family we all remember our father and mother telling us at various times.

Whatever you do, do not think we were a model family with all the virtues that this world knows of. I assure we were anything but that but very much live wires and very human indeed.



The thing I can remember first, that fastened itself on my mind, was the Sabbath day when father got up early to clean his horse and feed his pigs with the help of my brothers Sam and Dick before getting their breakfasts. Then father washing and putting his uniform on, Dick and Sam with their Army jerseys, and away they would go. Dad with his cornet, Sam had a concertina at that time, to the open air which would be anything like two miles away.

They came home tired but happy, then off again in the afternoon at 2 o'clock, home at four o'clock and have tea, then at five thirty away again for the evening.

He used to say Sunday was the hardest day of his life, but the happiest.

As children we loved to go out with him in his butcher cart, it was great. We would be going along sitting on the seat talking, then all of a sudden he would say "what have we passed there".

Nothing except those trees, or that farm, or some such thing. Then dad would say "Use your powers of observation. Did you not see a tree all twisted and black, or what about that beck just over that wall, or that broken trough outside that farm house. There are things to look for if you get lost. Now do not forget another time".

It became quite a bye word at home - use your powers of observation.



It is a funny thing to say and perhaps strange - the first question any one of us asked when we came in from school or anywhere father included was - where is mother, or as we used to call her Mo.

My mothers mother when she used to come for a holiday would say, there thee goes like a lot of sheep where's my Mo, shame on thee but

it made no difference. She was a queer soul at least it seemed to us children.

I must relate this incident.

My Aunt Mary had brought Grandmother up for a holiday. Auntie and mother were going to visit some friends and grandmother who felt a bit out of it said she would take the day off on her own. She would be about seventy years of age then and was not so good on her legs.

Mother got to know about her intention and had an idea what she would do.

As children we all had very healthy appetites and Grandmother was always saying we were half starved. The night before mother and Auntie went off, she asked grandmother to make us an apple pudding. Needless to say she was delighted. She would see the bairns got a feed.

My brother Dick that morning felt especially hungry and as there was a ham bone that needing picking he got it, and some bread, and was going to have a jolly good breakfast. Grandmother saw him with this ham bone in his hand. I think it must have been sweet the way he held it. But not for long did Dick enjoy it, for Grandmother saw him. You greedy creature what are you doing with that, give it to me, I want that for some broth.

"But Gran" Dick said "mother told us you were making apple pudding and I want this bone". But the bone had to go and be washed under the tap.

I can see my sister Meggie nearly frantic, she had just cleaned up. Grandmother brought all sorts in to cook, the dirt she made was awful. Pans for this, pans for that, she would give us a dinner.

She started at eleven o'clock to make the apple pudding. I have never saw such a big one in all my life. She put it in a pillow case, tied it at the wrong end. Out it had to come again and when we came home from school no one knows the disappointment when that apple pudding came out, apples not done and the outside all paste. Talk about mutiny was not in it, we were so disappointed.

Grandmother appealed to father telling him what ungrateful children we were and whatever mother did to put up with a lot like us she did not know.

Dad as serious as a judge told her to do no more for us as we never appreciated it. He was sorry he could not eat all his as he had such a good dinner with the ham bone and potatoes etc.

He yolked up at night and went to meet mother and Auntie and could do nothing but laugh while the tears rolled down his cheeks. Mother said all she could get out of him was 'Dear oh Bless me' 'apple pudding'. To this day that apple pudding is brought into conversation when we gather and *do you remember* starts going.

## Chapter 3

**My oldest sister Tisy was always content minding the children and having a book. If she had been given a chance she would easily have out stripped the lot of us in education for even now she has a wonderful memory, but could she argue and did she get beaten - not very often.**

**She was as stubborn as a mule if you upset her too much, poor lass it was a shame how we used to plague her, but she was a good sport.**

**I remember how of a Saturday when everyone was finished, Tisy would leave the steps and just go inside the back kitchen or scullery door until about three o'clock in the afternoon so it would be clean for Sunday. She would then go upstairs and read her "Sunday Stories".**

**This particular Saturday my brother Dick and the rest of them must have been feeling a certain way for they grumbled and better grumbled at her to finish and get washed. That made her worse. Dick threatened to wash her if she would not. It turned out Dick took the floor cloth and washed her face. That afternoon there was not such peace but we were friends before bed time.**

**That was the strangest thing I know, eleven of us, no matter what quarrels we had amongst ourselves we all forgave one another at night when we went to bed. It was never preached into us but some how we all felt we could not say our prayers and say goodnight and goodnight for everybody and be bad friends. We would say goodnight, goodnight for everybody to each member by name and they would answer. Many an argument we have had before we settled down.**



**In the morning my father was always up first, lighted the fire and while the kettle was boiling would go out and see to the horse and then come in make a cup of tea to give mother one upstairs, and remember, if we could only get downstairs before dad went out he would give us all a thick slice of bread and butter which was the sweetest bite of the day. We used to run down in our nighties, one stocking on and one off many times, for fear he missed us.**

**Another thing that stands out in my mind is the apple or orange we always had before breakfast. But if we made a row before mother came down there was no apple or orange. That apple or orange saved us many a doze of medicine.**



**I really must relate this incident which puzzled the family very much indeed.**

One morning dad took Mother a cup of tea up, and as usual filled up the teapot and put the cozy on so that my older sisters and brothers could have a cup. I may add our house were very early risers and never in bed after 6 o'clock.

This particular morning my oldest brother came down took a cup of tea and spluttered for all he was worth said nothing waited for my sisters to come down and see what they did when they got a cup. Their faces was a picture to behold. When dad came in they all asked him what he had done with the tea, he could not understand them asked mother, who was by this time downstairs, if her tea was alright, which it was and his had been.

They tasted it and could not understand it. They rinsed the teapot out with hot water made a fresh brew for breakfast, but that was not nice, and no-one could not understand it at all.

They put boiling water in the spout, it took so much cleaning to get rid of the taste. The mystery was solved a few days after when mother heard my brother Bob say to my sister Janet. Do you know what I saw the other morning Jan.

Janet said what.

Well I saw two pills come out of that tin on the mantle piece and walk right down and lift the teapot lid off and go inside and the lid went back on again. Mother listened, never a muscle moved, but that solved the mystery of the nasty tea.

They looked after he went out, and found a box of Parkinson's blood and stomach pills in a tin. What a wise mother and father never to let on that it was something rather funny.



I remember with the rest of the family our xmas times. I can honestly say all my years that I have lived, I do not remember hearing of any one of our age who had just such good times. They were great.

There was the anticipation, the expectation, and then the realization. Which was the best I do not know.

We would start about October to be thinking about xmas. One would say isn't it time we started our committee meetings, we will start tomorrow.

Then there was the hoarding of matches and candles. We had an old grandfather clock in the room and of course it was a grand place to hide them, also up the fire place. Then after a few days they would all mysteriously disappear.

We would lay in bed and tell the most fantastic stories of father xmas. We wondered however he managed to keep his whiskers white and how he knew all our names to get us something we liked. What would be in our stockings, who would sneak downstairs in the morning, be careful of the creaky stairs for fear of waking dad.

Remember, this would be toward the end of October.



Then there was the games to play and all the other plans to make that never came to anything on the most wonderful day to us. We would discuss the previous xmas's, what the mistakes was, I cannot put it on paper what we were like.

Providing for so many must have been a great sacrifice to our parents. I wonder whether the joy we had in the receiving them, gave them the recompense they deserved for the sacrifice they made. Those xmas'es will ever live in our memories.

In what was always termed as the girls bedroom there was a knot of wood out of the flooring and that hole would never be kept covered. We were an inquisitive lot of youngsters and if we heard anyone downstairs in the back house, after we were in bed, one of us would be out of bed lying on the floor with one eye on the hole to see what was going on.

I remember one xmas eve, or at least it must have been morning, when my sister Lettie and I heard some rustling down in the back house. Out she crept out of bed, we heard mother say hush they are awake. After she waited awhile and heard no other sound she proceeded to put the stockings in their places as well as the toys. When it came to Letty's or Titia's turn and mother said we will put this here for Tish, such a shout went up, I wanted a pram not a go cart. I do not like it.

Of course the cat was among the pigeons that night.

Then another year they were not in the back house or kitchen and we looked all over for them and at last found them in the shop.

Once she fooled us, that was when she told us to be good and as soon as the clock struck five we could get up. She had stopped the striker.

Then another year she put the clock back.

One xmas when the mistletoe was hung up, the kind made with whoops and paper my brother Dick thought he would put some xmas candies in to make it look nice. Of course the paper caught fire and we were scared indeed. There was Dick with a cap trying to put it out. You could understand the danger with wooden beams as a ceiling. That was never tried again. We were not ones for playing with fire.

That part of our lives ever remains with us.

If people would consider what xmas meant to a child, that child would never know for years that it was their parents, and it is not the expensive presents that give the most pleasure.

As we grew up, xmas was kept up as my brothers and sisters moved away and lived out of the district. Mother and father always saw that a box containing everything that was on our table at xmas dinner and tea was sent to each one. According to the size of their family. My oldest brother would be 50 when mother died and his wife never had made herself a xmas cake.

Such acts kept the family together.



As we grew older we all would go out with the carolers and the boys with the band and what times we had.

One night I remember we were out singing and in the company of singers was a woman whom we used to call on the quiet 'the fog horn'. I have never heard a woman with a voice like her. You could hear her a half a mile away on a clear day.

My youngest sister Amy had just been married and her husband had a young man there at their house for xmas. He was a very prim and proper young fellow. On the xmas or New Years Eve we were out singing when this young man asked who made that awful noise. We said we would show him at the next stand.

There was a special carol sung a one that we knew this woman would give full vent to, so we arranged for him to be just in front of her. When it came to the refrain "Brighter than the Brightest gems, Shines the Star of Bethlehem" her head went back and she bellowed.

I can honestly say we never expected the result but this young fellow gave a shout and bounded off and upset all the singing for that night. No more was done.

While we could not help ourselves for laughing, yet we dare not say what was the matter. We were very careful about anything like that after that episode.

## Chapter 4

I would like to ask, as you read these pages, what difference is the average child today to what they were sixty years ago. There was not so much publicity then and I am afraid we old folk are apt to forget our own childhood.

I remember my sister Tish and brother Bob who were always very early risers each morning. As soon as father was astir they were there.

When we were all children, father used to have a cow to provide us with milk. It was cheaper than buying it. They believed even in those days of the value of milk and good fruit.

This particular cow was very quiet and was 'put out' in the field up the road as we used to say. Tish and Bob (only school children) would go up at six thirty in the morning to bring it down to milk. These two scamps thought people were lazy who did not show smoke in their

chimneys or have shutters opened or blinds drawn. They started playing knocking everyone up and going away like little angels.

One farmers wife saw them one morning and told father about it. Dad spoke to them and told them not to do it. In their young minds they thought the woman was mean and would pay her out. They never said a word, but this persons house had a passage running through the centre of her house.

The next morning when they went for the cow, they deliberately drove the cow in the passage. The woman came out and asked what was the matter.

Bob replied *"Please mam, will you get the cow out. It is a bit wild and it came in your passage"*.

The woman said to dad after *"you should not send that cow up with those bits of bairns, they were scared stiff when it came into my passage"*.

Dad listened but with a surprised face when he came home and asked Bob and Tish why they did it. *"Well dad she sneaked on us, we were only knocking all the lazy folk up"*.



