

VI

FAMILY LIFE AND FRIENDS IN ENNISMORE GARDENS

THE LANDGRAF OF HESSE AND OTHER FRIENDS

THOUGH visits to South Africa absorbed so much of these first two years, the time spent in England, the pleasant association of home duties and outside social work, of care and thought for the children's upbringing and their future prospects, the recreation and amusements which our cheerful house and large garden afforded for old and young alike, and the visits further afield to Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France, provided interesting experiences and many enjoyable times.

Preoccupation with the children's welfare naturally came first in my life, and the promise of somewhat exceptional brain power and ability in my sons—no doubt inherited from their maternal great-grandfather, Field-Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, and their paternal grandfather, Mr. J. W. Birch, an eminent financier—prompted somewhat ambitious designs for the young people's future.

With a mother possessed of a strong bias in favour of religion, it was only natural that the children should, at an early age, have leanings in the same direction. For most children these questions have a great fascination in quite early years, although often associated with the haziest ideas of religious beliefs. I remember my second son,

when at the seaside, reprimanded for not paying attention to his prayers, he answered triumphantly, "It does not matter, as we are now at Eastbourne, and we left God in London!"

Both my eldest and youngest sons associated spiritual aspirations with a metaphysical turn of mind, and the former, when told at five years of age that another little baby was expected to be left, as usual—in the teaching of those days—on the doorstep, reflected thoughtfully for a long time, and then remarked with some solemnity, "What I want to know is, can one refuse them if you don't want them?" A vision of infants being delivered in countless succession naturally aroused many misgivings as to when the supply would cease! The younger boy had also his perplexities and alarmed my mother, with whom he constantly resided during my absence with my elder children abroad, by doctrinal questions, such as, "It makes my head go round and round when I think of Eternity," until she hit on the happy expedient of feigning sleep when the child assumed either a contemplative or talkative attitude, in the certainty that she could not possibly deal with the conundrums he was sure to raise.

Sundays were kept with many religious observances, and although no doubt tennis and other games have introduced an element of brightness into our Sabbaths, unknown at that time, the days then were happily filled up with the Church Service in the morning, walks or golf in the afternoons and readings in the evenings, and, when visitors had departed, by the singing of hymns—a custom which, in the musical talents of my family, was popular with the young people—Frank showing his appreciation, when he left for his preparatory school at the early age of eight, to write to me, "You know that my favourite hymn is 'Holly, Holly, Holly!'"

The contrast between then and now on Sabbath observ-

ance amongst the upper and middle classes is of interest to those who, brought up in the strictest school of bygone days, contend that, while the evolution of thought and custom in all things must be taken into account and that for those leading a sedentary life, with but one holiday in the week, games and recreation are justifiable and necessary; for others, living in a vortex of pleasure every day of their lives, there is no excuse for demanding that dance and other public places should be kept open on Sundays or to expect in country places, as is now so often the rule, that the Sunday afternoons and evenings, with extra trouble imposed on servants, should be given up to entertainments and bridge, for which, in all likelihood, the host and hostess have no "penchant." Yet these opinions would meet with a smile and the condoning of the old-fashioned prejudices of a bygone day associated with the invariable inquiry, "Are not bridge and dancing better than idle gossip?" But why should gossip be the only alternative? It is not a matter of anything being wrong on one day that is quite harmless on another, but all turns on "belief" or "unbelief" in a great Hereafter. If "unbelief," well and good, but if there is a firm conviction of a future spiritual state, surely some extra time given one day in the week, by those living in a world of mundane affairs of work or pleasure on the other days, is needed for the consideration of the future life and the interests which will survive for all time.

My eldest son was very musical and was the "show" pupil both for the pianoforte and violin at his preparatory school. He and my youngest boy were also born actors and many were the dramatic performances, primitive in their way, enacted in the Easter holidays in Ennismore Gardens. A considerable latitude was given on these occasions, with a view of encouraging histrionic talent, but a line had to be drawn when it was proposed to flood the schoolroom to

represent the scene between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Cæsar*. Even at an earlier age Sir Walter Scott's novels and plays from Shakespeare were not considered too ambitious to tackle or reproduce. My elder girl was chosen, in view of her marvellous memory, to recite, perched on the school-room table to give the greater height, Buckingham's speech prior to his execution; while the two younger children were dressed in long mackintoshes and described in the programme as "Common people; George and baby"!

