

A
LIFE AND ITS
SEASONS

by
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SPRING IS GONE
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My aunty's face in tears blurred in the smoke, her hand grasping my mothers, both sobbing as the train jerked slowly away. The soot blackened walls of the station slipped by, familiar buildings, the steep green slopes of the valley, with its winding river, neatly walled fields and squares of woodland, rising to the purple of the moorlands. As my mother wiped away the tears on her round face, ugly now as she sobbed, my father holding her against him, stroking her hair, the enormity of the event I was a part of occurred to me for the first time. We were leaving home for ever, and our lives would never be the same again.

Like most thirteen year olds the excitement of leaving England and going to Canada had been my paramount emotion. I don't recall having any regrets, in fact I was delighted that I would not have to take the final exams at school in which I hadn't expected to do so well. After being top of the class for most of my three years at that school, I'd expected to lose my crown that summer and was privately glad to be getting out unscathed. My brother on the other hand, was indifferent to the academic side of things; missing exams was no consolation for missing an opportunity to play on the school cricket team, and next Autumn the Rugger team. He also had, at fifteen, deeper friendships including some with girls. He was looking sullen in a corner of the carriage as the train carried us with mechanical resolve further away from all that had been solid and familiar in our lives. My excitement had become hollow uneasiness. My twelve year old sister, of course, was sobbing against my mother subject as usual to the prevailing mood of the family circle. I joined her noisily.

Thus, dissolving in tears, our family emigrated to Canada.

PART I
CHAPTER I
SPRING

From our back bedroom window we could see the fields with its grazing Ayrshire cows just beyond the back garden. A dark row of stone houses, slate roofs glittering purple in both sun and rain, marked the border of our part of the village. Beyond were the fields reaching up to the steep moors of the Pennine hills. Little cluster of low stone buildings marked the tiny farms clinging to the side of the valley. The green grassland was broken up into neat squares by old walls of large flat black stones piled together without mortar to bind them. Copses of beeches and oak provided shade for the tiny forms of sheep and cows grazing on the rich grassy slopes.

This was our corner of the Aire Valley. The river itself flowed lazily a few miles away through flatter land. A narrow river, biting its way through the rich earth of the wide valley bottom, its banks were not high, but steep. In the spring the water rose and often flooded over the banks and covered the land. The usually gentle little river wound tortuously from its source in the limestone cliffs of Malham Cove, and wandered beneath high fells towards the farmlands and woodlands, past small sleepy villages and historic towns and abbeys to end finally in the Wharfe River. Many streams from the hills entered it. Along these streams which tumbled in a great hurry

from the moorland, small villages had developed, some, as ours did, back in Saxon times. Nestled into the protective valley walls, where now farmland for raising sheep and dairy cattle replaced thick woodlands, Our little village was a mile away from the highway between the towns of Skipton and Keighley. Other little villages lay close by like beads along the necklace of this high road, each a distinct entity, its people distinct from those of the nearest village, even if only a mile away.

Sutton-in-Craven, our West Yorkshire home and birthplace to my mother, brother and sister and I, stretched purposefully along two becks, one a turbulent gushing stream pouring from the hills and the other a shallow, lazy, gently curving body of water which somehow had earned the appellation of the Holme River.

Sutton Beck, as its busier counterpart was called, was simpler, a lower working class river which emptied itself without fuss or ceremony into its lazier sister. Thereupon the Holme River, pepped up, tumbled along a bit itself to provide some power for a large textile mill just down stream. Not being satisfied with its donation of power to its middle class neighbour, the energetic little Sutton Beck turned the wheels of the villages other textile mill less than a mile above its final end in the larger stream.

The village, as I remember it, was a peaceful dead end, with the busy world passing by a mile away along the main roads. The sounds familiar to me were those of the crows cawing in the tall trees across the fields, the cows mooing loudly as they came up our back street to pasture, and off in the distance the sheep. Their voices carried on the wind blowing off the tops of the hills. The wind I remember well, especially in winter when it was biting cold coming from the North, moaning through the chimney tops and metal pole at the end of our garden which held the clothesline. I'd listen to it at night, to its tone and hope when it reached a certain pitch that snow was on the way. In March the wind blew in tremendous loud gusts, but it was moist and warmer, bringing the smells of the earth and fresh new grass, tossing the daffodils in the garden about in a golden frenzy. In summer there was always a gentle cooling breeze, rarely absent for long even on a rare hot day. The frequent showers brought from clouds collecting over the Pennines when the wind blew from the West, fell gently in summer, between hot sunny periods; the "sun showers" which made the land so rich and productive in the valley. In the autumn the same wind would whip the rain across the miles of moorland and lash it against the windows.

We were all warm and secure inside those sturdy granite walled houses with roofs of slate. At those times we would watch the tall elms and beeches weaving and bobbing to avoid the blows of that mighty force, and see the grey masses of clouds sweeping across the sky.

CHAPTER II

In the Autumn and Winter when the wind blew or the rain fell we would all sit quietly in front of our warm kitchen fire. The kitchen fireplace was something of a shrine in the average man's home, with its mantelpiece covered with photographs, ornaments and the inevitable clock. My mother kept things simple on the mantelpiece, but the fireplace beneath was impressive indeed to my easily impressed mind. The brick fireplace was bordered above and on one side by shiny black metal, with a fireside oven, its door hinged by glittering silver

fittings. Brass fireside utensils gleamed on a brass stand; along with other brass ornaments. They were like soldiers parading along a large rectangle of pale tiles separated by a fender from the thick woven rug.

My Dad, like all Dads, always headed for this haven on his return from work, shivering from the cold, to stand for a few blissful minutes warming his hands. Then turn his back to the fire and gaze at his family in a kind of trance as the circulation returned to his body.

That memory of Dad is dim because he left us at the start of World War II when memories are ill formed, to return only for short periods over the next five years. But I do remember his warm smile with the one broken tooth, and his shiny black hair, wavy and slicked back with a stark white part, ^{ing} the style of the times, the "Brylcream" look.

The centre of our world in those winter war years was my mother. She seemed always there, with her large wondering blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and brown hair which glinted with auburn tints in the firelight. She liked to laugh, and talk silly with us, in a high pitched twittering voice, teasing us gently when we were hurt to bring laughter from the verge of tears. On those winter nights when the wind blew loud outside, straight from the vast waters of cold sea beyond Scotland, she'd huddle with us in front of the fire, its light alone glowing in the room. The thick curtains were closed because of the blackout regulations, and all doors closed against draughts. A blanket was stuffed against the door to the backyard, but a high pitched whistle from under the door still was heard, making us feel even more secure, because the winter wind, our enemy, was trying to get in but couldn't.