I would like to say here - only once do I remember my father thrashing one of us when we told the truth. It was an unwritten law in our home with father and mother that no punishment was given, only they would tell us never to do that again.

If we told them a lie we did get thrashed but that was very seldom indeed, it paid for us to tell the truth.

One thing I think stands out in my memory was the fact that such silly things as "you won't go to heaven", "the devil will get you", "Jesus won't love you" and all the horrid things people seem to instill into their children if they want them to be good, were never mentioned at home no matter what we did. I am glad too. It would have sickened our minds to the things that are most important and for we were indeed a spirited lot of youngsters.



Again I remember, while Bob and Tish used to go for the cow up the road in the field. Where the cow was they came across a nest of young birds that had been forsaken or the parent birds killed. Every morning they hunted for worms, took bread to school with them which was on the road, fed them again at dinner time, then at night time until they could fly. There was not a child amongst us who did not love animals and birds although I confess I did not care to be too near the cow or horses.

One thing I remember, we never quarreled with outside children very much. We were a crowd on our own.

**It seemed to be Janet that played the most important part in Bobs imagination.**

**One instance in particular when he had come from down the lane and wanted her to go for a ride on the moon. He tried to persuade her but would she go, not for a long while. When at last she did go, it was to watch the moon in a large pool of water moving along and Bob imagined he was having a ride. You will understand that was early morning.**

**What a wise woman mother was. She could enter into that lads feelings more than dad could, he was more practical, they were well matched.**



**Another time I remember Bob saying, "*father shall I go and fetch the cow down*" (by the way her name was Daisy). Father said "*Dick brought her down*". Bob said "*he has not, I know I have cleaned the byre out and Daisy isn't in there*". Off dad went to see. Dick declared he had, Bob it was not there, but when dad had looked in the byre, there Daisy was and the byre cleaned out and the cow in it.**

**Are any of your children like that ?**



**Yet that same boy I remember sitting on the top back step nursing a hen that was not very well. Dad was doing some repairs to one of the buildings opposite when the ladder slipped and father clung to what he could for support. Bob looked up and neither shouted or got flustered. Bob just put his foot to the ladder, steadied it with his hands and weight until father could get down, which was not easy as dad was a very heavy man. It was found out that dad had broken his arm when he managed to get down.**

**I remember this same boy, as he grew older, was rather what today would be called a problem child. Up to all sorts of mischief and was getting into rather bad company, not the company that would help a lad of his character.**

**One boy who had lost his father at the age of eleven, but who was very fond of my brother Bob, used to come to the house frequently and started to stay overnight after his mother moved further away. He would always stay at weekends, holiday times, and go where we went. In fact to the younger members he was more like an adopted brother than anything else. He seemed to have a very steady influence on my brother Bob.**

**So one day mother said to Bob, "*you have to decide between Fred being stopped coming down here and entering the house - or these other boys*". Consider for yourself Bob. Which is the best pal and which ones will do you the best good.**

**That broke Bob more than anything previous had done. He knew mother of old would not go back on her word. That was the secret of**

her strength she was slow to say I will do this or that, but there was no going back no matter how we pleaded.



I would like you to remember what a wonderful impression all these incidents had on my life especially the last twenty years that I had to work.

There was Janet, she had a great imagination - she would imagine all sorts of things. It seemed to be inherited in her son when he was a child and now in his child.

Letty was a great mimic - many an entertainment we had with her.

Amy was always business-like while my young brother Will was everybody's boy.

You will notice I have spoken a lot about my younger sisters and brothers, but as I proceed I will mention everyone.

## Chapter 5

One day we were talking in the back house - all the youngsters together that were younger than me. I used to mind them. I always liked children and seeing it was nearly xmas I was telling them wonderful tales of Xmas - such as father xmas will be making that toffee just like mother makes when we had a bad cold or for a special treat.

The wonder of a child's mind fills me with amazement to this day.

Everyone of us was talking, giving our opinion as to how much toffee he would make and where he would make it etc, when suddenly my sister Janet said "*I wonder if it boils over ? If it does and he is making it up our chimney - whether we could smell it and taste it*".

Believe it or not, but first one said "*I can smell something like toffee*". Another could smell it too, until everyone said the same. Janet put her finger a little way up the chimney, brought it down and declared she had got a spot of toffee on it which must have boiled over. She still says when she thinks of it - the imagination of that taste was sweeter to her than any toffee.

Of course the smell must have been mother making it in the kitchen when she knew her little rebels were safe with those wonderful committee meetings.



Another thing that helped us most in our future outlook on life, and I am safe in saying helped to mould part of our character, was the obligation of giving to the Lord.

We never got pocket money in those days. Mother used to say she could not afford it. We got plenty of fruit though. When I say plenty, I mean it. We were brought up to love it and eat it, with bread and butter, have an apple or an orange. An apple was preferred before anything to eat except that wonderful slice of bread dad used to cut early morning. Mother used to say that was as good as medicine which it certainly did help us not to have much medicine at all.

If however we did get a penny given, half must be put in the poor box for those poor children whose father and mother was not as well off as ours and who's little boys and girls could not get any breakfast.

You understand that was OURS we were putting in the box.

If we had visitors once in the day the box was put on the table. When my Uncles or Aunts came, especially Uncle Ned, he would say "*mind that is not for Lazarus*". We laughed but half went in all the same.



About that 'giving'. It has as a family (as we have grown up) helped us always to remember people less fortunate than ourselves. Even at Self Denial which comes round in the Salvation Army once a year in March.

As children, and like all children, we were heavy on boot-laces. I want to point out that it was voluntary, Mother used to ask us who was going to deny ourselves of course - and we would say all of us. Let me state it was for seven days only.

Denying meant doing without the things we loved most.

As a family, butter and fruit were the chief things and of course laces were thrown in. When we walked out of our seats on the Sunday with our little packages, we knew that truly was what we had saved by denying ourselves and we felt proud of it.

One thing it made us know, is what it was like to do without things and have feeling for others. Just try it and see if you do not feel more sympathy for other folk. It is worth a try.

I remember my brother Bob when hee was fifteen years old. It was a bleak blustering March day that year and Bob said this particular Self Denial week he would do without tea.

He was a strong healthy lad who did not like dinners much or meat, but loved a milk pudding, fruit pudding and of course the inevitable cup of tea.

Well this particular Wednesday he went with the butcher cart to a distant place. He set out before 9 o'clock in the morning and came

home at about 12:30. Mother and sisters were busy, my father as well. My brother had gone to be trained as an Army Officer.

Mother had forgot to put on a boiled currant pudding for him. When Bob came home needless to say when he asked where his pudding was, Mother felt awful. But he would have neither butter or tea and sat down to dry bread and cold water. Nothing Mother could say could persuade him to have tea or butter. He said I will not break my promise.

That incident had a great influence on his life in after years with out him knowing it.



Another incident while I am on this subject. My sister Janet and I have our birthdays in March and it so happened that our birthdays normally fell in Self Denial week.

This one particular week, Janet happened to miss self denial week and of course that meant a cake made for her. She did like her own way, full of life and was always a very popular girl and full of fun.

This particular day she had been warned again about coming home from school late, for as dad and mother used to say, they liked us where they could see us. Janet by the way was a little pest for coming home late about five o'clock.

As I mentioned, this particular day she was told if she did not come home on time there would be no tea and bed. Seeing it was her birthday, she thought it was a long time since I had a cake and they will not put me to bed today as its my birthday.

She came in as she had done all the week. When she was told to prepare for bed she did not know what to say, but she never tasted that birthday cake. It did her good.

Would to God, that parents today would be careful when they warn a child, but when they do, keep their word. They would have less trouble as the years go by and, I know, fewer heart-aches.

## Chapter 6

What a red letter day in our lives it was when father and mother took us to the seaside for a day. They were very cute as we would say today, I mean father and mother. They always left it until the last week of our holidays and of course we had to behave ourselves or else we would not go and if it rained we could not go either.

Never a night or morning passed but what we prayed for a fine day. We never said a lot of prayers, but we were taught also to use our

own words to express ourselves. Being told that God wanted us to 'talk' to Him.

Every child did not ask his mother or father for an orange or apple, or even their bread and butter, in the same way - but their mother and father understood them, well now that is like our Heavenly Father. That by the way was how we were taught to pray.

When we were laying down in bed we would sing such choruses as 'Have faith in God, the sun will shine, though dark your path may be today, His heart hath planned your path and mine, Have in God, Have faith always'.

In our childishness we really believed in God and depended on him for that fine day. You who read this must believe me when I say, whether it was our childish faith in Him or what, we never had a wet one.



Again, going to a restaurant for a cup of tea was a thrill. Of course mother and dad could not afford to buy food for seven hungry youngsters so they took it with them.

They used to leave us on the sands at a certain place. We must keep together and not go into the water until they came back, they were only going to be away for an hour and if we had obeyed orders we would get a surprise.

Of course we did not learn until afterwards that it was to get a quiet meal on their own.



I remember seeing a great lump of jelly (as I thought) on the sands and shouted of my other brothers and sisters to come and have a look. I touched it with my foot. I must have touched it in the mouth for I gave a yell and quickly withdrew my foot. Whenever I think of that incident I can think of that sting and feel it in imagination. Those were the days when, wherever you went in Redcar, you heard the cry Redcar Rock, two, three or four bars a penny.

I once had I 'one and a half penny' to spare. I thought I would like a nice juicy orange - which was a rare sight in those days to see an orange in summertime. I went into a shop to buy one, but when the woman said three pence please, I just looked dumbfounded and walked out. Didn't the others laugh.



Of all days that stands out in our minds (that is in the younger sisters and brothers) I think will be the Sabbath.

As soon as we awoke, Letty (the one whose eyes would not go shut again) and Janet would go for their dolls and start 'Armies'. Sing our hymns, say prayers and have a proper service in our nighties. We were not sports if we did not get up when it was cold.



The bedroom window-sill was low and wide, and three or four could sit on it quite easily.

When it came to the lesson, the dolls were the scholars and we the teachers. Letty and Janet always the Capt and Lieutenant. After awhile they would feel cold and then jump back into bed with feet like ice and wake my two big sisters up - and then the fun started.

My oldest sister Lisy was in a big bed with Hannah and Amy, one side of the fireplace. Meggie, Lettie and Janet in another full sized bed the other side of the fireplace. While I had a single bed in a corner because I was such a restless little monkey.

I will tell you more about our pranks later that we did upstairs because I am talking of the Sabbath.



I do not remember whether mother told us not to play with our toys on Sunday or not, but after breakfast no toys were played with. We got UP for Sunday school and one thing was instilled into us, we must be punctual and behave Ourselves and listen to what was taught us.

We were like the children of today and yesterday - we were not angels. We were cute. We knew how far to go - for a misconduct mark on our star cards was a dreadful thing. Father and mother used to say *"it is no good making excuses, you could not have been blamed if you had not been there"*.



One poor chap used to take us for our directory, or as other denominations called the catechism.

There were some lads called Bulmer in the class who were 'rifs' in every sense of the word. The man taking us would get as far as the first commandment, then say "sit down there Bulmer". It was said that often, that we nicknamed him 'sit down there Bulmer'.

There was another oddity that used to teach us in Sunday School who had a bit of a lisp or stammer, who was aggravated to death as the saying goes, but they did there best. With it all, it gave us a good foundation for our future lives.



As my elder sisters got older, they taught in the Sunday school. My brothers went into the band and attended the open air, father as well. To us as a family Sunday was the happiest day of the week.