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To the present writer, and in all probability to other mothers whose sons have enjoyed an Eton education, the happy time spent in the charming environs of Eton College and the Playing Fields and Grounds, the generous hospitality of the Eton masters and the pleasant rencontres at their luncheons with old and new friends, stand out as pleasant memories. On other occasions the cosy teas supplied in the boys' bed-sitting-rooms, when letters to be read by the family and other treasures, to say nothing of delectable eatables, which were all forthcoming from the mysterious locker figuring so prominently in the young men's diggings, made a delightful end to a happy day. I was also privileged at that time to participate in another phase of Eton life when staying with Mr. Luxmoore. I was invited to accompany him to the House Debating Society and was much impressed by the interest of the speakers in the many topics of the day, whether social or political, and still more so in learning that speeches, having been prepared for or against a resolution propounded, never deviated by a hair's breadth from the original arguments, however much these had been demolished by speakers who secured the first say!

Excellent reports were received every term of my elder

boy's application to his task and his progress in the different subjects he was then studying. There occurred, however, one exception to this rule, which filled me at the time with serious apprehension. Mr. Luxmoore, the House Master, in endorsing the favourable expression made of my son's work by the other masters, ended his report with: "I am sorry to say, however, that this half he contracted a debt with an unsavoury merchant!" Visions of public-houses and such-like haunts rose in my mind, and it was not until I had an opportunity of hearing my son's explanation that these fears were removed. With a slow smile gathering on his features, he explained that the debt contracted was for 1s. to a man who sold apples on the field and from whom the boys often purchased goods and paid for them the next day, but the man in question, being taken up on some charge, quoted my boy's name as one of those owing him a small amount!

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Philanthropic work for other classes, though in different forms and fashions, was as much in favour then as now. I was fortunate in finding at that time most congenial occupation in the small committee meetings held at Lady Jane Taylor's house nearly every fortnight to forward Mr. Fairbridge's scheme for Child Emigration to Australia; while in the alternate weeks we met to discuss the best method for assisting the anti-Socialist Sunday schools, in which Lady Jane was so deeply interested. The smaller committees then in vogue consisting of several energetic workers deeply interested in the cause ensured that each member's opinion received full attention and contrasted favourably in my ideas with the enormous committees now formed, where fevered attempts to sell tickets for entertainments and to secure the presence of Royalty are the greater objects in view.

Lady Jane Taylor, then an elderly lady, had already initiated such valuable social work, both at home and abroad, that some of these efforts were later taken over by the Government. The Fairbridge Scheme, as we know, has been one of the few successful immigration plans and is still much to the fore and appreciated by the Australian Government, as well as by the Emigration Authorities at home. The children sent out at quite an early age and brought up on Australian farms are much in request by the farmers when they attain the age of fourteen or fifteen and supply the assistance the agricultural community needs, while not interfering with Dominion interests.

Another of Lady Jane Taylor's enterprises, as mentioned above, was to combat the teaching given in the Socialist Sunday Schools and to attract to religion children who were too poorly clad to attend the Church schools, or whose parents had imbibed the communistic disregard of religious instruction for their young people. Several schools were started in different parts of London and we used to make pilgrimages to meet the children, who were often escorted by their socialistic and sometimes communistic parents to the room we had hired for this purpose. The fusion of classes certainly did good work, if only in a small way, in removing many prejudices and in raising a sense of gratitude in the parents for the time and attention given to their children. It was amusing to follow many of the futile arguments these men would sometimes introduce, and in particular I remember, after somewhat bloodthirsty speeches from quite a meek-looking man, I remarked, "If these are your views it would mean the annihilation of our class!" "Not at all," was the rejoinder, "we do not wish to destroy you as individuals, but only to blow up the system!" The satisfaction of getting into personal touch with these people and pity for the poor children who had had no

religious training until the days we came into contact with them, made this work particularly attractive.

But of all my numerous social activities at that time, the visits paid to a large men's ward in a London Hospital had the greater interest and appealed to me chiefly as bringing into sympathetic relationship the classes who otherwise would only be acquainted as employers and employed, and in providing an opportunity of giving a helping hand in various ways to the men who on leaving the hospital had no certainty of another job. Yet I remember now the diffidence and misgivings of my first visit to the hospital, in the fear that it might be looked upon as an intrusion, and my furtive glances at the occupants of the beds as I walked down the ward to see if there was any gleam of reciprocal friendliness on the invalids' faces as I passed. I was all the more pleased, therefore, after two or three weeks to find the clearly evinced anxiety of the patients that I should spend at least a few moments with each of them in turn. It was interesting to see how much gratification the smallest attention would give to the recipient, and in this connection, I remember just before I left the ward one evening, speaking to a poor man who was desperately ill, but who confided to me his one wish was for some acid drops that very night ! It was then too late to return to the hospital after calling at a shop, but I went to the nearest chemist, bought the drops and subsidized the salesman heavily to see that they were delivered at once. When I called a few days later I found the patient had passed away the day after my visit, but his dying wish had been gratified, for he had received and greatly enjoyed the small gift I had sent him.