At these times Mam would tell us stories of her life, and our life with Dad before the war, of amateur theatricals in the village, illustrated by random photographs taken from a large cardboard box, through which she and Dad had met. Pictures of Dad in an evening suit heading a line of similarly toffed-out men, all wreathed in glistening smiles and topped with glossy heads slick with Brilliantine. Then there would be Mam as an Egyptian beauty, face an enigma, like a Sphynx naturally, with her arms straight by her side except that the wrists and hands were extended from her body at ninety degrees, and her feet likewise were placed squarely at a ninety degree angle to each other, all in the best traditions of amateur theatricals of the happy era of the early 1930's. We'd all love those stories of performances we had never seen. Dad was usually a leading man, a baritone, whereas Mam was in the chorus, happily inconspicuous but an enthusiastic dedicated soprano nonetheless. She was totally absorbed in each plot, so much so that in a performance about Pocohontas as that historic figure was about to interfere in the attempt to roast her loved one alive, when there seemed a hesitation, a mental block, in the heroine's speech, my mother's voice shrilled unhesitatingly from the depths of the chorus, "Stay!" with the broad "a" as only a Yorkshire-bred maiden could say it. The look she received from the haughty leading lady would have blistered the paint on our back doors.

She'd sung us songs from "Non No Nanette", "Maid of the Mountains", "Rose Marie", "Merrie England" and one we'd like best about "Naughty Harry Drew" from an operetta I can't recall, but certainly very obscure. On especially stormy nights we'd ask for a recitation of "A Night With A Wolf", about a person lost in a storm who took shelter in a cave only to find a wolf. But the elements had tamed them both so that they, natural enemies,

huddled together for warmth. So intensely did she recite this poem, no matter how often she's told it, we'd all shiver, despite the warmth of the fire, and huddle at her feet. My sister would climb up on to her knee for added security, two fingers of her right hand sunk deeply in her mouth. I used to suck my thumb on those occasions but more of that later.

And so the winters of my early childhood passed, our father far away, emphasizing the strength and the warmth of our mother. In those years she became the central pillar on which our world was built.

CHAPTER III

The war years made an indelible impression on my mind and have influenced my life and thought. I believe most of the English people who lived through those years, even as children, are forever marked by those years.

Life was related to the war, before it, during it, and that eternal whispered time, "after the war" when the war was over how wonderful everything would be! Of course, things were never the same again, for anybody, anywhere.

We were never exposed to the bombing, and living in our placid little village changed little. We knew that some of the big cities in the country were the targets of the night raiders. In fact, to our amazement, after the war, we learned that German planes used to turn over our end of the valley and then start their bombing run on the city of Leeds thirty miles away.

Nevertheless, Mr. Robinson just across a square patch of rough grass from our house, built an air-raid shelter. Dog Field we called it because dogs often mated there.

Mr. Robinson was a ruddy-faced, square headed, silver-haired man who was in the contracting business. Like most West-Riding men, he was economical with words. He had built his own ^{garage} carriage and owned a car, which made him a man of substance. Being also a thorough man he dug a deep square hole in the middle of the empty plot opposite his home, easy dashing distance.

"Just in case. Tha never knaws dust tha," he informed his neighbours. The structure was built with thick wooden supports jammed deep in the earth at each corner of the pit and one midway along each side. On the roof was again a series of smaller wooden beams held up by two centre posts at the end and sheets of thick galvanized iron, which was used to cover a lot of hen houses in the village. On top of that he piled earth and sod so that outside it was camouflaged against anybody who decided to strafe the Robinsons or divebomb. Two deep trenches had been dug converging on the one door leading into the structure. It was an imaginative creation, unique in the neighbourhood and, to my knowledge, in the entire village.

His family, consisting of his quiet little wife and a spaniel never had to use it. But it was tailor made for the boys of Hazel Grove and the members of their gang. As the structure slowly fell apart during the war years, we and our friends fought every major battle the world had ever known around that air-raid shelter. Which battle depended on what was showing at the local picture house a mile or two away in Crosshills. The Errol Flynn film "They Died With Their Boots On" had us going all one summer, the 7th Cavalry manning the trenches, colossal foresight of Mr. Robinson, and the howling Sioux hordes hurled themselves suicidally against us.

Years later a crude pennant with a red number 7 was found buried in the mud of one trench.

Part of the roof finally collapsed during the Napoleonic Wars inspired by a showing of "The Scarlet ^{Pumpernickel}" at Charlie's Picture House. Mr. Robinson never objected to this flagrant abuse of his edifice. He could easily have picked us all off with his shotgun from the vantage point of the garage. On occasion, instead, he watched us as we noisily drove off the charging Dervish Army on our way to ^{relieve} Khartoum, smoking his pipe between sessions in his back garden "digging for victory." One day he came over to show us a red fox he'd shot in the hills early that day. "Shot it at day-break, killing t'farmers chickens, it was, aye even worried a lamb and dragged it t't'wall, but couldn't drag it over. Dog here chased 'er and cornered 'er i 't brambles near Sykes weer ah shot 'er." While he recovered his breath after this longish speech, we reverently examined the little dead beast, and patted the Spaniel which was shivering in excitement, its stub of a tail wagging like a wind-shield wiper gone berserk.

Despite this calm acceptance of our depredations in his air-raid shelter, we were not so kind in return. Like the Mongol hordes we sometimes pretended to be, we raided his apple tree, a small bush of a tree which yielded surprisingly big, juicy red apples. One terrible night, the entire horde descended on his garden and stripped the tree bare of every fruit then stealthily slinked away to its hideout in a line of thick bushes across the Dog Field.

If he knew, and I am sure he did, he never changed in his attitude towards us. Like most Yorkshiremen of his generation, he didn't wear his emotions on his sleeves.

CHAPTER IV

Most of what we knew of the war we learned from the movies; the pictures, or the flicks as they were usually called. Charlie Nuttall had a small theatre near the Railway Station at Crosshills. Charlie as he was known, even to us predator types of tender years, was the typical promoter. Extremely affable for a North Countryman, he greeted everybody like a close friend, was extremely gracious to the ladies, and met everyone at the door to his theatre and bid them a fond "Good Neet" as they left, like a minister meeting his congregation after a Church service.

His theatre, like most theatres that I've been in my brief experience in Britain, had a Royal Box - we assumed with youthful logic that this was for the King if he came to Charlie's! All I know is, that my Uncle Bob and Aunty Amy used to sit up there in later years, when Bob returned from the war.

The matinee crowd, among which our gang were usually numbered, were a noisy rabble which tested every morsel of Charlie's determined air of the noble entrepreneur dispensing a higher class of entertainment. We'd queue up in a rugged line at about 1:30 p.m. when the picture started at 2:00 p.m. High pitched voices discussed all the movies shown in the last year at every theatre in the district, often with sound effects to illustrate some of the more exciting moments. If an express train happened to approach on the nearby railway, large portions of the queue detached themselves and hurtled across the road to the wall overlooking the tracks. Upon returning the queue reorganized itself. If a former position in the queue was denied, fights ensued. Charlie would rush out to disentangle clumps of small boys entwined in mortal combat.

When the doors were finally opened for business the queue bunched up from a line to become an amorphous mass. Like a gigantic amoeba the mass appeared about to engulf the Picture House and ingest it but, from it little boys rapidly budded off, paid their threepence, and disappeared shouting inside. The heaving mass was itself finally ingested by the Picture House, and Charlie Nuttall red-faced, took off his spectacles, cleaned them, and took a deep breath, and closed the door. The show was on.