Dad said if it was a day of rest, it must be one for the woman too. So he said if mother cooked a dinner he would not eat it - so mother did not do it and it was cold meat etc. Whatever company came to our home (and we had a lot at weekends) they had to do without their dinner being hot.

At night the younger end, that was beginning with myself down to Willie, were not allowed to go to the meetings. Mother always stayed in with us. It seemed to us quite naturally to play at being at the meeting again. Some time one, and then another, would read the Bible and in our childish way explain it. Mother told us when we grew older, that many a blessing she got from us using our own childish imagination.

There was Will (the youngest) just old enough to read who said one Sunday he would take the lesson. Of course we all had to be serious and very reverent, we never had fun in these meetings or services. He took Adam and Eve, and in his childish way he said Adam was a coward to blame Eve. He need not have taken the fruit if he did not want to. Nobody can make you do anything if you don't want to do it, so don't blame anyone else when you do wrong. Blame only yourself.

We all were that quiet, for he was the youngest and would not have reached the age of eight years. That little bit of advice stayed with me all these years.



The saddest incident that happened on a Sunday was when an Uncle of ours came to our house one Sunday morning. Having walked miles with his three little girls, out of work through drink, no home, children hungry and dog tired. He was a very clever man, but drink was his master.

This particular Sunday dad was lying on the form that was built in the wall. He had been to open air, we had had dinner, and it was just before we went to Sunday School and dad to the open air. These cousins saw us talking to dad, one brushing his hair which he loved us to do. The middle girl called Eva was very intense, then in such a quiet voice she said *"Uncle Rob, I wish you were my daddy, I would be so happy"*.

That upset both Father and Mother.

My father turned to Uncle Bill and said, *"Bill if that does not shame you and make you want to be different, nothing will"*.

We often think of that incident even now. Mother and father did their best for him, but he loved himself best.

To finish about the Sabbath. We (that is the younger end) went to bed early while the older end finished the night with a good old fashioned sing song, and we in bed used to lie still at night and enjoy it fine. Such was how we spend the Lords Day.

## Chapter 7

**I must never forget to mention the old back house which was our playroom as well as wash house etc.**

**In those days oranges used to be wrapped round with different coloured tissue paper. As children we used to gather these up and what we made out of those gaily coloured squares of paper no one could imagine.**

**We would make patterns out of them by cutting the paper when folded into small pieces. We always started in the centre and cut where our fancy led us to go, and it really was wonderful the shapes that came out. According to the open work of the paper, according was the price when we played shops.**

**Another thing we did with them was to make flowers brim our 'Tam-o'shanter'. What style and colours. Talk about the leading fashions of the west end of London, they had not a look in for originality and style.**

**The shop business with us was a reality. We used to gather brown pottery such as women used in those days to knead the bread in. They used to be thrown away when broken. In our yard we had what was called a pot tub, and if none was there we would go hunting for it.**

**The dark brown pot was bacon. If it had a white lining inside, it was fat bacon. What we called when we were children Black Man's Baccy (the real name or as we knew it locally to be called celt) was rice, after the flower was stripped from the stalk. The flower of the docken leaf (which is a brown when ripe - green when not) was used for other cereals. Then there is a green plant with great big leaves and thick stalks we used for rhubarb.**

**What ever we wanted to sell we could get something to substitute it.**

**Scales did not worry us. A broad flat piece of wood did the trick, put level on a couple of stones when we wanted to weigh. A small or larger stone on one end, and the bundles on the other end did the trick. Of course we only played in the back house if it was fine. Other days it was either down the lane or up in the top fields, which belonged to us.**

**My mother or sister could never keep a needle or pin for us. We used to sneak them like mad to sew dolls clothes and dress our dolls. We used to see who could dress them the nicest and take them shopping with us.**

**One day Janet and Letty went to Amys shop to buy something and Amy said, "*do you know my cockles are so dear they are two pence or tuppence a penneth or pennyworth*". Of course those two would break the shop up by making fun of Amy and there was no shop that day.**



**When it was summer time we used to go down the lane to play when off school. That was the best place because there were no prying eyes**

of our older brother and sisters to tell what we were doing and make fun of us. Father used to have some buildings down there. No traffic ever came because it was just a lane leading to a few houses, then at the bottom was some building which father rented with three fields.

Near the buildings were some turkeys in what they called a garth (which is not a yard but a green patch, walled round). My brother Dick and Hannah were too big for the younger end, they used to go with the pig meat to feed the pigs. That was alright - but in this garth were some turkeys, and they aggravated the old bubbly jock as they called it, and the old bird did not know what to do. I do not mean throwing stones etc, that was to them cruel, but aggravated it by imitating it.

At last the person who owned them came out and threatened to tell their father. They were always sure never to go so far again to bring her out. Although she was a decent lady and never split on them.

That same sister and brother (when we were in what we called the top field) told me to mind the children and they would bring me back some big cattarrs. Do you know what they are? Just haws or fruit of the May blossom. It was a dud minding those children. Certainly they brought some beautiful cattarrs to us, but we found out they had been helping themselves to some of a lady's green gooseberries.



While up in that field one Good Friday I found half a gold sovereign and, knowing it must belong to my father, gave him it when he came home. He gave us all a penny, and to this day I think I earned that penny for handing the half sovereign over to dad.

I bought a half penny worth of mint imperials, they were a lot for your money. Then a half penny worth of toffee. My mother thought I was wicked because I spent the penny instead of giving half for lazarus.



Speaking of mint imperials brings to my mind old Granny Nicholson and Granda too. One was little with a black crocheted net over her white hair. She was very tidy and as was the fashion in those days a clean housewife always had a lovely white apron on. The old gentlemen had the loveliest white hair and beard.

We were just like other children and we watched to see who was in the shop. The shop by the way was the front room of their house. If Granda was in we were sure of an extra large lump or a dozen more sweets. Old Granny would come in quietly sometimes before we got out and said weigh them over, and of course like all men he had to put them back.

Then there was Granny Carrigan. We were not allowed there because she used to sleep in the room. Sometimes we transgressed and went in for something she hadn't got - just to see her great big bed in the room, with the pope hung over the mantle piece and all the other

catholic figures. After a while she got gas in the house and the meter was behind the door. As they came out they would turn the meter off.

Granny Newsome was the favourite, but she was always away in the winter to her sons. She used to sell lovely broken scotch and we would talk to her. She was treated with respect by us all.



There was one Easter Monday. Father and mother as usual were at Darlington - which was, and still is, a great day there. We were left at home. My oldest sister was sitting on the yard step with a cup of tea and a book. All the rest were either in the house or yard for it was a fine playground for "kit cat", "marbles", "tops and whips", "puss in corner", "charlie over the water", and any other game.

By the way father had made us a swing in the passage and we could touch the ceiling with our toes when we went high.

This particular Easter Monday Letty was on the swing. Having a try, or whether she was going to jump off, I cannot quite remember, but we knew nothing until there was a splash. The children all shouted, myself included, for there was Lettie - head downwards - feet in the air - in the rainwater tub.

Quick as lightening my sister Tisy jumped up, cup going one way the book the other. She pulled Letty out by her legs, took her in the house, changed her and she appeared none the worse.



That yard of ours could tell some tales too, especially when we wanted to play circuses. An old orange box with a few hens in, old Tip the dog and Mary Ann the cat all helped - and when Bob put one of mother's print skirts on as showman, everyone was complete for the circus. I do not know how he did it but he could get those hens to go in one at a time, he really was a marvellous lad with animals. All these games never cost us any money and there was no dysfunction either. Our father and mother saw to that.

I remember one thing my father could not stand, that was the banging of a door. If by chance he happened to be in the house, and we went out and clashed the door behind us, he would say "*who is that that has just gone out*". "*So and so*" we would reply. "*Tell them to come back*", and back they would come. "*Shut the door*" he would say again. If it banged again they were brought back, and he would say "*I will not tell you again to shut the door quietly*". One thing he taught us girls and boys was to respect property. One of his favourite sayings was "*remember, a penny saved is a pound earned*".

Some times we did really fall out with one another and have serious quarrels. Then mother would come out with her favourite rhyme - "*Little birds in their nests doth agree, tis a shameful thing that we children of one family cannot agree*". That more often than not settled us down for a while at least.

# Chapter 8

One or two incidents in my own life stand out very vividly.

One of these incidents was on a wet cold winters day. The shop floor was covered with straw because there had been a heavy snow storm. The floor being wood seemed to seep in all the snow off the boots of customers coming in.

This particular day, a girl called Matilda Simpson came in for a loaf of bread. Mother handed her the loaf and the change as well. Matilda was a little careless and let two pence drop amongst the straw on the floor, but no one had heard it drop. She told mother what she had done and of course mother and I looked but never found it. So mother said *"When the straw is up from the floor you shall get it back if it is there"*.

The girl went out, but I continued to look for it and found it. Mother said *"call the girl back"* which I did. When the girl had gone again I said to mother *"Mother you could have kept that two pence, she would never have known whether you had found it or not"*.

I never forgot the look on mothers face as she said *"Myra - that girl has lots of brothers and sisters and her father drinks. If she had not got that twopence she may have had to go without something because her mother was twopence short. I fancy we would have been rogues just for twopence"*.

There was my mothers teaching.  
The seed little found root though, for I was only a little child.



The other time that I remember well, was lying on the bed upstairs kicking my legs, and swearing for all I was worth and using awful language. My sister Meggie came into the back house that was under the bedroom and brought mother unbeknown to me. I got no thrashing but the lecture I got went deep and I never did it again. Mother never used to say *"Jesus won't love you etc"*, in our punishment. Religion as children was not mentioned. God is love was what we were taught from the beginning.



When I tell you an incident of my sister Janet it will show you we were very far from being angels - only everyday youngsters.

There was a bachelor and his spinster sister lived together. The sister tending her bit of garden, just a tiny one at that, but it was kept without a weed in it. She was as prim and proper - as her brother was just as easy and loved his pint. At the end of our row, and their side

door facing this garden, was a public house. The owners children were all girls and Janet had a grudge against the eldest girl for some reason or another and had made up her mind to get even with her.

We were always forbidden to go out at night time as children, dad used to say (mother as well) - if she knew where she had us, we could not be blamed if we were not there. This particular night we were playing as usual in the back house when Janet mysteriously disappeared. No one knew where she was at but she was not gone long enough for us to be worried over her.

Presently a woman came into the shop and said "*Mrs. Carter will you speak to your Janet. She has pushed our Margaret Ann over the wall and she fell amongst Miss Maddinsons flowers and spoilt them*". She had her Margaret Ann with her who had been crying.

Mother said "*I hardly think it is Janet Mrs. Mountgomery*".  
"*Yes it was*" the woman replied.

So mother said "*come with me and we will see*".

Janet was playing like the rest of us and mother said "*there you are you can see*". The woman turned and gave her another slap or two for telling lies.



Upstairs at night we used to have fine times on the quiet. Of course by the time of these happenings Tisy and Meggie were in the growing-up stage and were beginning to feel grown up. Older sisters have to put up with a lot sometimes (so have the younger set too). They loved to get us off to bed. You felt from tea-time they watched the clock for 6 o'clock in the winter and 6.30 in the summer (sometimes it may be 7 o'clock).

One of our favourite pastimes or games when we went to bed was playing schools. In those days there were no interior spring mattresses. We used to take the bed clothes off and then roll and roll the bed down to the bottom of the bedstead that was the desk. We were teachers and used to borrow Meggie and Tisy's Sunday clothes and put them on then we were grown up someone was on the watch to see who came upstairs. Then we would be that interested we would forget to watch and they would come upstairs and we got what we really deserved.