Few, in visiting the men's wards, would fail to appreciate the fine characters and many excellent qualities of the working classes, when uninfluenced by agitators, and more especially when seen under the softening effects of illness

and pain, and these impressions strongly imbibed by me at that time have been confirmed by later association with others of the same class I have come across elsewhere.

As the men became a little better they were allowed to sit on the balcony overlooking the crowded streets of Charing Cross, or to gather around the fire at the end of the long ward and discuss with friends and visitors the events and politics of the day, in which they took a keen interest. At that time the Boer War was in full force and there was generous appreciation of the difficulties of the Generals in the disastrous battles of the so-called "Black Week." While the outside world criticized freely the conduct of the war and foreigners would probably have raised the cry, "Nous sommes trahis," these men would remark, "It is not possible to judge unless on the spot—it is not wise to interfere with the man at the wheel!" These hospital visits, I always felt, benefited visitors and patients alike, for I never appreciated good health and home comforts so much as when I returned for a rest to my own fireside and realized how insignificant were my own little worries and anxieties compared with the sufferings and hard lot of many of the hospital inmates.

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But to return to the family life and the social enjoyments of our London home, where we spent a few months every season. Looking back on those days one realizes how greatly the friendly relations existing between so many living in what we might term our "little colony in Ennismore Gardens," contributed to the happiness of our times spent there, contrasting forcibly with the usual customs of London dwellers, who in so many cases hardly know the names of their next-door neighbours. Lord and Lady Halsbury and Lady Blois, and Sir J. and Lady Brunner lived in the large block of houses with their own little terraces

opening into the larger gardens beyond ; General and Mrs. Clive, the Bridgemans, Pilchers, Pretymans and my husband's aunt, Lady Normanton, had houses at right angles, and many warm friendships were made in those years. But though favoured with a large circle of acquaintances in town, it was still possible to maintain an inner circle of a few intimate friends. My partiality for entertaining brought together young and old in less formal gatherings than were usual in those times, and helped considerably, as in the case of a well-known man then courting a lady of society, to the happiest results. In those days each resident in Ennismore Gardens could have the use of the delightful square which separates the houses, on application to the Garden Committee, and, though it was said that Mrs. Arden Birch was inclined to monopolize these privileges, all were delighted to come to the croquet parties, where foreigners as well as English were found, and a German officer of the 1st Foot Guards (then attached to the German Embassy) was a conspicuous figure in a tall hat and long frock-coat, continually lamenting, when he had made a bad stroke, "I did hit the ball too deep !"

It is interesting to note how prominently the friends made abroad—in South Africa, in Egypt, in Berne, in Germany and in the south of France—figured in our home life, prompting the reflection that, if the acquaintances of early youth have the prior claim to our affections, the friendships formed with those with whom we have associated abroad assume a prominent place in our regard.

The Frenches, then living in town, were constantly with us, and the Conyngham Greenes made their headquarters at our house when home from foreign stations. Many Dutch families were also in England from time to time and were heartily welcomed as a small return for the great hospitality shown us at the Cape. Count de Lalaing, of

whom we had seen so much at Berne, was then the Belgian representative in England and was a constant visitor. Count Blucher, another well-known personality in London life and a partner in business affairs with Lord French, was, again, an *ami de la maison*. The Count had seen many vicissitudes, for he was brought up in the expectation of inheriting a large fortune, but his father's third marriage seemed to have deepened the rift which had existed between them for many years, and in the Prince's animosity and the financial consequences of the War, the son was later left in much-reduced circumstances. Prince Blucher, the father, who through his first wife, a Radzewill, and other aristocratic relations, was connected with the high nobility of both Germany and Austria, could not live in Germany owing to his refusal to pay his rates and taxes! His preference for England was shown in making his home in Herm Island, which he leased from the English Government, though on the outbreak of war he was summarily ejected from the place. We met both the father and his young wife in London and saw more of them during one of our visits to Egypt. I well remember an instance of the Prince's strong prejudice against his native country, when we were dining at a big party at the "Savoy," and his personal servant brought the news that the *Darbiah*, in which he was to travel to Assouan, would be ready in the morning, adding the further information that, after lowering the English flag, he had hoisted a German one in its stead! The guests were electrified when, with the greatest indignation, the Prince exclaimed, "Take it down! Take it down! I will have nothing German on the boat!"

But it was with his son, then Count Blucher, and the fascinating lady, Miss Stapleton-Bretherton, he married a little later, that the closer friendship was formed. Both he and his wife were leading personages in London society and

also most popular in Berlin, where the Emperor's partiality for the young people only equalled his disapproval of the old Prince. I have always considered Count Blucher one of the most charming personalities. His unfailing courtesy, his loyalty to his friends and the higher motives influencing his whole life, made him in my opinion a very perfect character.