Once inside most of the boys rushed to the front; front seats being the favourite vantage points. Again numerous brief punchings and pushings took place, and by the time the projector started to roll the beam of light shone brightly through a cloud of rising dust. As the picture appeared on the screen and the martial music of the Movietone news crashed out, a great cheer arose from the ranks of children, along with shrill whistles from those lucky enough to know how. This is part of the reason the front rows of seats were known as the "Spit and Whistle". Following this pagan ritual a reverent silence followed, to be punctuated by cheers or boos when the screen depicted allies or enemies. For those less patriotic souls amongst the audience it was the time to let fly spitballs with elastic bands either at random or at specific targets with big, easily identifiable heads. Again a series of scuffles took place, until Charlie arrived with his flashlight, throwing a beam that made the beam from the projector pale into insignificance.

The culprits were caught like bombers in a searchlight and identified. Since a repeat annoyance meant ejection the mob was quelled for good. Charlie had not, nor did he need ushers.

With the start of the Big Picture, renewed frenzied cheering began again followed by a reverent silence with underlying excited anticipation, then the action started, and if it was to the boys liking a symphony of cheers, sighs, boos, laughs and coarse comments accompanied the show to its final conclusion.

A massive shout of applause brought the movie to an end, and whilst "the King" was being played, feet thundered on the linoleum floors towards the two side doors already opened by Charlie, who had retreated by now to his office, no doubt to help himself to a large whiskey. Into the blinding light of day the twin columns of boys poured from the Picture House, already re-creating the film in their wild imaginations.

For the next half hour the streets of Crosshills and Sutton would echo with the sound of simulated pistols, rifles, machine guns, cannons and bombs, the howl of divebombers and the screams of dying humanity.

CHAPTER V

WAR

Wartime seemed an exciting adventure to a little boy, and its horrors were not real, at least not to a country boy as I was.

My father, excited by events, joined the Auxiliary Fire Service with his pal, George Smith. Both were not of call-up age at that time. Both received an ancient telephone with a brass receiver and bakelite mouth and ear pieces. They would call each other up a lot to test it. Most people didn't have telephones. All this was a bit of a lark to Dad who probably preferred it to the Home Guard. The latter, motley body of old veterans and teenage boys who would go on some marches carrying all sorts of implements; spades, pitchforks, rakes and even an old Lee-Enfield rifle or the occasional shotgun. They would hold mock battles in the hills, scrambling through

the deep ferns at the edge of the moors. They always seemed to hold these exercises on fine days. As boys, we'd watch them march by after such activities, with prisoners, who to resemble Germans, pulled the fold of their forage caps down over their ears, with hands clasped over their heads. The "prisoners" were marched briskly into the nearest Pub, and hostilities ceased forthwith in a chorus of guffaws from within the cool depths. Serious negotiations over an armistice followed.

Things became more serious when Dad was required to join the N.F.S., the National Fire Service, which unlike the general A.D.S. was not a voluntary body. He came home grinning in a dark blue uniform and shiny bright buttons. I was disappointed that he didn't have a bright brass helmet worn by the firemen I had seen in pictures, but had instead a tin helmet like a simple soldier.

Within no time he was gone and I saw my mother cry for the first time. Her large blue eyes, red and swollen with tears, were to become a familiar sight over the next few years. It always broke my heart.

Dad went to Doncaster and there was some fierce bombing for awhile. He wrote a lot and came home regularly. Life seemed to adjust to a new pattern and became secure again.

A bit of real excitement arrived when he arranged for us all to join him in Doncaster for a few days. We travelled by bus and my young sister was intensely sick all the way. The little single-decker was always stopping to let my mother and her off at the roadside.

Doncaster was crowded and noisy with not really enough destruction evident to satisfy my brother and I. We all lived in a boarding house with a kindly elderly lady. We saw Dad regularly, of course, but my main recollection is that of my brother and I being given the money to go to the pictures nearby - a matinee each time. I expect this is because Dad was off until most evenings and wished to have the afternoons free with Mam. Where my sister was I don't recall. She was so shy that she had a capacity to make herself seem invisible, easy to forget about. Perhaps we took her with us. For the entire short stay, only about three days we saw the same film during which time a piece of dialogue revisited itself into my mind - "Mr. Hopkins, give me my hundred pounds" although the title of the film has long been forgotten. The bustling city frightened us a little, but we felt secure in the cool, dim depths of this theatre. We never thought of going further afield.

Soon after, Dad was called up into the navy and in his uniform of petty officer ships writer disappeared again. For some time he stayed in England and Mam would visit him at his base in Highgate, then Plymouth. At these times we'd be grossly overindulged at our Grandma Ellison's or Grandma Wilcock's homes. Mother always returned sad and disturbed but in the evenings of her return would cheer us and herself up by telling us of the new places and people she had met. She became firm friends with a family in Plymouth and we'd correspond with them for years after. But finally the inevitable happened. Dad was finally sent overseas. Embarkation leave was a dreadful time for us all, like the end of a long holiday. We didn't know where he was going, although he did, we later discovered. He left walking down the street to the "bus" and with a final jaunty wave disappeared behind the privet hedge at the end of the road. He sailed from Portsmouth shortly after, bound for Malta. It was 1942.

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The cadence of life changed with Dad away. At first my mother lived from letter to letter, all censored. His outward voyage took over 6 weeks. On a swift mine-laying cruiser carrying a cargo of munitions he was carried far out into the Atlantic on a circuitous route, constantly shadowed by U-boats and Focke-Wulf observation aircraft. Over the horizon was a flotilla of heavily armed warships of the Royal Navy to discourage any wolf packs of German submarines. These were the days when Malta was fighting for its existence as a lifeline to the troops in North Africa. Only 90 miles from Sicily the tiny Mediterranean island was bombed several times daily, and convoys of ships laden with food, ammunition, fuel and men were under constant air and undersea attacks. It was a slaughter-house at sea once the friendly Straights of Gibraltar were passed, made obscene by the beauty of the blue seas sparkle in the summer sun made blood red on the horizon by the smoke from burning ships before darkness.

The convoys never found escape in the dark sea on even the blackest night. The fires from crippled ships towed by their sister ships or escorts were beacons on which the mirauders of the sky and sea continued to home and strike with such ease and frequency from their nearby bases.

Through this holocaust sailed my fathers ship, too swift for U-boats, heavily armed against air attack, not impeded by the need to escort the plodding freighters. Finally after an endless agony of waiting, my mother read us that first short censored letter, tears all round; but he was safe, for the present and on dry land. From then on the Epic of Malta became a part of our lives. The constant bombing, the stories of starvation, heroism, endless sleeplessness from repeated air-raid alarms, became personal horrors. The war had come home.

In later years Dad added the pathetic remarks, of sickness due to chronic near-starvation, and the destruction of sanitary facilities by constant bombing; of high jinks during the intervals between attacks of panic, of cowardice, and the sale of servicemen's rations to wealthy Maltese civilians on the Black Market.