I remember the day we had been learning at school in the history lesson about the South Sea Bubble and it left people bankrupt on account of it not being solvent. At night the boys were in their room across the landing and the girls in theirs. We were acting this South Sea Bubble all over again - the lads against the girls. Mother told us twice to be quiet but this night we fairly let go.

There was an old chap who used to gather rags and bones who said to father he would gather him some burdocks to make beer. "*Best beer going Robinson*", but you must dry them first. He got dad some and they were put in the back room to dry.

How mother got up those stairs that night I do not know, but she did. She went into the back room and got a bunch of these burdocks and

came straight down the steps into our room and gave us one two three on our tender parts before we could scramble into bed. Did we holler.

Then she went into Bob and Willie who hollered more and she went downstairs to find some people wanting to know what was the matter. They thought the house was on fire. When we said to Bob and Willie how those old burdocks stung they said, "*We slipped under the feather bed while she was in your room, and put the clothes on top. We shouted loud so she would think we were hurt a lot*".

We never had time to think, but Jack Hudson got it when we saw him and no burdock beer was made that year.



There was a very old lady died suddenly and as she died away from home. They wanted mother to be there when they brought her corpse home, which was about 2 o'clock in the morning.

My sister Meggie was supposed to look after us, but she would not give us plenty to eat. If my older sister interfered then there was trouble - somehow she used to rub us up the wrong way. I do not think she meant to at all, but we were not an easy crew to handle.

That day father gave us some disinfectant shells he had bought from a man at the door who said they would keep flies off anything in the room. Of course they were none such to hear the man talk so dad bought some and hung them up in the slaughter house thinking it would keep the flies off the meat. He soon found out that it did worse than that so he gave them to us to play with.

My sister Meggie did rub us up the wrong way that day and no mistake. We took these fancy shells to bed. Of course she nor any one else knew, but we thought we would just spite her out for what she did to us. We rubbed two shells together all over the sheets and blankets, the pillows, put some inside the pillow slips and rubbed some on the bed until the room reeked with disinfectant. Then rolled her night dress up in them. It really was a shame for that was a job done thoroughly.

My Grandmother was staying at home at the time and dad had bought a tortoise. We had not had it many days and Grandmother placed the washstand beside the door for fear the tortoise came upstairs. She was occupying the boys room. They having moved into the backroom. Another thing it would keep the stink out that those little devils made (thats us). What she would do with us if she had her way - she always though mother was not strict enough etc etc.

When Meggie and 'Tisy came to bed there was a hullabaloo and no mistake. All the cherubs fast asleep, disinfectant did not interfere with their sweet repose but they got a smack or two. Fresh bed clothes had to be got. Everything on that bed had either to be washed or hung on the line outside to air. Truly that room was disinfected, so the shells were not wasted after all.





My sister Tisy never would go to bed without a glass of water on the mantle piece for fear it was wanted through the night. Of course there was logic in that for it was a cold march to the tap at the other end of the house, and it woke us all up if there was a disturbance in the bedroom. That drink of water was often used for a different purpose.

Meggie again came in for a share of it one morning. They thought (Janet and Letty I mean) that they would try their hand playing at christening.

Meggie was asleep early this particular morning when they thought they would christen her (Baptize if you like the word better). Of course the glass of water was very useful and did the purpose fine. Instead of a few drops on her face they gave her a generous supply. You surely can imagine the results. Meggie jumping up and scattering the two of them, but they were a bit too quick for her and were out of bed before she could get at them.

Bye the way this was about five am in the morning.

Another trick those two had was to touch her warm feet with their cold ones or tickle her foot. Then when she managed to get one of them they would start singing, "*Meggie and her lambs, Letty scratched her leg in the bed, she blamed it on to Janets legs did you ever see such fun in a bed as Meggie and her lambs*". Those two really were pests.

One day a spider was hanging by a single thread. Meggie was blissfully asleep when they started early morning to say it was getting nearer Meggies nose. They had her just helpless that morning. Do you wonder why mother or father never intervened. Well as I have said before their bedroom was the other end. There was a landing a bedroom and another landing before their bedroom and of course no one would tell tales except the older sisters would grumble, then we would behave for a while. As I go on with the incidents and we grow older I will return to that bedroom again.

## Chapter 9

I remember the first day I went to school. The infant school had just been built and wasn't I proud of going to school with my brother Dick and his pals Harrison Glarkson, Joe Poole, etc.

It was a cold March day and I had a hand in each pocket. Dick was no angel either although he was reckoned amongst the older he could play a trick as good as the rest. The school master lived in the school house and in front of his windows he had some beautiful flowers, they were a joy to behold. The tea roses that grew up the walls either side of his door were the loveliest I can remember. Whether it is because I was a child at the time I cannot say, but as I write this down I can see those beautiful rose trees climbing up the wall one mass of beautiful yellow roses.

This particular morning Dick and his pals must have been a bit too rough. They had ruined the masters flowers and he was so annoyed that he offered five shillings if anyone could give information regarding who had done it. These lads wanted the money so they put their heads together to see how they could do it. Of course the dopey one always gets the dog to hold. So the dopey one of the three was chosen as the culprit. One of the others told, and the boy that got the thrashing got so much and the rest divided between the other two.



Another thing he did (that is my brother Dick) he would go after feeding the animals into the vicars orchard and pinch apples. Then go like a little saint to the open air and play his instrument. It came to him a long long while after that, that it was wrong. When I say a long, long while I mean years.

My father or mother did not know, for that was one thing they were very strict on - our honesty.



My sister Hannah was no angel either. I well remember the time she used to scare the life out of me with a woman they nicked Jinny Blackin Pot.

Going to school she used to tell me all sorts of things about this old woman. How she ate coal and she would put a curse on you if you did not do as you were told by her. You can imagine how I bothered one Friday afternoon when this dirty woman came out of her house and beckoned me with her dirty finger as we passed the square where her house was on our way to school. I went over to her and she thrust three half pence and an old dirty can into my hand and said *"go over there and get me gill of beer"*.

I didn't know what to do. Hannah and her girlfriend didn't either.

Eventually I went up the steps to the public house and as soon as the landlady saw me, she said *"what are you doing here."* I told her I wanted a gill of beer for that woman in the square. She stood and looked at me - I would be no more than ten years old - and said *"you go down those steps straight to school and do not go into a public house for anyone. What will your father say. I'll tell him and that woman too"*.

I was so glad, I ran past the old woman who was the other side of the wall and took no notice of her shouts at all. When I went home my father certainly did speak to me about it, but not blaming me, only telling me to promise never to go to a public house again or any place where he would not take me.

When I told him about the curse on us, he asked who told me. Of course Hannah got a lecture on hurting a childs mind etc etc.



**My father and mother must have had a blind eye many a time to what we did for I know they knew our Hannah and Letty (as they grew older) got up early of a Sunday morning and lighted the backhouse fire to boil pigs feet before they went off to the seven o'clock service. For Hannah always had a soft spot for her stomach - like Dick, Janet, Amy and Letty. As years rolled on I am sure they knew more than they had let on to us.**

**While I never joined much in their pranks, I was not a sneak and never gave them away unless it was really something that was too serious.**



**The old back house comes up again when on a Saturday morning Hannah was doing some house work she would give Letty or Janet some droppings to make some chips. Can you (other than my brothers or sisters) imagine this, yet I assure you it is the simple truth.**

**They would get a large sized tin lid. Put some dripping in. Cut about three potato chips and put them in the tin lid. Put the lid between the bars and fry them.**

**Hannah knew when to slip across the yard and sample a chip. More often than not the lid capsized into the ashes and many a finger end was burned, but they persevered Saturday after Saturday.**



**I cannot say much about Sam, my oldest brother by adoption. He was a serious sort of person and was older by a few years. We all stood rather in awe of him. He was a good lever to the household and we could always go to him for advice, but he made us feel ashamed if we did anything shady at all.**



**Why I have never mentioned the dog I cannot say, because Tip was part of our family. The folk called him Tip Carter and a wiser or better dog was hard to find. It was cross between a cur and an old fashioned bob tailed sheep dog. We took it all over with us and we were safe and felt happy if it was with us. Anyone could come down the yard without it raising an alarm, they could look round the place (that was in day time) but let them lay a hand on anything or try to go out without seeing anyone and you could look out.**

**Three people only that dog disliked and would not allow them near without someone was in the yard. We used to take it with us to play kick the block and talk to it like one of ourselves, but its special charge was my youngest brother Will.**

**People coming through with cattle would ask for a loan of the dog to see them through the village and dad would say "*off you go Tip give them a hand.*" It would see them round the corner then turn round and come home.**

There were some friends (girlfriends) who used to come for supper of a Sunday night and when it was cold and bleak, or very wet, Tip would go across the fields and see these girls safely home. Tip would never enter the house, just stand outside and wait until they had shut the door and then turn for home. Many a late night or early morning when mother has been away on an excursion, or my older sisters have, we gone to meet them and taken the dog. He never walked with you (or behind you) unless someone was coming. Then he walked behind them until they were well passed. Then he'd come to you as if to say "*now you are safe*".

He picked some poison up, and my youngest brother felt it keenly. In our way we gave it a burial, had cards made out for it, and truly mourned for good old Tip.



Time moves fast in a home where happiness reigns, but I do not want to create the impression that there were never any differences of opinions or quarrels. For there was but one thing I do thank God for - and that is that there was no enmity fostered.

I think that must have been helped by the books and papers that were in the home. For regular attendance at Sunday School and good conduct we each year received a prize. The first prize (or practically the first) was either 'Old Testament Heroes' or 'The Life of Our Lord', and although someone before us had had those books we wanted them for our own prize. We would look and devour the stories, and such books as received as we grew older that we received from the juniors. Those, plus the papers in the home (which were not many) fostered in our minds the love of good reading.

## Chapter 10

I have previously mentioned that time moves fast and, when Willie was a baby, a doctor wanted to adopt one of us, preferably Willie. But mother and father would part with none. We had it hard in the Salvation Army at that time. I mean it was hard to be a Christian as my father and mother had taught us and shown us by their lives.

Mother and father were beginning to see the fruit of their labours as Salvationists. As far as they were able, they had kept their vows to God when they gave each of us as we came into the world back to God. I am firm in the conviction that what a child sees in the home in his early years has a greater bearing on his future life than parents think.



My sister Meggie and brother Dick got to the age when they felt they would like to be Salvation Army officers. Both father and mother knew what that meant for them, yet they would not persuade them to

**give up the idea or to encourage them to go. An Army officer in those days was not what it is now. They went into Training.**

**It was hard in Training, and when they were sent out to preach the gospel there was no guarantee of salary. Many times they would only have eighteen pence to take. They had to go (as now) where they were sent - it really was a call from God with them.**

**Father and mother were just beginning to see the fruit of their labours when they had (shall I say) this shock of them going away. My brother Sam felt it keenly, for he and Dick were very good pals indeed. Father told Dick and Meggie that there was always a home for them, but they must never run away but do right - even if the sky fell in. God would look after them.**

**That was our first break in the family.**



**Tisy was keeping company with a young man against fathers wishes, but he had to give in at the end and they got married. A very good husband he has made for her too.**

**Hannah went for school teaching and had her bit of flirting, which scared a woman that much she declared she had seen a ghost and raised such a shout it brought the street out.**

**There was an officer at that time at that time (at home) no one knows how he got to be one. He himself said he sat on the college steps and would not know how he had been called by God. I really think he was a little bit wanting and I can truly say if anyone could stand in an open air with that man then they really loved the Lord, for he was no credit to anyone.**

**Being the sort we were, we saw the funny side of the affair - and a good thing we did - for if we had once let go our open airs or meetings I hardly think we would have commenced again. Our parents had some wise sayings. One especially was "he that fights and runs away lives to fight another day".**

**Talk about the good old Army !**



**Well I do not know whether it was good in our village at the time or not. This I do say. If, as Christ says "I come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly" then that life abundantly fills all the want of worldly pleasures.**

**Even at my age I still believe God never intended his people to be miserable. You must get fun out of your religion as much as your solidness.**

**The sun is just as necessary as the rain, frost, snow, and wind. So while the rain waters; the frost cleanses; the snow keeps the earth**

warm, and the wind lightens and blows the dead leaves about - everyone is happy when they see the sun come through.