The Landgraf of Hesse was another friend well known in London at that time and was closely associated with many incidents in our lives. Of Royal rank, and a nephew of Queen Alexandra, he seemed also much to prefer England to his native land and would spend long months at a time in this country, attended by two officers, in whose appointment the German Emperor had a say, and whose constant attention was necessary owing to the poor man's pronounced blindness and his inability to see but faint indications of surrounding objects. The acquaintance in this case was made through a Major von Wright of the German Army, to whom I was asked to extend hospitality while he was in attendance on the Landgraf in London. He asked, on his first visit, whether he might be allowed to bring his Royal Highness to Ennismore Gardens and of course we consented, though we had some misgivings when von Wright informed us that the Landgraf, though an intelligent and interesting personage, had several peculiarities! There was considerable speculation in what way these idiosyncrasies would be revealed, and Lord French, who did not mince matters, suggested that the Germans were not all very refined in their manners and that our new friend, like Kruger, might possibly expectorate from his seat in the middle of the room to the fire-place, with unerring precision, on which Lady French indignantly protested that she would not then wear her best dress for fear of accidents! But in the first visit our worst fears

were not realized, and though closer acquaintance brought some oddities to light, the Landgraf's kindness and his dependence on others called forth our sympathy and endeared him to us all.

From this time we saw a great deal of his Royal Highness at our own house, where we made him very welcome, or at the "Berkeley" where he entertained his friends with great hospitality. He was of a somewhat amorous though changeable disposition, and many ladies were, at different times, the objects of his attentions, though in no case could any particular compliment be claimed, in the poor man's ignorance of the beauty or otherwise of the object of his attentions. I recollect how anxious he made my second husband, Lord Barrington, who found on his many visits to Hampton Court previous to our marriage, that the Landgraf was constantly in attendance and claimed a right, owing to his infirmity, to take my arm, and be escorted through the gardens, while my future husband, slightly lame, toiled after him in the vain hopes of catching us up! My mother, with a keen sense of humour, would pour fuel on the fire by the deference she paid to the Landgraf as a Royalty, and on one occasion when she insisted on having two horses to the fly to take him to the station on account of his rank, insult was added to injury, for, after my fiancé's futile remonstrances against the second horse, which would only add to the expense, he was not only obliged to escort the Landgraf to the station, but was left by him to pay the fare.

The Landgraf's brother had married the sister of the German Emperor and the children born of the marriage were the heirs presumptive of Hesse Darmstadt, and for this reason it was supposed the German Emperor took a great interest in his proceedings and always had the casting vote in the selection of anyone attending him, keeping in mind

that a marriage of his brother-in-law might interfere with his nephew's succession. Owing to his blindness, the poor man often made unfortunate mistakes, and I remember at a dinner-party given before my wedding, when he was seated on one side of me and Count de Lalaing on the other, in the delusion that the bridegroom (to use the German expression) always sat on one side of the bride elect, made the most embarrassing remarks to the Count, congratulating him between every course on his worthy selection of a charming wife and wishing him every happiness and success. The Belgian Minister hardly liked to explain the misapprehension and it was only towards the end of the evening, with the marvellous perception some blind people possess, he remarked, "Have I made any error? Is not Lord Barrington on your other side?"

Quite as ridiculous was the mistake made when we were all staying at Cragside with Lord and Lady Armstrong and were taken one day to see some wonderful horses in his Lordship's stud and traversed a long field *en route* to the stables. Here a tall ladder or fire-escape had been placed against the wall, and the Landgraf, just perceiving some object at the side, supposed he had come to his destination, and referring, he thought, to one of the horses (though in reality only surveying a tall ladder) he exclaimed with great enthusiasm, "What a lovely horse! What fine actions! What noble proportions!"

There was a touch of malice in his disposition, and his devotion to many of the fair sex in turn led to jealousy of those he suspected of paying attentions to the same lady and to situations which were at times extremely embarrassing. He was a great admirer for a short while of Lady K——, but staying in the house with her in Scotland he became jealous of a Captain S—— whom he chose to imagine was seriously in love with his hostess! One night at dinner,

not being able to contain his feelings any longer, he arose after the first course, with all the servants standing round, to propose a toast in the German fashion and to make a speech. To the consternation of everyone present he began by saying, "I have a proposal to make! That Lord 'So-and-so' should divorce Lady K—— and that she should then marry Captain S——!" An awful silence ensued, when he turned to his hostess and said, "What do you think of the proposal, Lady K——?" "Think," said the indignant lady, "I think it is the greatest pity your Royal Highness should ever have made so silly a remark!" It was well known afterwards that the officer then in attendance took him well to task, but that hardly lessened the awkwardness of the position!