Through a constant stream of letters and occasional photographs of smiling sailors in white duck shorts, we, the children, at least, were comforted. We even looked forward to the promised receipt for Christmas 1943 of a parcel of pomegranites which never did arrive. Since the voyage could take weeks, the parcel probably walked off the ship itself on docking and disappeared into the streets of some British Port. We were disappointed but philosophical about it. One photograph showed Dad and his mates, now our dear mates too, around a Christmas table laden with food and big quart bottles of Carlings beer from a Canadian vessel. All looked gloriously happy. Years later Dad told me that their stomachs could handle little of the beer and food, which was an unexplained Bonanza between constant starvation. They had another party that same evening to finish off the goodies.

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Our quiet village seemed far from this new demented world. The rhythm of our childhood was not altered except by the absence of fathers and some older brothers. Like Dad all our uncles were involved. Uncle Jack, youngest of Dad's three brothers, was captured near Dunkirk whilst quietly sleeping off his exhaustion in a trench. He was a wireless operator in the R.A.F. and the anomaly of the mode of his capture kept him amused

for years after. He was nineteen and the bleak years that were to follow in the stalags of Germany were a poor substitute for the gay life he had been leading before in rural Yorkshire. Uncle's Harold and Jim, both in the army, stayed in England, Harold rising phenomenally quickly through the ranks to that of Acting Major by the war's end, in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment too, whilst Jim, a quiet unassuming and very peaceful man was to remain a very private Private and eventually found himself back as a civilian because of a bad heart. The most apparent sign of war was the appearance of new schoolmates, off cumdins the evacuees from the Great Northern cities now under bombing attack. After the London Blitz the Germans concentrated on strategic targets, and Liverpool was a favourite in 1941. With its docks, warehouses and shipbuilding facilities it was a prime objective in the effort to starve England to death. The section of the city known as Bootle suffered under the onslaught, with great loss of civilian life and property. The houses, row on row, in this working class section, collapsed and a wasteland of stone, brick and mortar remained with thousands of homeless families. The warehouses were set ablaze with their stocks of food newly arrived on the convoys which staggered in after nightmarish Atlantic crossings. The Mersey Estuary broad and deep glowed livid red. Such was the conflagration that even Dad, still in the N.F.S. at Doncaster then, was involved, standing as Reserve on approaches to the city. Tales of horror filtered back to him and to us, of firemen lost in the inferno of a river of burning margarine and cooking fats that flowed swiftly down a dockside street. Sheffield too was smashed repeatedly by bombers, who mistook residential areas for the great steel mills further west down the Valley. From these, centres laid waste came the children, in a massive evacuation to rural villages and towns. They lived with new families and became the latest fad at school. City bred, they were strange to our quiet country ways. They also came from a background of poverty and, as if their problems of adjustment were not enough, they were suspected openly as the source of an outbreak of lice; they cross-pollinated the heads of the flower of Sutton's youth. A lot of cross-pollination probably occurred during the many fights that took place in school yards, Sutton Park and sundry alleys of the old village, as the newcomers reacted to teasing from the less sensitive and more ignorant boys out to declare their territorial imperatives. Bred to street fighting the new boys with funny accents and fleas, more than held their own and actually fought with fists and wouldn't hesitate to try and "knock yer block off" or kick opponents in "the knackers". Many legends of physical prowess soon surrounding particular boys who like gunslingers of the old west, had to perpetually defend their new found reputations as good fighters. This, despite the mothers admonitions to their children to stay away from these children and their "nits", gained them a solid status and they were accepted. The mothers bought carbolic soap and fine tooth combs and a weekly ritual began when after a shampoo each child's head was combed vigorously over a newspaper laid out on the rug before the kitchen fire. To our intense delight occasionally a louse, destroyed by the powerful soap, fell onto the paper. The world was anything but a dull place. Some evacuees were to stay and be adopted by villagers, their parents lying dead in either the rubble of a bombed-out city, drowned in the seas or simply lost in this great whirlwind that swept their childhood away.

The closest I got to evacuees other than rolling around on the ground with one in battle, or sitting near one at

school, was later in the war. With the defeat of the Luftwaffe many children returned to London and other big cities as the war turned in the favour of Allies. Then came the new and ghastly unfamiliarity of the Buzz-Bombs and Rockets, the V1 and V2 German weapons, a terribly threatening if strategically hopeless new method of warfare. In a great panic the city of London again regurgitated its children and spread them over the country. This time my Grandma and Grandad Wilcock found themselves billeted with two brothers from a London suburb, Eric and David.

Throughout the time of Dad's absence, there had been open hostility between Mother and Grandparents Wilcock. For reasons known only to one steeped in the peculiar traditions of the British middle class, Grandparents Wilcock snubbed my mother and openly criticized her. My mother, all Yorkshire with a strong Irish temper, stubbornly and effectively resisted all these efforts of her in-laws.

With wisdom, she continued to insist that we visit them often, and continue to go to the Baptist Chapel where Grandad was superintendent. She herself had nothing to do with them whatsoever.

To their credit, my Grandparents Wilcock did not suffer the sins of the Mother, whatever they were, to fall on the heads of the children, us that is. With great glee we set out to inspect these strangers from the vast metropolis of London. We were already familiar with London, of course, from our own mothers visit there in 1942 and its reputation, sur-real, legendary, sing about, read about, perpetually in the newsreels and talked about on the radio - the city that became a symbol of resistance the world over.

We had anticipated these two evacuees as if they were martians. They looked pretty ordinary and they were CLEAN. Somehow we expected all evacuees to be covered with the dust shed from collapsing buildings and smell like a damp basement. Most of the evacuees we met wore somewhat tattered clothing, not necessarily from clambering over hot rubble to safety, but more likely from rolling around on a cobbled Liverpool or Manchester street in close combat with a boy from the next street. Therefore alien. But here were two quiet, blue eyed boys in tidy new clothes, one curly blonde the other with waveless light brown hair and obviously the weaker of the two. Even their accents were disappointing with a faint London inflection but correct. We had expected cockneys, looking like the Artful Dodger in the film about Oliver Twist. Instead they were more like Little Lord Fauntelroys whom we had despised when represented recently at Charlie's by the child star from the U.S.A. Freddie Bartholomew.

Swallowing our deep disappointment valiantly like our morning cod liver oil, we started a friendship that was to last and grow over the next few months of the crisis. We exchanged stories of London embellished for our benefit for country lore imparted during rambles through the woods and fields that were our heritage, up to now taken for granted. It touched us even then in the rawness of raggle-taggle boyhood to see their delight in paths through shady green woods full of bluebells and the beauty of the Valley as it opened before us on climbs up the steep hillside to the Pinnacle. We ate fish and chips together walking them home to our grandparents.

For many evacuees from the crowded English industrial cities the war meant their first immersion into country life. Most gained a lot from the experience in new families, most of whom did all they could to make up for

the stark realities of these children's lives. Contact was kept with a parent left at home in the city, and a country in which North and South were not mere geographical differences experienced a new mixing of its peoples a closing of gaps in such knowledge, and a falling of barriers.