I think the fun in religion is like the four seasons. It is necessary !! It is a poor religion that has no fun, and a poor Christian who cannot see fun even amongst himself.



I remember one officer. I would not question his goodness but he certainly was a bit eccentric. His name was Laycock. He thought of a bright idea by putting a card in his window.

"Laycock in" - when he was in.

"Laycock out" - when he was out.

Imagine anyone with a sense of humour seeing that.

He could not sing a note and my sister Hannah always used to start the singing. Such songs as *"Don't turn him away Hannah, I am thine Hannah, Draw me nearer Hannah etc etc"*. Well now imagining that happening in your family. Could you help having a bit of fun outside about it.



He was great on memorials and funerals and one night in the meeting the place was full. This officer asked all who had loved ones die during the past ten years to stand up. I can assure you my mother was not often caught napping but it was a good service and everyone felt a good influence in the place of worship.

But when he struck up *"Are you coming home tonight"*, this was just too much for mother. She sat down thinking what a scatter there would be if they all came home that night.

One thing those days of queerness showed (I use that word for want of a better) was whether we were Christians. In word ,thought or deed certainly it was not to be seen and heard.



My father and mother set us a good example and standard of religion. Father was a Salvationist from conviction and in our village there seemed to be a certain number who had no desire to help themselves or let God do it for them.

They had no ambition to be clean, honest or even decent, but expected God to do for them what they could actually do for themselves. But as everyone knows, God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I will not say were were not ashamed of the Army many a time - or I should say this class of people - for they outnumbered the real Salvationist and often it was a real cross for us to bear to mix with them.

**I think I have mentioned before of one particular woman. Janet and Amy were at the open air and this woman was there. She insulted them right and left every Sunday morning until this particular Sunday they felt they could stand it no more. They came home and said they would not go to the open air any more where that woman was.**

***"Alright" mother said and said no more.***

**Janet and Amy still kept airing their views. Nothing was said until it came towards the end of the week and they were talking about it again. Then mother turned and said *"If your religion is no better than hers, then for goodness sake stop away and do not be a hypocrite. But you should feel shame of yourselves. Remember she cannot have been taught what is right and wrong like you. Therefore if your standard is only as high as hers you are more to blame, because yours should be much higher than that"*.**

**Was there not a lot of wisdom in her - I mean mothers teachings, she conquered and I will not say that that week she must have had many an anxious moment.**

**Can you see the importance of home training.**



**Meggie, Dick, and Hannah had now gone as Army officers and Sam married. I may say that that particular woman was disappointed because she did not marry my brother Sam (and we suffered for it). A good thing she never was a sister in law.**

**Bob was left as head boy after Dick went, for Sam would never have the butchering. Bob liked looking after the stock rather than killing. Although he was a big lad he carried his humour with him.**

**I remember one day father bringing a dealer to see a beast he wanted to sell. So they both went down the lane to have a look at it. Imagine dad's surprise when on the flank of the beast was drawn the Union Jack. He was as we would say flabbergasted or amazed.**

**The man burst out laughing and said *"nay Robinson, I am as patriotic as the next but I hardly like taking a cow through the street with a Union Jack on his side"*. All dad could say was *"that lad will be the death of me"*.**



**Another time, horse hair was up to 2/6p a pound and Bob wanted some to make a pound - when to him he had a brain wave. He cut it off the horses tail and left about five inches of stump.**

**Every Thursday mother and father liked the afternoon in the market of the nearby town having a look round. So as usual Bob harnessed the horse into the trap and father and mother went out. Dad looked at the horse, saw his tail and wanted to know what was the matter.**

When he was told what Bob had done - *"well Dear oh Bless me that lad will be the death of me"* was what he said.

Mother said every time the horse (old Tom we called him) cocked his tail up father would go off in laughter until the tears came. Then when he went to park his horse and trap at the ostlers, the ostler said *"Law Carter, what have you done to the horse's tail ?"* Dad said it is that fool of a son of mine.

He really was what the country call today a problem child.



Like all young lads verging on twenty there is an urge for something different and father and Bob somehow did not hit it or agree like the other boys of the family.

I remember father got him into the Metropolitan Police Force. Dad thought it would be the making of him. But just before the last papers were signed, Bob said *"I would much rather have been an Army officer"*. So he had his choice and still his fun seemed to be uppermost but it was all good fun.

Then when Bob was sent to the Corps at Whitechurch, World War One broke out.

Bob was the first Salvationist to list up as such. He went to Whitehall and fought for his right to be recognized as a Salvationist - or he would not go.

He won the day and then became 'A Kitcheners Man'.

## Chapter 11

Now I come to my youngest brother, the youngest of the eleven.

As it is obvious to everyone, the youngest is always more spoilt than any. I am, and have always been, sorry for the middle part of a family. The eldest have the parents confidence - they look after the children. While the middles just fit in - and the youngest always have a lot of notice taken of them.

My brother Will was a loveable lively lad with never an answer to seek, and it resulted in him being very popular.

With my brothers and sisters away he had not the same amount of fun in the house. At night time there were none of his age and, being a big boy, people thought him older than he was.



He was often scoffed and called coward because he had not joined up like the other youths. He was not sixteen then. I remember a big recruiting meeting in the station yard and several speakers there (that was before conscription came in). He of course stood listening and some of the agitators shouted to him not to be a coward and join up.

The catholic priest was speaking at the time and there was a bit of a how you do when Will said *"when I am old enough no one need ask me to go - I have tried already and they will not have me"*.

The agitators shouted the more. So he shouted *"Father how old am I, they say I should join up"*.

The priest said *"Let that lad alone. If they were all like him there would be no need of these meetings he is not sixteen yet"*.

He certainly did give father and mother an anxious time. Going to London to get into the airforce and anywhere he could to try and get him and his pal in the Army.

All the lads from the band had gone and Will was left on his own. Imagine a house-full - then just three girls and a boy. The result was he got into company that was not good. His love of music and his wit made him an ever popular guest wherever he went.



Time went on and he had to go. Which left only Janet, Amy and I at home. My eldest sister came home with her baby, while her husband was away. Father was in a good way of business and while I could not tolerate the butchering, Janet and Amy used to help him. Janet was in the shop in the village which had been opened some years earlier.

I refer to that woman again who was the bane of our lives as children and was getting no better.

The Army often had half nights of prayer and our place of worship meant a lot to us. We were never the 'in and out kind'. We were taught that it was God we worshiped and the Army was the place we worshiped Him in.

There was one of these half nights of prayer and naturally we went down to join in prayer. We heard this woman say something that was anything but nice. She was always poisoning the young folk against us that were the weaker willed sort. As to her remarks, we never let on we heard her. All the same they hurt the three of us.

Not many weeks after that incident my brother Bob came home on leave and we had a very happy time because he thought a lot of his sisters and we of him. As a family we seemed to go in pairs of numbers, although we were all happy together. As I have stated it was good to have Bob home and we were telling him about this awful woman (of course he came in for a share of her nasty ways when he was at home and naturally understood us).

Somehow she had gone round fathers to let her put a goat into his field and give it hay for three pence a week. This particular leave that Bob had ( when we were telling him about this womans goings on with us) we said I wish to goodness we could do something to make her grumble about. I do not know which one suggested it (suffice it that one of us did) that her goat should be milked. That was no sooner said than agreed by us all.

As I write I can see her now with her can on her arm. Linking arms with about a dozen lassies or lads. They formed a chain across the road and they were going with her to milk the goat. It really was funny - Bob, Janet, Amy, and I walking down the road at the same time as she and her contingent were coming up.

To be fair, we always said good evening. But up would go her head and never a word would she speak - and naturally the others would not speak either.

You would have thought butter would not melt in our mouths so sedate were we. Bob had milked the goat letting the milk run on the grass. Of course the next night nothing happened, but the night after it was done again. Then a couple of nights later on it was let loose. There was only the four of us knew anything about it and Bob went back to his camp and apparently everything quieted down again.

About a fortnight after, father was having his breakfast. It was Sunday morning by the way and he was ready to go to the open air when Amy said *"Dad, where is so and so's goat these days. I have not seen it in the field for a week or two ?"*

Dad said *"Oh the goat. Either the Belgians or the pit lads would not leave it alone so she has taken it up to Mathers"*.

We never could keep quite long and Amy said *"Would it surprise you to know the Belgians or pit lads were your own children"*. (The Belgians were refugees in the World War).

I can see him now turning round in his armchair from the table and looking at us - then the lecture that he tried to give us. He stopped in the middle and said *"dear oh bless me what next"* and laughed, because while we did not harm the goat her husband lost a days work looking for it.

We deserved the policemen after us as much as the children today.



There was one house in the village that I can always look on with pleasure. Simple hardworking folk. Not brilliant but they were good folk and we spent many a happy hour there. They were not well off but were spotlessly clean and hardly a night past but what we visited Polly Targetts home.

I shall relate an instance that occurred. We were really innocent of any of the consequence, but a good thing no one knew who did it.

We called as usual this particular night and, in conversation, Polly said *"You know Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Habron. They are both in the Good Templars and they have been quarrelling in the street. Mrs. Brown accused Mrs. Habron of taking drink on the sly and there has been an awful row"*. We talked of other things as well and forgot about this until we opened the door to go home.

Just on the step was an empty stout bottle and Polly said someone had meant this for one of their doors she should think. Janet said she would put it on some ones window sill seeing it was Valentine's day tomorrow. Can you believe - it she just went across the street and put it on a window sill.

The night was dark all windows and shutters outside - which when nighttime came they used to close and fasten with a hook that was attached to one of the shutters by attaching the hook to a small staple on the window sill. It was not a night that anyone would care to leave a door open, because the weather was wet and everyone felt sorry for themselves.

Amy, Janet, and I walked off home and never gave the stout bottle another thought. As usual we went into the village next day and called at Polly's house. As soon as we entered she burst out laughing and said *"where did you put that empty bottle last night"*.

Janet said *"Why - on someone's window sill. What's the matter"*.

*"Matter"* says Polly. *"Why you should have been here through the day. Mrs Brown and Mrs Habron has had the street raised. One accusing the other all day. You must have put it on Mrs. Habrons window sill. Because she found it when she went outside to open the shutters. It got so bad the policemen had to come and make the peace. How it will end we do not know."*

There were we, such good little girls, the cause of an upshot like that. Yes - all you nieces, nephews and great ones as well.



We had our fun, which we remember and enjoyed, 'The Pictures' never entered our heads. We were too busy having fun that we didn't pay for and can remember for ever.