But the Landgraf was a very good friend to me and, when I was taking the waters at Homburg, most kindly placed his opera-box at Frankfurt-a-M. at my disposal, and here I was able to take some of my Homburg friends and acquaintances to many performances of the best German music. His Royal Highness was a great musician and told me that when in the vein of composition he invariably saw a red light shining through the surrounding gloom. Bach was his special favourite, although he was well acquainted with the productions of all first-class composers. I remember a concert given by him in the Steinway Hall, to present some of his own inspirations, and to our dismay we found that twenty-two canons were to be rendered! I did not at that time know what "canons" might be, but I found they were used in this case to present nursery rhymes depicting infant life and parental teaching, such as "Come, little baby, play on the sands," or "Run, little child, to your papa so dear," and in the reiteration of these and other words of a similar character in various forms over and over again, a sense of humour alone saved us from the intense boredom we feared,

TRAVELS IN GERMANY, BERNE AND THE FRENCH RIVIERA

But in any account of our experiences at home and in foreign lands, I must not omit the delightful times spent at Berne in 1903. This visit was preceded by one of short duration to Berlin, to be near my elder son, who was learning the German language in the neighbourhood. I was not much impressed by the German capital itself, for though possessing very fine buildings and kept in perfect order and cleanliness, with excellent music and hotels provided, everything struck me as "ultra-modern" and with few historical interests. With introductions from English and German friends, we met with great kindness from residents in the place, but we were amusingly conscious of the obsession of a Stopford cousin who had married Major von Roedner, then in attendance on the Kaiser, with the idea that we expected her to secure our *entrée* into Court life and festivities.

From Berlin we travelled to Berne, where Sir Conyng-ham Greene was then the resident British Minister. We were at once launched into the diplomatic set, then constituting the smartest society of the place. This novel experience was of interest to us as visitors of a few weeks only, but must have been boring to those destined to remain for months on end. The close association of *chers collègues* led to intimate acquaintance with each other's affairs, and it was indeed praiseworthy that under these circumstances there should have been so charitable a spirit

maintained where individual idiosyncrasies were so much to the fore.

Count de Lalaing was then the Belgian Minister to Berne. Count von Bulow represented Germany, and the Duc d'Avarno, to whom was given the sobriquet of "Whiskers," and Baron de Byland, known from his round face as "Cheeks," were respectively the Italian and Dutch Ministers. Mr. Thiebaud, representing the United States, and his attractive wife were great favourites of the moment as first-rate authorities on the "Cake Walk" lately introduced into Europe from America, and for which there was a perfect craze in the high life at Berne of the day, possibly as providing a pleasing interlude to the monotony of diplomatic existence. This dance figured in all the evening festivities given, and it was the oddest thing to see the weird movements and contortions of the creole native carried out with the greatest zest and enjoyment by the representatives of foreign powers.

Dinners and luncheons and many other entertainments were given in our honour, and while the von Bulows provided what might be termed a "Banquet" in their lovely house and the Greenes arranged successive dinner-parties for our benefit, the humbler members of the Diplomatic Corps received us in the evenings in their rooms at the various hotels they frequented. One and all seemed concerned that we did not use the customary "de"—the evidence of high caste—before our name and insisted upon inserting the prefix in every letter they wrote!

Our own "Thé Dansant," given as a slight return for so much hospitality, was a great success, chiefly owing to the versatile gifts of Count de Lalaing, who excelled in the music-hall songs of the day. These episodes and the earlier experiences at Berlin served to inspire a mock heroic poem, and, as it well describes the chief events of this tour,

will amuse children and grandchildren, and can be skipped if so desired by the general reader. These stanzas ran :

I tell no stirring ditty,
I sing no plaintive lay,
Only a humdrum story
That happened yesterday,
Of tripping on the "Continong,"
Of travel and research,
Of good and ill that there befell
The family of Birch !

The mother was a widow,
Her health was just "so-so" !
The elder girl she left at home
For fear she'd be *de trop* !
The boys were all in College,
She brought the second girl,
Who really was good-looking
When her hair was quite in curl !

The lady loved fine dresses,
Albeit a pious soul !
And if you take fine things abroad
Of course you must pay toll !
So when they came to Dover Town
And luggage there was weighed,
With boxes all both large and small
Full seven pounds were paid !

The sea was rough and choppy,
And dark and drear the night,
So when in Berlin they arrived
They were in sorry plight.

Some came to see the strangers,
Some asked them up to tea,
Some held aloof, for fear, forsooth,
Of use they'd have to be !
For out spake bold von Roedner,
"We cannot welcome you !
Where are your hundred quarterings ?
Where is your blood so blue ?