The war brought about a dispersal of industries and government from the cities to the country. Those in the know in our village muttered darkly of a factory two miles down the valley, and it was known to Lord Haw-Haw who mentioned the location in his broadcast one evening. Of more interest to my brother and I, and to all the boys of the villages around, was a mile square of estate located beyond the fields a brief stroll away. The estate used to belong to a wealthy family now gone, and its ornamental gardens and shady woods allowed to grow untended. A small lake with a wooded island occupied the centre of this woodland, its water still and sinister, choked with duckweed; the home of numerous wildfowl. Throughout the estate ran narrow walks, now overgrown with grasses and overhung with the heavy foliage of laurel, rhododendrons, and the tall beeches that almost blocked out the daylight. It was like a jungle, in the tropics and it became one in the imagination of all the small boys who lurked within the estate. An old abandoned tennis court with pavilion stood at the edge of the woods, where apple trees grew and more important, stands of cane. From cane, in the right hands, developed excellent pea-shooters. A pea-shooter, with the abundant ripe elderberry fruit for ammunition was of immense nuisance value, particularly in the classroom on a boring Spring afternoon. Elderberry fruit were ideal, for with a mouthful of these small, hard missiles a schoolboy with little basic training could keep up a steady machine gun-like bombardment for several seconds.

With the cane and the elderberry season coinciding, nature herself seemed an ally in the annual invasion of the estate by rival gangs, bent on achieving supremacy with best pea-shooters that could be harvested.

The estate, however, had other purposes than a paradise for pea-shooter connoisseurs. The government of the realm had requisitioned the large house for nefarious purposes. "Hush Hush Stuff", "Summit Scientific" intoned the old men over their beer in the pubs. At any rate it was patrolled by gruff elderly men with heavy boots and flat caps. An expedition into the area was thus illegal and therefore a highlight of the Spring and early Summer.

The estate could be penetrated in a number of ways. Most practical was to cross a narrow strip of woods, through which a public walk ran to a beck which separated the wood from the estate. This was the frontier, a narrow shallow stream flowing between old stone walls. A dam, part way up, allowed excellent trout fishing for those inclined.

From the edge of the aspen grove a gully ran down the gentle slope of the valley. The sides were covered with wild roses now in full bloom, their sweet smell blown everywhere by the wind. The wind was strong to set the bushes tossing and the long new shining grass of the meadows twisting and dancing, driving all the earth smells deep into my senses. With the sound of a distant waterfall and that wind rushed through the aspens, and cut off the mechanical song of the grasshopper; sparrows hidden nearby in the tall grass. It was a day intensely alive and I came alive because of it.

A well worn farm road rolled through the gully and up the steep side to the edge of a ploughed field now showing its newly planted grain like peach fuzz on the face of a youth. The sky seemed so big arching over the gentle undulations of the earth. With fluffy clouds above grouping together as they reached the horizon. Under such a sky men feel small and insignificant but not reduced because thoughts sore and swell within. In this wide land of sky and wind, nature still dominates and makes you a part of itself. It makes man think of God and want to see how He looks, probably laughing at His greatest creations friendly efforts to control and conquer his endless cycles of failures because too often men struggle only against themselves and their natural instincts. If that sky was to darken and rain falls everything is changed on the land, and the cycles of life go on in supreme disregard of man grovelling around in the city roaring like an angry beast only a few miles away when the wind dies for an instant.

It also provided a natural means of crossing easily to the Estate. Here, therefore, a gruff man with flat cap and heavy boots was bound to be lurking in the thick green foliage beyond the stream.

We took the circuitous, cunning route - running because it was supposedly open to observation from the estate along its entire course. Small boys, however, could surmount this obstacle with ease.

A bridge of stone crossed the beck about a hundred yards below the Estate. On each side beneath the arch a narrow shelf ran under the bridge, 6 feet above the stream. We used the shelf for many reasons; to lay in wait for unsuspecting rivals crossing the bridge, to shatter the nerves of Sunday strollers by creating horrible sounds, or on occasion to choke and cough on a cigarette proffered by an older acquaintance. As an access to the Estate the shelf was perfect because from it, a short leap to the banks of the stream beyond the bridge carried us into NO MANS LAND. The latter was a wide field bordering the Estate. At the beck side a line of trees provided some cover. By dashing from tree to tree we approached the forbidden zone. The stone wall of the bridge continued along as a high wall for a great distance behind us, through which a strong wooden gate opened to the public lane beyond. Our line of retreat was thus the same as line of entry and as such was a drawback for reasons which were made starkly apparent one sunny afternoon.

On that day we had entered the estate by this well known route without incident. We opened the wrought iron gate, took care to leave it open, and entered the cool shade of the wood. The cane was as never before, excellent for first rate pea-shooters, quality merchandise. Between soarties to our favourite spots; the lake with "Moorhen Island", the tennis pavilion with its air of a past long forgotten; we harvested enough cane for our needs. At the point of leaving, Peter one of our number, Peter Barsby, came running out of the woods breathless and highly excited. "Run! Run! There's two men coming!" - like magic we were suddenly on our way after his retreating figure, down the narrow path to the gate. Behind us heavy footfalls and coarse old-man shouts spurred us on, panic mixed with the excitement of being chased. At the gate a shock greeted us. We were met by a heaving, shouting mass of small boys all struggling to get through the narrow opening. Many were climbing the wire fence, others were attempting to get across the beck, jumping from stone to stone to the safety of the public woods on the other side! The estate had been alive with boys even though we had thought ourselves to be

alone. Somehow we all were through the gate and reached the wide NO MANS LAND, the field beyond, streaming in a shouting horde, towards the high wall, the locked door and the narrow shelf, the only outlet through the stone bridge. Behind us yells of pursuit urged us on. Panic has erased further memory of this event, except that I remember scaling that high wall like an orangatang and leaping to the safety of the land beneath, along with the other breathless boys. We all looked at each other, recognized vaguely that we were a cross section of all the nearby villages. Then disappeared into the haze of the late summer afternoon.

From the vantage point of many years after this experience, I wonder what those two guardians of the Estate must have thought of the game they had flushed that day. They must have at least felt surprised that so many small boys could roam at will in that somewhat circumscribed wilderness, and even a bit futile at their efficiency as custodians of His Majesty's property. More than that they must have had a good laugh at that stream of small boys flying across the field and wondering what in hell they could do without a monstrous net!

With Dad away Grandad Ellison came down one day on his regular Saturday visit.

"Ah've cum to tak t'lads for a walk, Ruby" he announced. Grandad usually spoke in ultimatums.

"Thas'll be needing a man around wi' George away."

Thus, Saturday walks with Grandad became institutionalized usually in the morning.

Grandad Ellison was one of a dying breed. He took his manhood as a challenge to be the unyielded head of a family unit and we were part of that challenge. He didn't trust a woman, even a daughter of his to raise us as men. On the Saturday walks, we learned a sense of belonging in this simple country life and according Grandad's philosophy.

A stocky, silvery haired man with a square large head and square shoulders, Tom Lister Ellison carried himself upright and seemed to plough along the lanes and paths of Sutton like a battleship through a heavy sea in a high gale. Life had treated him roughly and he regarded it pugnaciously, spat in its eye, and enjoyed himself like a dog in a barnyard full of sheep.