Can any one of us from Sam, right down to the youngest of us, ever forget the nights when father and mother went off on an excursion without having any of their pretty little dears with them. The night my brother in law Billy Stockdale had a phonograph.

Gramophones were not on the go then. If they were we had not seen or heard of them. As I say we simply cannot forget those nights because we used to have such fun.

After the shop was shut, my 'brother in law to be' used to bring his phonograph up with his records. They were like little rollers. The Bell where the sound came out was a great big one. You could easily put your head inside the bell end. To hear a voice say *"This is an Edison*

***Bell record; March under the Double Eagle or The Mocking Bird"*** sounded grand to us. But the chief joy was when we started making records.

Billy got some blank records and we all in turned tried to sing down. If it didn't take - out would come turpentine and rags to rub it clean and start again. What voices; what noise; but it was good.



Bye the way. I am writing all this in hospital - and as I put at the front ***"Down Memories Lane"*** - you will not exactly expect it to be all in apple pie order. For I write as I think of this incident or the other incident - just as my memory works.

One thing I can assure you it is all true.



One afternoon father and mother went away. No I am wrong - it was mother who went for the day and left my sister Meggie to look after the children while Tisy was doing the washing. She told Meggie to make a rice pudding for dinner. Never dreaming that that would be all she would make.

As a family we liked a rice pudding when mother made them. She put eggs in, butter as well and grated nutmeg on top. They were lovely and milky too.

Well as I said. Meg had to make one for dinner this day. We came in from school - and out came this rice pudding - which as hungry children we ate. Then asked for something else.

***"No! You have had your dinner"***.

***"That is not dinner" said one of us, "that is only rice pudding"***.

Well said she ***"you are not getting anything more"***. She would not either - no matter how we asked.

So we said ***"I will tell Sam"***.

***"You can tell who you like. You are not getting it"***.

Sam by the was now married and living in the front house. So he came in and told her to give us some bread if there was nothing else for dinner.

***"They are not having anything else. Mother said I was to make a rice pudding for them and they have had it. I used a cupful of rice what more do they want."***

To cut the story short. It ended with Sam taking us into his house and his wife filled up the empty corners. So we always connect Meggie with a rice pudding.



While on about rice puddings, I will mention an incident with Dick and Hannah.

One day there was a rice pudding for dinner again and Dick, as serious as a judge, said *"Mother. Do you know our Hannah eats rice !"*

Mother said *"No, I certainly did not know"*.

Hannah speaks up and said *"Our Dick, you are telling lies. I do not eat rice"*.

Dick said *"But I've seen you. It is you that are telling the lies."* It got so heated that mother said *"There must be something in it Hannah, for Dick to stick out that you do eat rice"*.

Then after her many denials Dick thought he had gone far enough and said *"What is that you have on your plate, yet you keep denying eating rice"*.

Mother looked at him and said *"Dick I could knock your head off upsetting the house"*.

I think mothers have an awful time sorting out all the troubles. Smoothing troubled waters all the time where there is a family. Especially if it is a family like ours, always full of the joys of spring.



One day my Aunt Polly and Uncle Charlie came from Middlesbrough on a visit just for the afternoon.

Aunt Pol as father called her was a dream. I was always glad she was not my mother, she was too dreamy, but she knew how to make money. My Grandmother had always sympathy for Aunt Polly but not much for mother, because my mother always seemed to manage and never wanted or asked for sympathy. Where as Aunt Polly was of a different temperament altogether.

I was talking about Aunt Polly and Uncle Charlie coming for an afternoon, then at night mother and father going for a walk with them. From myself down to the youngest always went to bed early and this particular night mother said *"now I will bring you some sweets in if you go to bed and cause no troubles"*. We promised.

When she came back, mother said *"have the children been good"*.

*"I have not heard a sound said Meggie they have been grand"*. Had we I wonder. I will tell you what had happened and just you see if we had been good.

About a week before, there had been at school a man from Jamaica giving a magic lantern lecture about his country and cocoa trees and the cocoa beans and how they grew etc etc. It happened to be

summer time so all the windows were darkened with brown paper and anything they could find. The pictures were very good indeed and, as children, nothing escaped our eyes.

Now I come to this particular night when we were so very good. There were five younger than I, Bob and Willie being the only lads. So Tish, Janet, Amy, and I let them come into our room so we would have a magic lantern. We had made up our minds before to have it one night. We had taken some large sheets of parchment or grease proof paper as it is now called. I had a few pencils and we were all set for to show some pictures. So we wanted to know how to do it. The nights were light and we had no brown paper.

We knew how we were going to make the pictures. We would draw ducks, hens and anything we fancied on the parchment with a pencil. Two would hold it up while a third had a lighted candle at the back to show up what was drawn. That sounded grand in our imagination, but how could we darken the room. The blind was white linen of which my mother was rather proud of. By the way everyone had linen blinds or venetian blinds in those days (that was before paper blinds came out in World War One. Now they just have curtains).

Anyway we wanted the room darkened and we must find a way. So one of us had a very brainy idea to get a quilted quilt off a bed and pin it to blind. Then get a sheet or blanket and fasten that to the wall at one end and pin it to the paper at the corner. That would do to let the children in for the magic lantern. We got all nicely fixed up and all set for the show when we heard something click click clicking.

Tish shouted - *"Oh Myra, the quilt is tearing the blind"*.

I went to see what I could do and shouted *"lift the quilt up at the other end"*. But before that could be done there was a great tear like the letter T in blind.

All our enthusiasm went flat. We packed up and got back into bed. Oh no there was no noise and for sure we were never as quiet as that night. Every one of us remember and can never forget mother coming upstairs and saying *"Well you have kept your promise so here are the sweets I promised"*.

This is where mother and father's training about truthfulness came in.

Not one of us could take those sweets without first telling my mother. So being the eldest I had to say *"Mother we have torn the blind"*.

*"Oh, what with. How did you manage that"*. Then the story had to be told.

That night we cannot forget, because sweets were such a luxury. Mother said *"You will just do without your sweets, and they are peach or pear drops"*. I forget which it was now, but you can believe me not one of us has ever bought a peach or pear drop since and never hear the name without thinking of that night. It fell to my lot to mend the blinds and it was not an easy matter when you think of it as glazed linen.

**What is there that can beat memories. Nothing to my knowledge. Especially those of childhood.**



**Another incident I can remember when Dick was young, about seventeen I should say, was pinching apples from the Vicar's Orchard and eating them going to the open air.**

**He said he had done it for a long time before it came to him that it was stealing. He thought there was more than the Vicar needed and he could eat some.**

**The day did come when he saw how wrong it was.**



**As I have grown older I cannot to this day understand why they take these young children into the juvenile courts to be tried. They would be far better if they knew the person who caught them could give them a smack and send them home.**

**My father always contended that to punish the child on the spot was far better than holding fear over them - and he was not a cruel man by any means. But he used to say to us it is no good coming to me - for you will get another. You should not be there.**

## **Chapter 12**

**Again I think not of our tricks and fun, but of the many queer folk who seems to be crowded into our childhood memories.**

**There was four very little people called Adam, Eve, Bobbie and Bessie. They were brothers and sisters, none of them married.**

**Poor Baggy Adam how they plagued him and Bobbie with his shiny waistcoats and Eve and Bessie. They were very little and like little tubs.**



**Then there was the 'Old Dutch' - as we nicknamed an old lady.**

**She lived on her own - and I am safe in saying - I never remember in all my life seeing a straighter woman. Although she was in her seventies she was as straight as a poplar tree. I am sure she must have had lessons on how to sit down. I could well imagine she would have to sit well back on her chair. Her back straight up against the back of her chair, knees together and feet as well. As she walked you would have thought there was a ruler down the centre of her back.**

She always came into the shop just as one was closing. She would come in, every Saturday night, and Janet and Amy (or any of the others) somehow dodged serving her. She was such a strange person with such strange fancies - besides, she liked me to attend her for she would spend twice as much if I was serving. Her hands were very bony, her face colourless and big bulging eyes that seemed to be always staring at you when she talked to you.

And what tales she could tell. How she would wake in the night to see two big shining lights at the foot of her bed and a voice telling her that he knew where her money was. And how she always looked all over the house and under the bed before she went to bed.

While she was telling me this she was fumbling in her bag for her purse. After a while she would get it out, but it was always inside yards of old rag. Then she fumbled for her correct change.

Many a time it was an hour after the shop closed before she would go. I had not the heart to turn her out. She seemed so lonely and I was so understanding. One Saturday night I nearly put my foot in it with her. When she came in and had been served it was about supper-time and all were listening to her in the kitchen at the back when she started telling me of the uses of carbolic soap.

*"Yes Miss Carter it is even good for joining cow horns together".*

*"Oh I said" I'm quite surprised I have never heard of that.*

Then she straightened herself up and said *"Yes, and I will tell you how I found out".*

*"I was out for a walk one day and coming home in a field opposite my house there was the farmer with a cows horn in his hand. I asked did he want it. No he said. Two of his cows had been fighting and one had its horn broken off, and it was a good cow too. Did I know how to mend it ?. Now Miss Carter, I had no idea but remember always try once anything that comes into your mind. So I said I have something in the house - and I brought out some carbolic soap and put it on the end that was broken off the cows horn. I put it on to the broken part that was on the cows head and believe me Miss Carter it stuck the two together. After awhile you could not tell which was broken."*

I happened to look up at the window that was in the wall between the shop and kitchen. There were two faces like full moons. When she got to the end of her tale there was such a laugh in the kitchen I had a job to keep my face straight and the old Dutch said *"they must be having a good time in there"*. I said to myself yes at my expense.



One day she would dress up and let me know what really being dressed up properly meant. I nearly faded out when she came in. Talk about a ship in full sail, well that was not in it to this old lady.



She had put on her best hat, which if it had one yard of ribbon on it had six. Then the feathers. She had trimmed the hat herself by the way and it really was a work of art. But her white net scarf and lace pitcher (or jabot) took the bun. Her jacket was tight fitting. Short with great leg o mutton sleeves. The skirt trailing the ground with about a half dozen frills on. She was a scream.

Imagine her as a tall gaunt women dressed like that and you can have an idea what a sensation she would cause walking through the streets where boys and girls were playing.

Miss Carter she said. *"I never have put up with such rudeness or cheek as I have tonight the way the children shouted at me and scoffed me showed they had never seen a well dressed person before. And if I had not promised you that I would show you how to dress I would have gone back home."*

I wished she had gone back, for it was an awful job for me to keep a serious face and be sympathetic too.

My niece Ena wrote a composition at school and without saying what it was about, she received 2nd prize at the show for it. The title was 'The Old Dutch'.

It caused a great deal of amusement.



Yes there were lots of oddities in the village.

I do not suppose more than any other village, but while we never made folk uncomfortable (for the simple reason they never knew) we looked upon them as funny.

It was more than we dare do, because both father and mother were very strict over our behaviors outside and inside regarding people older than ourselves and especially poor people. It was just amongst ourselves that we had a little fun about them.

I remember when my Uncle Bill was staying in the village with his three girls, I think I have mentioned him before. My mother spoke to him about his girls and he turned to mother and said *"Now Ria. I can say nothing. They take no notice of me. If you tell Janet or Amy there to tell them, they will take notice of them more than me"*.

Mother said *"What in the world do you mean Bill"*. I may add that Uncle Bill did not say it in such a polite way. However when mother asked what did he mean, he said if Janet or Amy there was to tell them to open Jack Pickerings shop or any other shop they would do it.