'Tis true, perhaps, in England,
 Your claims you can prefer,
 But here yours is an unknown name,
 Without the prefix 'de' !"
 Thus spake the dame of high degree.
 For Oh ! the dreadful thought !
 She was afraid she might be made
 To launch them all at Court !

"For me it is far different !
 I've married a German boss,
 He hasn't got a penny,
 But he's something at the Schloss !"
 But what his task she did not say,
 Nor what were his pursuits !
 He might have dined with the King each day
 Or blacked the Kaiser's boots !

My girls should be Princesses !
 As becomes their rank and state,
 For proposals came in every day
 If they only knew their fate !
 The elder, tired of offers,
 To Russia has just gone off,
 To mix with Kings and Princes there,
 She's the star of the Peterhoff !

But they'd a mighty cousin
 Who lived in land hard by,
 And when she heard her kinsman's tale,
 Her wrath rose great and high !
 She swore her cousins were as good
 As any in the land,
 And to her loved relatives
 She wrote in firm round hand :

"I pray thee, trusty kinsfolk,
 From Berlin's soil to turn,
 I'll guarantee a welcome here
 If you will come to Berne."
 So from that proud and "Uppish" land
 They made a swift retreat,
 And figuratively shook the dust
 From off their pretty feet !

To Switzerland they journeyed,
 For they had yet to learn
 The wonderful reception
 Awaiting them at Berne.
 "Sir Greene" was on the platform
 And "Lady Greene" and "fille"
 And many of the menials
 Of England's Chancery.

And if the horses from their shafts
 The people did not take
 And drag the Birches' up the hill
 For sure! 'twas a mistake!
 For Kings or Queens or Ministers
 Could not have made more stir,
 Their cousins well had advertised
 Their coming everywhere!

And who can tell the friends they made
 In those few happy weeks,
 Avarno, known as "Whiskers",
 De Byland alias "Cheeks"!
 Again, the dear von Bulows,
 So charming and so kind,
 The Thiebauds and the "Cake Dance,"
 I bear it all in mind!

And Lalaing's perfect English
 And repertoire of song,
 "Two eyes so black and lovely,
 To whom do they belong?"

And who can tell the happy times
 Of all those festive scenes?
 The banquet at the Bulows'
 The dinners at the Greenes'!
 The widow's charming dresses,
 She now with pride displays,
 And e'en the Mongelas fine clothes
 Pale before those of Jays!

And then those many evenings
 Up flights of stairs galore,
 In Berne, most diplomats, you know,
 Live on the third (top floor).
 There fed with light refreshments
 And chit-chat just as light,
 You'd meet the friends you'd seen all day
 Or dined the previous night.

The Birches' gave a "tea fight,"
 They wished to do their share,
 The party mentioned in the *Queen*,
 "How could it have got there?"
 They danced, they sang, they played ping-pong,
 And 'twas a pretty pass,
 When Lalaing brought the house down with
 "You boys! keep off the grass!"

Enough of this! Pen, pause awhile,
 If more I tell or write,
 Full many volumes would be filled
 With all I could recite!
 Suffice to say, when quitting Berne
 This was their one regret,
 Such kindness they could ne'er repay
 Though they would ne'er forget!

* * * * *

I gaze into the future
 With full, prophetic gaze,
 And what I see reflected there
 May well my soul amaze.
 I see the proud von Roedners,
 Reduced to straightened means,
 For you cannot live on glories past,
 E'en if you dined with Queens!

The elder daughter still unwed,
 Does now her pride lament,
 The second's married a younger son
 In a marching regiment.

But as for those sweet creatures,
 My Kathleen and my Cis,
 No single fate's reserved for them,
 They live in married bliss !
 The one a Duke, the one an Earl,
 What matter which has which !
 For both are English gentlemen,
 So good and kind and rich.

And then for these, the parents, Greenes,
 What still for them remains ?
 A peerage, with a money grant,
 An escutcheon without stains.
 Ambassador in every Court,
 All other posts he scorns,
 While his wife, the lady Lily,
 All foreign Courts adorns.

The moral of this story,
 Is easy to discern,
 If joy and woe and good and ill
 Must come to each in turn,
 'Tis better to begin elsewhere
 And then come on to Berne.