He'd been called up along with most of the men in the village at the start of the big offensives on the Somme in W.W. I. Grandad had been sent to the Italian front so that he survived the war. Most of his compatriots from the village died in it, a great many in the space of a few days. His two brothers came home, one without an arm, the other with a foot shot off. Grandad came back, but was an embittered man. Like many of his generation it wasn't his war, he felt. He'd rebelled even then and been tied to a gun wheel as punishment for insubordination of some kind. He came back to a world of chronic unemployment. He hated "Black-legs" those who defied strikes and continued to work; he admired the Bolshevik revolution, he drank away the pains of his humiliation by the depression years. He felt the shame of his daughters and saw the tears of Grandma a pretty gentle and devout woman who had married him for love despite her Catholicism. Grandad was a confirmed agnostic.

With the better years of the Thirties in England he lost some of his bitterness and was respected by his contemporaries in the village, with his flat capped cronies he'd stand in front of an old horse trough in the centre of the village, directly across from the King's Arms Hotel, a strategic point from which to view all the activities of

the village. The main street curved by them, up to the old village and down to the bus stop and the mills of the newer part, built during the Industrial Revolution when Textiles became King.

The horse trough behind them was scarcely used now, but its steady trickling sound brought on a fine thirst during those warmer days of summer. But the old men stood there exchanging sage remarks at long intervals, all facing the same direction, hands on their suspenders at chest level, rocking on their heels to keep the circulation going, chests puffed out, backs straight. Grandad was often prominent in the group taking a front rank.

When passing this group of men on the way to complete an errand at the Co-Op or green grocers for Mam, we'd do so with a certain reverence as though they were a war memorial or a conference of school headmasters. "That's Ruby's lads tha knows, Tom Lister's lass," one would invariably remark. "Aye they are that," said another, who knew very well who we were.

"How's your mother?" one would inquire. This ritual made us feel part of an old tradition, we belonged here.

On returning we'd see the men sally forth marching in unison as if to some supersonic skirl of pipes, towards the cool shade of the King's Arms. The sound of trickling water in the well behind them had done its work. They were finally overwhelmed.

As a part of this hard core of Village manhood, Grandad had his influence on my brother and I. We walked along the beckside, past mill dams, with the beautiful white swans with clipped wings flapping away as we walked by. He took us up the woodland paths to the high pasture beyond telling us about the sheep and the farms we passed along the way. In his garden plot on the hillside above his home, he had us pick peas and beans, feed the hens and geese, dig the garden for potatoes.

On Sunday, the three of us, my sister along this time, we'd visit Grandma in her old stone house, a tiny four room house once part of an Inn converted into a row of three houses, with the toilet at the end of the block. The building had been erected in 1617. There we'd eat lunch of Grandma's bread and jam, cuddle up to Grandma who was soft and receptive. Grandad sat there in his inviolable chair, the collar off his broad striped shirt, sleeves rolled up, braces slipped off his shoulders, his leather belt, which he always wore with his suspenders still tight across his broad stomach.

I'd sit at his feet fascinated by his gold watch which ticked loudly in its casing as it sat against that ample belly.

"Think tha'll have a belly like that one day, lad?" he'd ask.

Grandma and Grandad were simple people products of their backgrounds and their times, who provided no high flown philosophies of life but filled us with a secure sense of being a part of a way of life. They were honest, predictable, spontaneous and loving. Grandad was a man, when we needed one around, at times profane, angry and drunk (although I never saw him that way). I understand he had been often irresponsible, a gambler where there was little money for his family. But I remember him with deepest affection as his own man, not hiding his faults, not boasting and respected by everyone who knew him.

After my father left home his parents, Grandad and Grandma Wilcock, similarly stepped into the breach as

Grandad Ellison had done. Unfortunately they did not have Grandad Ellison's positive approach. Rather they stood by to watch over 'our lives' presumably to keep Satan at bay. Although we were spared the specifics we knew Mom was infuriated by some of the innuendos about what she should and shouldn't do; our occasional family trips to the early show in the evening at the Picture House; "the first turn" it was known to the locals were frowned upon by my Baptist grandparents. As the weary months of separation passed into years some wives went to dances, held to entertain the service men stationed in and around the village during the periodic training exercises held in the rugged terrain of the Dales. Intricate relationships sometimes develop and in general such "carrying on" became well known in the village. Well aware of this my unfortunate grandparents felt it necessary to remind my mother of the dangers: she was also well aware, and doing her best to devote her entire life to rearing three young children and keep her worries about Dad to a minimum. The result was near rupture in civil relationships with the rule of the game clearly understood, we were allowed to visit our other grandparents.

This was to our great benefit because Grandad if something of a hypocrite like most middle class Methodist and Baptist of that time, was also an entertaining and knowledgeable man.

Unlike Grandad Ellison he was an off-cumdin born on the Lancashire coast. He was in trade, that is, he bought and sold fish. More romantic that that, he sold his fish from the vantage point of a van, a small Commer. With great enthusiasm he toured the villages nearby, shouting his wares as he approached the doors of his potential customers.

"Fresh fillets of haddock, hake, cod, geruts, fish caaakes!" a voice rising to a crescendo. And as he approached a door opening to his admonitions, a great smile would wreath his round, rosy face and in the most gentle, soft voice "Try a choice bit of hake, madam, lovely fish today."

Cyril Wilcock, itinerant fishmonger must have been pretty successful, since he owned a pleasant duplex, with a garage and pleasant yards back and front.

He loved to travel over the hilly winding country roads, loved to meet people and chat, knew a thousand stories. He was a man of the wider world outside Yorkshire, politically a Liberal and in his humble way, a self-educated man. All his son's were educated, some in Grammar school and in my father's case encouraged to take training in a Technical school and learn to climb to the top of the biggest trade the country had to offer, Textiles.

A visit to his home meant intellectual stimulation. He had a wonderful set of children's encyclopedias, 1929 Ed. full of photographs and drawings. I would pour over these endlessly, particularly the history and geography volumes. He seemed delighted in any of our accomplishments, encouraged any sign of scholastic interest.

"Ee our Peter's going to be a scholar!" he'd shout - (he was always inclined to forget that he wasn't hawking fish on some village street).

Grandma was a quiet woman, who laughed a lot. With no children of her own, she took us to her heart, although our boisterousness seemed to confuse her. She preferred my sister, who with her great shyness, normally crept mouselike around the house, and when we were all playing games or just chatting with Grandad,

Christine would curl up on Grandma's wide lap, put her fingers in her mouth and watch all with solemn blue eyes. Grandma would join in when we played "Snap", her favourite game. To our delight whenever her card coincided with another she would never get the key word out. We with our lightning children's reflexes beat her and she'd lean back in her chair, lift her legs off the carpet and shout "Nap" too late, laughing, red faced, beaming at us all, making us feel very superior, growing up, taking over. "Nay, you're all that fast" she'd say. "What a caution, ah'll nivver win". Grandma at such times was a jolly Yorkshire woman, true to her birth, definitely Sutton. But at the appropriate occasion, usually social ones not concerning the immediate family she could, like most English people with prospects, and pretensions to property, turn on a "proper" accent and thus were people of dual personality. Grandma Wilcock of this second personality would never have welcomed the first Grandma, the one we loved, into polite society.