You can imagine how mother felt, and naturally wanted to know more about what he meant.

He said the village is alive at night. With the doors that are opened, the bells that are rung and the shop doors

flung open. I was waiting my turn for a hair cut in Jack Pickering's shop when the door flew open and someone shouted in 'a pound of tripe please'. I knew the voice and Jack said it was nearly every night except Friday and Saturday and Sunday, and no one could catch the little monkeys. The Sergeants house, Doctors and everybody's was the same. There was a gang.

It turned out that the front street was the only street. Four or five of them (all girls) formed a gang and some watched while others rang. Then they would do the opposite and ring at different times. By the way they were supposed to be at practice at the Army. That stopped their gallop.

The same things are done today by children. I have heard folk grumble and what they would do. Where were the policeman etc etc. I got fed up with one person grumbling about children that age and I asked them if they never a child themselves. What did 'they' do at that age.



Towards the end of these memories you will see how all these incidents helped me in my work as a woman.

All this phoey that we hear of in the present time about dealing with children makes me feel like writing to papers and saying it is not the children that needs so much attention as the mothers and fathers. They get off too lightly when their children are neglected and forsaken.

I do know my mother and father had no easy time with us. Many a time father used to say "*Not one of you are alike. You are all different in dispositions.*" Many a time he used to say to me as a young woman when I used to flare up with certain ones who definitely were not fair and tried to twist things to their liking.

After it was all settled (or shall I say in abeyance) he would say "*Myra. Learn to conquer yourself, then you will conquer others*". He never said control but conquer. Years after when he had passed over I remembered those words and was glad that he had ever taken me to one side and uttered them to me.

## Chapter 13

They used to sing a song in the Army which began:-

Many Queer folk in the Army they say,  
Good Old Army.  
But for the Army where would they all be,  
Good Old Army.

**Some of them oft used to wear ragged clothes,  
Some of them oft used to have a red nose,  
How the Army got hold of them nobody knows,  
Good Old Army.**

**Then the chorus went:-**

**The Good Old Army has come to try to do you good  
though its methods are strange and oft misunderstood  
we do it all for the best you know  
telling poor sinners where ever we go  
that they can be made as white as snow  
in Jesus' Blood.**



**We often thought the flood had given Witton Park more queer folk  
than anyone else.**

**When we think of the Black Sheep Tommy Gibson, Swank Howels,  
Martha Whiteman, Jack Hudson, Billy the Dodger, Blind Isaac, Mother  
and Daddy Bromley, Tommy Pritchard, Eddie May and Brother  
Summers (who we used to nickname 'Get your feet warmed Tommy').**

**We did get them mind you.**

**We didn't let them know we had some fun at their expense. It was  
not our fault any more than it is the childrens today if they have the  
funny bump well developed. Even the flag carrier Charlie cannot be  
missed. We passed many an evening reciting their sayings.**

**Every time the prayer meeting started - especially after a good  
meeting when the invitation was giving for those who desired to  
serve the Lord to make there desire known by coming to the mercy  
seat at the front - this old lady was always the first. As soon as that  
happened, if father could catch our eyes before they went right into  
the prayer meeting, he just lifted his thumb, which to us girls meant  
go home, and of course we dare not refuse. That was why we  
nicknamed her the black sheep.**



**Tommy Gibson while we could not help but smile at him, yet at the  
same time, we also felt sorry for him. As a lad he had had the sense  
knocked out of him. They used to say his mother pulled him about so  
much by the ears. That was why they stood out so much - and mind  
you they did stand out. large ones - and they were like a monkeys.**

**His intentions were good, poor chap, but it was said he could not pass  
a public house without waking up drunk. However he did manage to  
keep sober for a month. Then he got an army jersey - and this was  
after years of trying and constantly coming to the penitent form.**

**He got to the stage of being enrolled on the Monday night by the  
Divisional Commander. Tea time of the same day he went to the  
Ensign (as she was then called) and said**

"Ensign. I have broke it".  
"Broke what" the Ensign said.  
"Me saved" said he.  
"Nonsense" said the Ensign.  
"Honest Ensign" said he.  
"But you cannot, you are going to enrolled under the flag tonight" the Ensign said.

Then as we used to say he bluthered like a bairn "Oh Ensign. I got drunk last night and I broked me saved".  
Oh no you didn't. You only thought you were drunk, but it was only the desire of it that made you walk drunk.  
You put that jersey on and I will be there to see you can remember."

To us it was funny, because Tommy had always been one for running down to the penitent form whenever there was a good meeting. We had all got used to him, but had more sympathy with him than we had for the Black Sheep. Perhaps you will not believe me, it is true all the same, Tommy from that day turned over a new leaf and as far as his intellect went was well saved right up to the last time we heard about him when he moved away.



Swank (or Tom Howels) was another one who used to say "*right fermenct yer*" instead of "*right in front of you*". He had been a terrible drunkard in his young day. I know father used to say he had been, and was, a real trophy of grace before he went back into his second childhood (that was after his wife died) when he lived alone.

As young girls we loved to hear him sing. When testimonies were invited everyone would expect Swank to get up.

He would begin by singing "*Farther on and yet still farther, past the milestones one by one, Jesus will forsake me never, It is better farther on*". By the end of the chorus there would be Swank, standing on his feet. Then he would remind the congregation how when the Lord found him he had not as much money as would buy a jacket to put on a gooseberry.

That same man, although so comical, was as patient with his invalid wife as it was as possible to be.

Being young one could not help but see the funny side.



Then there was Tommy Pritchard. He is still living. He was really a comic. No one could help seeing the comical side when he got up and said he had had a narrow escape in pit. A big stone fell on top of him and it took five men to lift it off. But he struck up that good old song "*Touch me again Lord*".

What would you have done. Your smiling muscles would twitch I think.

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Then he was sitting on the seat with a child on each knee and another either side of him. When testimonies were on - he put one on the one side - and another the other side - and then stood up and sung *"Heaven is better than this"*. Of course he never saw the funny side of it at all.

Why I remember him grumbling one day something awful. I said to him *"what's the matter Tommy?"*  
He said *"Why Myra it is like this. Someone is accusing my wife of something she is guilty of and I am here to defend her, it is only right isn't it"*.  
I said *"Yes Tommy, you cannot do anything else but"*.

The modern day cinema is nowhere near this for originality !!!

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One thing that stands out in my memory is one of my fathers sayings. Which was *"You know you cannot diddle me."* - meaning of course that he could not be deceived. I had good cause to remember those words after I was out working for myself.

I remember Dick telling father that it was him that pinched the muscatels and sweets at xmas time. They were locked away and father had the key. Dick found a way to unlock and lock the door.

Father used to shake the box and show mother and say *"Ri if I had not the key I would swear someone was in the habit of going to that cupboard"*. Dick said if it had not been locked he would not have touched them.

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Then there was Will who took the same size boots as father.

One day especially, father was finding fault with the way Will was cleaning the cart. He was not using plenty of water or using the spoke brush to dads satisfaction. Father by the way was very fussy over his horses and carts etc.

After his lecture to Will he said to him *"You know Will, you cannot diddle me"*.

Will came into the kitchen and said to us girls (Janet, Amy, and I), *"Dad says I cannot diddle him. Why, I'm diddling him now because I have his best boots on"*.

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Little things there are in this book to record. You will think that may be so. But what a wonderful lesson I learned from them as the years rolled on and what a blessing for others that I remember them so vividly and they come into my mind so easily.

To some (I dare say they will think) *"and she says hers was a Christian home when all these things were allowed in the home"*.

Would to God there were more homes in England like it today. There would not be so much crime and such an urge for Dick Barton's stuff and the cinema as there is today. The parents of today would be more stable and understand the pranks of children. Instead of it being 'our house' it would be 'Our Home'.

I have still the wooden plaque that says, 'Home the place where you grumble the most and are treated the best'. Never were truer words spoken than those regarding our home.

A sister in law, that never knew a mother and father's love and care or the security of home, gave my mother that plaque.



One never sees the old fashioned texts in the modern homes today such as the one we had over the door.

Peace be to Thee  
Peace be to Thine House  
and Peace be unto all that thou hast.

Another in the centre of the wall which said,

The Silent Listener,  
Christ is the head of this house,  
The Silent Guest at every meal,  
the Silent Listener to every conversation

Over the mantle piece the text

Lord Jesus make Thyself to me  
a living bright reality,  
more dear more intimately nigh  
than ee'n the sweetest earthly tie.

I could go on repeating them. There they were on the wall, only pieces of red and green cardboard with silver lettering occupying a place beside Queen Victoria's picture of herself where we used to push the daily papers or letters so they would not be lost.

There was Jim Leby's ride to York picture, which father liked because he remembered the man and the incident so well. He rode in record time from London to York but it was his last long ride that undermined his strength.

Then mother's picture called 'Alone'. Where the daughter of a widower had got married and he was watching the daughter and husband drive away. There was a dog with its head on his knee and another dog

looking into his face. Both of them sensing something of what the old man felt.

Yes, those texts fastened them on our childish minds.



We were taught to look upon God as a God of love, not fear. Some one who loved us and not someone who we were afraid of. Although mind when we said our prayers at night, we at least felt pretty bad if we had been out of the ordinary in having to acknowledge our mis-doing to Him.

Now that was a queer thing about us - we were quiet while each other said their prayers at our bedside. If by any chance one of us started to talk we would clap our hands then silence reigned again. Rather an original idea and whose it was I do not know but we would not say our prayers if there was talking in the room.



I for one (of the family) can remember my conversion as a child. There was a place they called the Glory shop in Garden St. How it got that name I do not know but I expect it was on account of some good old fashioned meetings in those days.

Imagine a place in these days called a Glory shop.

Well I was say I got converted there at the age of 12 years. After over 48 years it is still fresh in my memory. There was a boy in the meeting whose father was a very strict churchman and this boy was his only son. I can see that boys father now, going down the street with lovely clean black boots and his walking stick (because there was something the matter with his foot). His prayer book under his arm - very devout he appeared to me then.

My oldest brother Sam was the Junior Sergeant Major as they were called then. This particular Sunday night there was testimonies for the saved children and this boy got up and sang the chorus "*Follow, Follow I will follow Jesus anywhere everywhere I will follow on etc*". I listened to him and all the rest singing.

Then he talked about God helping him during the week. He would help him when he went home that night as well because he knew he would get thrashed for coming. Like he did every time he came.

But he didn't mind. He was going to follow Jesus.

Then my brother talked about Daniel in the Lions Den That night, I felt this boy is loving and serving Jesus. He hasn't a father and mother that understands like mine does. Daniel was brave he did not mind what he suffered as long as God was not disappointed in him. That night I was really and truly converted and knew it.