The easy journey from Berne to Italy and to the south of France tempted us to continue our travels and to return to England by the French Riviera. And here we came across, at Cimiez, some of our oldest friends—Sir Edmund and Lady du Cane and at Cannes our cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong—then the centre of Society in those parts, who entertained on a sumptuous scale—not only the Duke of Cambridge and the Fitz-George family, with whom they were great friends and who were then staying in the same hotel, but the English and French residents and visitors. Winny Armstrong, with her good looks and charming smile and manner and her keen participation in all that was going on, was a great favourite with all classes, for her floral purchases for every "Battle of Flowers" and the

many tickets taken for entertainments in aid of local charities meant lavish expenditure right and left. No carnival was organized at which she was not present and no "Battle of Flowers" took place without her winning some of the best trophies and prizes. She and her husband, later Lord Armstrong, were the kindest of cousins and friends, for neither cared to enjoy the luxuries which their large fortune then commanded, without sharing these good things with others. The day we arrived at Cannes a large dinner-party arranged for that evening in honour of the Duke of Cambridge was entirely reorganized to allow of our being included in an entertainment they knew we should enjoy.

Other visits abroad were made in those years in summer months to Homburg, Kissingen, Wiesbaden, Heidelbad, and Overhofen, etc., where I could combine a health cure with the society of whichever son was learning German in the vicinity. Many interesting folk frequented these watering resorts, and I remember in the few chats I had with Lord Carson at Homburg an amusing instance of his ready wit when discussing some of the members of our little English society then taking waters at the spa. I remarked how surprising it was that a mutual friend, Lord E. by name, though possessed of great knowledge of men and matters, should be considered so great a bore. To which Lord Carson at once replied, "It is only because he is a walking encyclopædia of useless information."

VISITS IN ENGLAND

But amusing as were these experiences abroad, the country house visits at home also brought us in contact with society even more interesting in its way. Home politics and international questions greatly appealed to me, and when Tariff Reform was mooted by the great Mr.

Chamberlain I became so obsessed with the subject that I was asked once or twice to go down and meet him in the country house where he was the guest. My cousins, the Armstrongs, kindly invited me to be present at his speeches delivered in Northumberland in 1903, and of course I welcomed the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the political hero of the day. He and his charming wife were then also staying at Cragside, and at meals and after his big meetings, we had the most interesting discussions on what he called his "Mission of Empire" work.

The first evening we were there Mr. Chamberlain had given an epoch-making speech on Tariff Reform at Newcastle. He remained for an overflow meeting in the neighbourhood, while the house-party returned to Cragside. But a place was kept for him next to me, when he joined us at supper later on. While discussing the speech I asked him why he had omitted the name of one of the leading economists who was in favour of his new theories and was amused by his strongly expressed self-reproach for having forgotten the name of one of his ablest supporters! This little incident, showing that I had studied the question, led to many more talks on this same subject and to our keeping in touch with him and his wife when they were living in Princes Gardens and I returned to my home in town.

I remember now the first impressions of the technique of a large political meeting, not having had much previous experience in this line. One could not but be greatly struck with Mr. Chamberlain's facility for dealing with the usual interruptions and his gifts of assimilating some new ideas while dealing with a difficult subject requiring deep attention. Hecklers' questions were often disregarded for the moment, but dealt with a little later, when the opportunity occurred of giving some trenchant and annihilating reply. In the same way, when Mrs. Chamberlain, with

considerable temerity, pulled her husband's coat-tails from a seat behind, to hand him a note containing some valuable suggestion made by a supporter on the platform, he would glance at the message as if scarcely taking it in, and continue his arguments, until, in a favourable moment, he could touch on the fresh matter without interrupting the tenor of his speech.

But it was at my cousin's, Mr. Whitmore's, house that I met with people who one and all made a mark in later life. These visits to the Manor House, Lower Slaughter, were most enjoyable, in their combination of interesting discussions on public affairs of the day, with the unconventionality and the delightful outdoor recreation afforded in the lovely garden and on the croquet and tennis grounds.

At different times we met at his house Lord Darling, whose jokes seemed more fitting in private life than when delivered from the Bench, Mr. Amery, who later became a member of the Cabinet, and Mr. Maxse, a firm friend of Mr. Whitmore's, with their mutual distrust of Germany and well-grounded suspicion of the ambitious designs and war policy of the German Kaiser and his Chancellor. Mr. Maxse was then contemplating the acquisition of the *National Review*, and there was a lively discussion on the various articles which he asked those staying in the house to contribute to his new periodical. Mr. Jack Sandars, then to the fore as politician and able secretary to Mr. Arthur Balfour, was another popular guest. But amongst the talented men then present, it always seemed to me that Sir William Anson, Fellow of All Souls, was far ahead of the others in greater intellect, in profundity of thought and calm unerring judgment, though at first these qualities were unperceived, owing to the reserved and retiring manner he maintained. Often silent amidst the brilliant conversation around, he would take no part in it until the

subject was concluded, and then, in a few and pithy sentences, would sum up the whole matter which had been under review.