As the war wore on, it was obvious to everyone what a fine job of mothering Mam was really doing. Grandad relented and came visiting more often. He had always come around with his van to give Mom a bit of fish and sell whatever she wanted to buy, but now he came to take us on occasional trips. He'd pack the back of his little van with rugs and cushions, and scrub out the fishy odours as well as possible. Then off we'd go, with a hamper of picnic things; Mam in the front seat and the three of us in the back. Grandma usually stayed behind. He took us to the prettiest picnic spots in the district and introduced us to the spectacular beauty of other dales. We picnicked at Bolton Abbey in Wharfedale and Gordale scar near where the Aire begins, went to the big Parks in the cities, where in Bradfords Maningham Park we boated on the lake and ran wild through the laurel bushes. Somewhere we went through our first maze of high green hedges. During these trips Grandad continued to instill within our spirits that joy of travel for travels sake that typified the Wilcock side of the family.

In the same way he was the Guardian of our Faith. As a staunch Baptist, stauncher because he was a convert from the Methodist and Wesleyan churches, he had been elected or appointed a superintendent of the local Baptist Chapel. No doubt his loud voice and affable manner had helped plus an eye for the business benefits of the association. Grandad had the ability to approach anybody on equal terms from the lowest parishioner to the highest landowner and later in his life the Prime Minister of Canada himself, simply by sticking out a calloused hand, covered in scars inflicted by a fish knife or cleaver. He could convey genuinely great pleasure at the opportunity to meet anybody, no one seemed immune to this sincerest form of flattery.

Anyway, he became the superintendent of the Chapel and because it had the best Sunday School programme in the village, Mother wished us to go, with great encouragement from Grandad himself. There our little souls were saved by a variety of Sunday School teachers. I have been struggling against their indoctrination ever since and have an increasingly desperate sense of having lost. The Baptist in me keeps ruining the joy of temptations and leaving them unfulfilled.

Sutton Baptist Sunday School was large. The school and the chapel adjoined each other.

Each was built in the Victorian era, and some grant of industry must have been lavish in his attempt to purchase Salvation for himself and family. It was built of solid granite blocks, and resembled the Roman Senate in

some respects. The Chapel itself was a glorious edifice, with wide oaken front doors leading into a pillared foyer. Broad steps led up to the interior which to a small boy seemed as if it must have been what Heaven was like. It was an oval structure rising to a high vaulted roof, the ceiling of which was painted with soft pastel murals of New Testament happenings. A balcony almost encircled the interior, held up by pillars of pink and blue ornate doric design. The endless rows of pews were of solid shiny grained wood. The choir and alter were set deeply back from the ministers pulpit, the organ large with pipes lining both sides of the choir. From the heights of the balcony, where we sat only on special occasions such as Easter or the Chapel anniversary, the vastness of this creation filled me with awe and to this day I have always entered places of similar design with great nostalgia.

The single most impressive thing about this place was revealed at the Baptism of youths into the church. This was indeed a highlight and never forgotten.

The carpet below the pulpit and choir was rolled away for this event, and a large set of trap doors opened in the wooden floor. In the water under the floor the Baptisms took place. There was no prissy sprinkling of water from finger tips of the minister onto the bowed heads of the initiates. Here the minister took off his jacket and shoes and socks, rolled up his pants and shirt sleeves and waded in. The youths in long white gowns with bathing suits underneath stepped down to join him and were thereupon submerged headfirst in the water. Depending on the minister, some were bowled over as if a rough sort of game was about to begin. Other gentler types and most usually with any girl, dealt with their charges more ceremoniously with a few splashes here and there and a final dip of the head. To me, impressionable by all rituals, the more fiery the ceremony, the more water that was splashed around the better, because John the Baptist, I was told, was a fiery man, a man of the earth. I would have been delighted if the whole lot, minister and initiates alike, even the entire congregation, could get in that small rectangular pit of water and roll around in religious ecstasy. Besides I thought that there was REALLY the River Jordan flowing underneath that floor, a remote tributary maybe, but enough to make it Holy Water indeed!

I never experienced Baptism there, probably for the best, since I would then have found it impossible, with my sensitive nature to have recovered from this experience and enjoyed the life I led thereafter.

In the Sunday School next door we were coached in the sober, head-working, no-joke approach to fundamental Baptist living. We really learned the Scriptures in those days, often from my Grandmother's brother, Willie Laycock, one of the other superintendents. Willie had a loud voice too and sang in the choir. That same resonant voice rang with fervor as he told us of Lazarus, lepers, Publicans (whom we associated with barkeepers and bartenders - so possibly did Willie) and sinners. It was "fear the Lord" coming across loud and clear in basso-profundo.

Fortunately, the other teachers were less impressive and could be molded like soft clay by the mood of the class from Sunday to Sunday. From primary classes in a cozy, carpeted side room we later joined the main school in a fairly large hall and met one of the senior superintendents, Mr. Walter Thompson, fondly known as

"Walt" to all over the age of 4 years. Walt had a deeply held, yet simple faith which he expounded in a deep voice with a very broad Yorkshire dialect. He was a striking figure, with white close cropped hair and a Shavian white beard and moustache. Like all Baptist lay-preachers and my Grandad Wilcock shared this attribute, he loved hymns, the more martial the better. In fact, there is little doubt that the rise of the non-conformist churches like the Baptist in the nineteenth century coincided with and benefitted from the militarism of the Victorian age. Soldiers could march to battle, and probably did to the rousing refrains of "Onward Christian Soldiers" or "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus, Ye Soldiers of the Cross". As wartime children we thrived on these, conducted by the current superintendent of the chapel for each Sunday, singing at the top of our soprano voices, and would have been ready to do battle with anybody, even the "churches" from up the road, probably huddled in fear in the cold Church of England.

Walter's main aim in life was to slay that ever-lurking dragon, the monster drink. By day, he was the fairly prosperous owner of the "Peg and Leg" shop, a wood cutting and turning shop on the outskirts of the village, turning over a good profit in the war. But by night he was the leader of the Band of Hope, the local temperance union. Almost single handedly he beat the drum of temperance in a village graced with at least five good sized public houses and a large proportion of working class, thirsty citizens. I say almost single handedly because he was aided by his wife, whom he referred to fondly as Mother Thompson.

With great shrewdness and a business man's practicality he concentrated on the children of the village. Most of his employees were probably good customers of the pubs, and presented little threat to business being of sober and thrifty habits.

Besides, absenteeism from work was a threat to the war office and as near a crime as any villager wished to get. The children, however, were fertile soil to cultivate seeds of absenteeism. Despite many opportunities I have never completely uprooted the plant seeded then and when passing through the mists of intoxication toward the oblivion of drunkenness, sudden shafts of light from this legacy of the past have turned me back to relative sobriety. I have always maintained too a basic mistrust of and pity for heavy and habitual drinkers.