**Do you think God expected me to be an angel ?? For I do not. And he does not to this day. I have felt for many years that God is more concerned at our trying to be good than at our mistakes.**

**Why should he have told Phillip when he asked Jesus to show him the Father. Jesus said *"Have I been so long with you Phillip and you have not known me etc"*.**



**I wish people who have anything to do with children would encourage, instead of condemning them. Have you ever heard of the boy at the Sunday School sports day who, after running a race and losing it, started to cry.**

**When the boy who everyone was shouting for (*"come on Jack, thats right Jack, you'll win"*, and) he did win.**

**Or the boy who started to cry.**

**When asked why he was crying he said *"If someone only had shouted - "Go on Bob run, you have a chance !!"* I am sure I would have run quicker.**

**That is what I mean.**

**Mother and father did encourage us no matter how many mistakes we made.**

**I know as a family we must have caused them many an anxious moment and sent them on their knees many a time on our behalf. They did some grand 'sowing' and, while the results were not always encouraging, they kept at it. Before they left us for the better world, they saw the fruits of their labours.**



**I remember going out with my Uncle Ned. He was going to see his sister at Witton and I went with him for company.**

***He said "I cannot understand you children. You have all turned out well. How none of you have gone the way your father did as a young fellow I don't know. For he was fond of a gay time. Yet what would have happened to him if your mother had not got him I do not know. He was no angel"*.**

**I said *"Neither are we.***

***"You did not know your father"* he said.**

**So again I thanked God that I only knew him as he was then.**

**When that was said I was quite a young woman.**





**I always wanted to be an Army officer but father did not want it (nor mother) although they never stopped me from going. I managed to go through training right up to about six weeks off the commissioning when I had to come home on account of my throat. It was a very great disappointment to me.**

**I remember my sister Hannah writing me and telling me that God must have called me to do the sacrifice to see if I really meant it - like Abraham did with Isaac.**

**I settled down again at home and worked amongst the children in the Sunday School. I became the Junior Sergeant Major (as it was then called) and did well with the children. Eventually we had the largest Sunday School in the district over 100 regular attendants. It was good to work with them (and for them). I held that position for years.**

## **Chapter 14**

**As each of the others went out, either as Army officers or had got homes of their own, I was left on my own at home with father and mother. Sam, Dick, Meggie, and Hannah were always the farthest away from home. Dick and Sam always managed to get home together for at least a week so did Hannah and Meggie. They were all home this particular time.**

**The lads, as they were still called, asked Hannah and Meggie to go for a walk with them. Of course they went. But soon Dick and Sam were putting the government right with their views on politics and the world etc, and as they were walking through fields that had only a very narrow foot path, Hannah and Meggie fell behind and were bored stiff and came back home. Dick and Sam never missed them until they were nearly home.**

**Whenever they were home again together and were going out together - politics etc had to be banned.**



**Bob liked his sisters to go with him of course. We younger set never minded going with him. We had the time of our lives with him. As the saying goes he was as daft as a brush. He certainly acted the fool when a few miles away from home where we were never known (as we thought).**

**At night those family gatherings are a thing to remember. I remember discussions lasting a long time when Hannah declared that Solomon of the Bible was proud. Then when they had enough of that debate - which had to be left as they could not convince one another - they would start on another. To this day there are certain**

members of our family who cannot meet without having an argument.

When one of them meets another member of the family they might remark

*"Our Bob gets no better. He talks like a fool".*

If we tell Bob, well he just laughs while he will say *"Tisy is just as stupid as ever"*.

Tommy Chadwick says he would like to prove Tisy wrong - just once - but she brings out her 'self enquire within' or 'dictionary' and proves she is right.

But through all our ups and downs we always remained friends.



After the first World War Bob got married and could not settle in England, so went to Canada.

Willie went to Australia the following year.

Father seemed to feel it a lot. I remember him looking at the empty passage and saying *"Ever since the place was built this is the first time I think there had been no carts in the passage. At least since I can remember and I never heard of it never having been empty before."*

He began to cause a lot of anxiety then. His health was failing and nothing to occupy his time. A man that has lived a very busy active life, then all at once retires from business, seems as if he is courting disaster. At least that is what seemed to happen to father.

He had a leg severely burned when a young man - that broke out after his retirement. Then his heart began to cause him trouble and he was causing mother and the family a great deal of anxiety.

The last six weeks of his life will ever stand out in my memory. Either mother or I had to cook for him. He would let no one else. I suppose that was because I had got into mother's ways a lot and I know that nothing was too much trouble.

I do not know whether I have mentioned it before but my father never bothered with me like he did the others. I do not mean he was unkind, but somehow he did not understand me. Or perhaps it was I who did not bother with him.

I do know though that there was no father in the world could compare with him in my mind. Especially was that so as a child - and it seemed to strengthen as I grew up. It was only when the last girl left home that I seemed to be taken notice of by him. Again I think it must have been my own fault because I could live and dream without bothering anyone as I grew older.

However that may be - I shall never forget him saying to me *"Myra I am just beginning to understand you"*. I was thirty four years old

when he said that and it matters less to me whether you believe me or not, but I know it was worth waiting for to hear him say it.

There is always one or two in a large family that has not the same chance as others. Because if you are sensitive, you keep in the background and others are content to let you remain there and you are not noticed much.



When father seemed to be coming to the end of his days on earth it seemed as if (after mother) I was needed a great deal. I remember when my sister Hannah came home to help for a while - father said to her that he could not understand why he was laid aside the way he was - just a useless body.

I remember Hannah saying

"Well dad do you never think what people must have thought (and no doubt said) when you have spoken in the open air of a Sunday. "What does he know of trouble or sickness or want. He and his family are alright and healthy. It's alright for him to talk there. Look at him, the picture of health and prosperity."

"Maybe God wants to show the people that God can serve your every need in sickness. Behind the scenes as in health and strength etc". My father said I never thought of it like that.

I never heard him complain again.

But I do remember a fortnight before he died. There was a funeral of two Sunday School children who had been drowned and Spennymoor band came through. It was an awful wet day. But before going back home they came into the back yard and started playing 'Jesus saves me now'. Father opened the bedroom window and asked them to come upstairs and sing it.

I can see them now going up those stairs. Over twenty of them. Those who father did not know were introduced to him. One of them was home from college on holiday. He was going to be a teacher or some such profession. Father turned to him and said

*"Lad. Get all the knowledge you can - but do not forget God !"*

*Sing that again.*

*'Jesus saves me now, Jesus saves me all the time, Jesus saves me now'.*

*I am glad I did not wait until now to find him lads.*

*Never forget him.*

He went Home sudden at the end. I remember taking his breakfast upstairs and talking to him. I happened to look back as I was leaving the room and he had gone - as quick as that.

But he and 'we' knew where he had gone. And now, as old as we all are, we speak with pleasure and the pure hope of going where he has gone to.



After that, the home was no longer home to my mother -somehow she could not rest in the home.

The garden took up her attention - also the child's welfare. At night she would go next door to my older sister's until nearly bedtime. That left me on my own in the house - and while I certainly could not blame mother, I understood her too well to cast the slightest blame on her, yet I was very lonely.

The home was never the same.

Some folk seem to centre all the affection on the one parent. I don't know for why. Certainly no one can take the place of a mother - just the same as no one can take the place of a father.

Why we thought so much of both mother and father - was because (regarding us their children) they never let the other down in our minds. What was said by either was law.



My mother visited a sister of mine at Stowmarket. She happened to be a Salvation Army officer stationed there. Mother went for a fortnight - whether she stayed that long I do not know, but I do know she came home very poorly. I do not think she was ever out again.

We could not get her consent to have a doctor at all.

My brother Sam came through. I remember my sister Letty was going back to her own home that night and Sam said go for him (the doctor) while she is asleep. We were glad to take his advice.

That was the beginning of the end. How she suffered no one will ever know. For you never heard a complaint pass her lips. Her whole thought was make as little trouble as she could for others. You had to use your own ideas and take her up dainties. And do things just as a matter of course.

I do say with pride, her sons and daughters thought nothing was too much trouble for the mother who had lived a life of sacrifice for her home. Whenever we gather together it will be a wonder if her name has not been brought up.

For over six months she was never left. One or the other sat up at night either reading or singing to her. She was in such pain that one

could not talk to her - she had not the strength. But she loved to listen - and even my brothers took a turn during the day when they came home.

That is where your faith, religion or whatever you like to call it comes in as a reality. One simply cannot imagine anyone singing to a sick person 'Tulips and Heather' or 'Mocking Bird Hill' - and the sick person getting strength and comfort from it when racked in pain. But when you sang in a quiet melodious voice

**Oh how praying rests the weary  
praying turns our night to day,  
when the heart is sad and weary  
just kneel and pray.**

or

**Now I have found the ground where in my souls  
anchor may remain there is body and comfort in  
it.**

When Christ, the Trinity and Heaven, were what you believe in - you have no fear. You could talk about it and it made her passage through her agony much easier.

All I want - is that when my time on earth is over - I shall meet death with as little fear as my mother did.

One thing - as a family we know where they are and we will go to God willing and we remain faithful. That better world will be ours as well.



When mother went to the better world the home broke up.

I promised her I would remain in the home the family had provided for me at least a year. I kept my promise - but I never settled. How could one - after having to look after this one and the other - how could you settle down to an old maids life. I was then thirty eight years old or near enough to that age.

As distinctly as I heard people talk - I hear God speak to me and tell me He would not leave me or forsake me. He had never seen the righteous forsaken or their seed begging bread. That was said to me by God in the meeting one Monday night as soon as mother took ill. I took God at His word and believed Him. That did not mean that I could sit down and expect my bread and butter to come to me. Oh Dear No !

It just meant that I had to do what I could and God would not leave me friendless or in want. After I had done my best for Him and tried hard to please Him. Work for myself, then what I could not do He would do for me. He has kept His promise, but then He always does.

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As I say, I stayed put one year and felt I could not stand the loneliness any longer. Only my youngest sister Amy knew I had applied for a post as a nursery attendant to the Bishop Auchland workhouse as it was then called.

I had no idea what that meant, except looking after babies up to three years old. I asked several of the committee what the duties were, but no one knew. Suffice it to say I was the person chosen from several others.

I shall never forget my first night. I looked round and it was a workhouse and no mistake. True I had a good bedroom and also a decent sitting room as things went then, but those children shall I ever forget it.

The thing that fastened itself on my mind was the babies with such big bottoms. Little children of two could hardly walk. The floor very highly polished linoleum and to keep it clean the babies were put like sheep in a play pen. Some fastened in the swinging chairs; the little babies that could not walk staying in the cots; but oh how clean they were. Never a dirty pinafore and not a happy face among them.

I knew a foster mother who was appointed to a girls home attached to the workhouse. She was appointed the same time as I was. I told her I had no idea it was like what it was. I will mention her maybe later on.

That playpen was no friend of mine, neither was the castor oil bottle or the swing chairs - unless it was for to give them swings in turn. I preferred a ball and the floor - which made the bottoms of the babies grow less and their little legs more active.

Sunday afternoon when the women went to a service and the little ones had had their sleep, I would have lots of little sweets or maybe a pomegranate. Then place the seed of the latter on plates and the sweets in packets for those that could eat. A pencil and paper - that was the best time of the week.

Matron used to complain of the state of the floor and the condition of their cloths being soiled. So I got fed up one day and said they have not such big bottoms as they had, nor is the castor oil used as much. I thought two clean pinafores a day was plenty. Rather a dirty pinafore as an ailing child.

As well as the babies, I had to see the premises of the able bodied women were kept clean. That was the place where the women who had children in the nursery stayed at night. I did not like that too well. The women were a vulgar lot and were not even decently dressed. I made up my mind to leave as soon as possible.

What used to hurt me very much indeed was when I had to see the old men and the grannys get their food when their attendant was off duty.

**I remember seeing one old lady who had lived at the top of what they called Phoenix Row at the top of the old Railway. Granny Gray was always the essence of cleanliness. She used to make beautiful hand quilted quilts for a living. I suppose she had got too old to support herself and had to go to the workhouse. I could not ask her questions as I felt it would have insulted her. She was so proud.**



**The book ends here - although it does seem a little suddenly.  
(Jim Flack)**