But these delightful conversations in *tête-à-tête* intercourse or in full conclave at luncheons and dinners were not allowed to monopolize all our time, and every afternoon, if not detained at home by croquet or tennis parties, we were taken to friends' houses or places of interest in the neighbourhood in a Noah's Ark vehicle of many years' standing ! I always consider the charm of these expeditions was greatly enhanced by the primitive and unconventional manner in which the excursions were carried out, owing to my cousin's utter indifference to what is called "keeping up appearances." Unable to afford entertaining on expensive lines, a first-rate chef and all home comforts were provided, but economy was practised on transport arrangements !

It was amusing to see each day the old family wagonette, drawn by the old grey horse we had known for years and driven by the old-fashioned coachman devoid of livery but wearing an antiquated tall hat, waiting to receive the whole house-party—the outing apparently enjoyed by the guests as much as if made in the smartest of equipages.

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But despite the many attractions of our home life and the enjoyable visits to continental capitals, the lure of South Africa was impossible to resist and in the first months of the following year (1904), I sailed again for the Cape, this time taking with me my second daughter, Cicely. In the peace conditions which then prevailed, war restrictions and military control were fortunately a thing of the past, but latent resentment and racial feeling were still much apparent, while violence and lawlessness prevailed in the Rand as an aftermath of recent hostilities.

We had, ourselves, unpleasant evidence of this in our experiences when staying with the Girouards in their house in Johannesburg. Major Girouard, a distinguished Engineer officer, had married a few weeks previously the daughter of Sir Richard and Lady Solomon, and their valuable silver wedding presents were still out on show in the drawing-room of their new house—a somewhat dangerous proceeding, with only black servants around! While our host and hostess were on the spot, we felt there was some protection, but, unfortunately, in the usual breakdown of arrangements in South Africa, and the non-appearance of the vehicle which was to take our luggage to the station, we missed the one train of the day to the Cape and were forced to remain till the next morning, though the Girouards had to leave, owing to an important engagement elsewhere.

I was very thankful, under the circumstances, that Mr. Stopford, then engaged to my daughter Cicely, had promised to remain for the night with us, for at twelve o'clock I heard a great commotion in the room below, where the wedding presents had been left! Then a loud barking of the dogs in the house and, finally, an agitated tap at my door, followed by the request, "Mother, may I come into your room? There is a black man on my balcony!" The door was, of course, immediately opened to admit the visitor and as speedily shut and bolted to keep out intruders. The next anxiety was how to reach my cousin, who had a room some way down a little passage, without being intercepted by others who had probably by this time realized their presence was detected! However, in great haste and with some trepidation I ran down the corridor and to my great relief my first knock at the door was at once heard and answered. Investigation downstairs by my cousin proved that some invasion of the premises had occurred in the room below. The silver was all dis-

turbed and ready for removal, the dogs were standing at bay, but the rescue had been effected ere the goods had been taken and the burglars had fled ! After this adventure it was a relief to depart the following morning !

I was very glad while in these parts to have the opportunity of visiting with Mr. Mansfield, then the South African Educational Officer, the Anglo-Dutch Veldt Schools which were then attracting considerable attention, in the party feeling aroused in South Africa and reflected in opposition circles in England, in the alleged predominance given to the teaching of English in the Boer schools. It was therefore interesting to find from personal observation that those who attended the monthly examinations at the centres of instruction were only too anxious to pass from the Dutch teaching which came first in the curriculum, in order to give more time to the English teaching, which they recognized would be far more useful in later life.

We were met at the Cape by my elder son, who had left his language studies to come out for a fortnight's holiday. By way of losing no time in preparing for his Foreign Office exam. he brought with him stacks of books which, in his complete disregard for practical affairs, he failed to repack in time to dispatch with the rest of our luggage the evening before we sailed. I have visions now of the long-suffering Dick Stopford on the morning we left, marching by the side of the trolley which conveyed the box containing these volumes, in his anxiety to ensure not only their reaching the boat in time but if possible to prevent their escape from the derelict box in which they were packed.

It was on this journey home that my interest in all sorts and conditions of men and my desire to hear all different opinions brought me into collision with my table companions, as in our very Tory society the name of Mr. Stead,

then on board ship, was much abhorred, and more particularly in connection with his recent book, *Crowned Heads I Have Interviewed*. As the result of a long conversation with him, one morning a notice was affixed to my place at table with the words, "This seat to be let," in the general indignation at my consorting with such company.

In April, 1904, we returned to England for my daughter's wedding which occurred only three months after my own ; my marriage took place in January and my daughter's in the following April. The wedding trip to Valescure and other places in the south of France was therefore curtailed to allow of our return to England in March of the same year.