Walter Thompson and wife worked their magic through Band of Hope meetings, usually in the winter months on weekday evenings. They lured the potential sinners by showing films advertised personally by Walt in the schools. The word spread widely. At 7 p.m. on the big night swarms of children from every village, every church denomination and even the infidels with no religion, clamoured before the large doors and stone steps of the chapel. With such a motley collection holding widely divergent views on lifestyle, it was inevitable that small clashes should take place, and these Walt and Wife always anticipated, came early and with gentle tones pacified one and all. To do so he merely produced a key to the door, which like a magic wand calmed the rabid throng and opened the portals to the magic of cinematography.

It must be said, at this point, that in those days, as most pre-T.V. survivors will recall, a movie especially a free movie, was special entertainment. To a Sutton village boy in wartime, a free movie was like manna from heaven. This may be an inappropriate choice of words, more in tune with Walter's wishful thinking, than with

the true motivation of the motley collection in his audiences. Mere movement on a screen was sufficient for most, if in colour all the better. Any message was lost on most. But Walter was not as simple and naive a man as he sometimes sounded (witness his thriving business). The films were the lure, not the purpose of his Band of Hope sessions. What else would attract the inclines from homes broken by alcohol better than a motion picture? And for nothing!

As he flung open the heavy doors, the shouting, enthusiastic mob poured in, girl's screams punctuating the gruffer yells of the boys from teenage down. No chivalry here, Walter and his diminutive wife would be borne along like lotsam on a tidal wave towards the main hall. The crowd rushed to the front lines of seats placed in advance in orderly rows facing the screen tantalizingly being above the rostrum and platform. To the latter, Walt and his wife had tried with agile tread to avoid total pulverization.

The routine was always the same.

"Well girls and boys, it does me and Mother good to see all your shining smiling faces "cum" to worship here tonight, and to learn how to preserve a pure and clean life free of Drink." He would intone in his opening sally.

Snickers echoed across the hall, countered by hushes from the stalwarts representing the home-side, Sutton Baptist.

Walter, undeterred, "and now lads and lasses, let us all sing with Mother Thompson accompanying us on the piano that 'lively' song, etc, etc,"

"Aw, cum on Walt, let's see t'pictures first." Once again from the nether regions again hushed, again failing to create a crack in that broad smile on Walter's cherubic face.

At this point the spotlight figuratively speaking would fall on Mother Thompson. Her small form seemed to have taken rout in the piano stool. Her little lyle-stockinged legs barely touched the floorboards. Short of trunk also she had somehow contracted her body even further, her small head sunken on her short neck, her lank hair crowned by a flowered black straw hat with a narrow brim and low crown, a hat like those of countless other older women of that time. Immortalized by Grandma of the Giles cartoons in the national newspapers, her little body was tucked against the keyboard to allow her short forearms to extend all the necessary distance to the keys. Somehow we rarely saw her face fully, but caught glimpses of a ruddy, complexional visage, features miniaturized, like a dolls face; which never smiled or frowned. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a big key in her back turn when she started to play.

Play she did, in rousing manner, fine old tunes sentimental in emotion, full of yearning from the hearts of women left destitute by husbands fallen victim to the evils of drink.

"Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin." Ask Jesus to help you, some others to win, etc, etc. Caught up in the infectious enthusiasm of the strange, even bizarre Thompson duo. The audience roared into song and the meeting caught fire.

Then followed the films about the virtues of milk, walks in the country, a tour film of Scotland, clean, sober, healthful living followed by the universal slogan - "Beer is best - left alone!"

Before the last film, Walter inserted his last harangue, knowing that when the films were over the exodus would be swift and final.

"Now lads and lasses, Mother and I have here a beautiful set of pledges, lively colours on right fancy paper. Pledge reads - I promise, never to take any intoxicating liquors or 'summat' like that, solemn words to help guide you through life. Summat to keep near you and remind you when faced wi' temptation!" (Derisive asides from the crowd.)

Now "O'll cum up and sign t'pledge before we show t'next film and after."

Shuffling feet and whispers, embarrassed lulls in activity followed. A few bold souls crept up the platform bowed as if walking up onto the platform for execution.

"Here, that's a good lad, a brave lad too. You're Jack Barsby's lad aren't you? How's your Dad, right well I hope."

With such familiar banter he'd get a few converts then and a few after the last film. After all, the pledges were colourful, on stiff parchment - no doubt from a vast pre-war supply.

When my brother Brian once went up to sign I, in reticence, held back. Perhaps some premonition determined this uncharacteristic behaviour for usually I followed my brother like a piece of his clothing in those days.

"Aye, this is Ruby Ellison's lad cum oop to sign t'pledge. How's your Grandad, lad? Well I hope."

Now there was a thing characteristic of the undying spirit of hope within Walter Thompson. This was not Grandad Wilcock, the Superintendent of the Baptist chapel, he was inquiring about, it was my Grandad Ellison. Walter never failed at any opportunity to inquire as to the health of Tom Lister Ellison who in turn never failed to inquire about the health of Walter Thompson when he heard with amusement that we'd attended the latest Band of Hope meeting. For he and Walter, on opposite sides of the war against drink, in that Grandad was a respected client in most of the hostelrys between Sutton and the racetrack at York, were in a constant state of friendly truce. It was an object lesson in my younger days of live and let live. Grandad never denigrated or demeaned Walter's efforts to convert anyone to total abstinence, nor did Walter ever regard Grandad with anything but respect as a hard-working man, who through no fault of his own, sought to stake his thrust on beer rather than milk or pure spring water. There was something noble about both attitudes. Walter Thompson's attitude taught me that there is in the hearts of some perhaps most religious and socially conscious men no trace of hypocrisy.

On that fateful evening when my brother signed the pledge he returned home with his trophy.

He was greeted with a hug by my mother, who realized his boyish sense of accomplishment. But her mischievous nature took a hand. Her blue eyes twinkled as she declared, as if a sudden Revelation had occurred "Oo, Brian, you won't be able to drink anymore dandelion and burdock! And it's your favourite pop!"

Struck by a thunderbolt my brother was immobilized in the centre of the kitchen floor, his face pale, mouth agape, pupils dilating; his breathing almost ceased. On the verge of a convulsion he was propelled (no doubt by Satan himself wearing a triple X emblazoned T-shirt) upstairs towards the bathroom, where he tore his gor-

geous pledge into ribbons and flushed them twice for luck down the toilet.

Despite Mam's protestations of "It was just a joke, Brian", those Band of Hope meetings never seemed the same again, and Brian always paled at pledge-signing time.

OCCASIONS WHEN THE WAR CAME TO SUTTON

Air-raid wardens were older men in black tin hats with a big white W on the front. They rode around the village on bicycles shouting "put that light out!" if a chink of light showed through the black-out curtains, they were trained in the rudiments of getting people to shelter or to know the safest places in houses in time of bombing attack. In Sutton they were destined for boredom and ignominy.

In the early days of war they did, however, convey an aura of authority, and comforted us that things were under control, even in our quiet little backwater. Those days did offer some excitement. Stories filtered back from the Home Guard wandering the high fields and hills, looking out for parachutes or spies flashing lights to guide bombers to targets down the valley. There were stories of bombers making rendez-vous above the valley, before the final run in on Leeds, Bradford or mainly Sheffield to the South. Some said "they could have had a shot at the buggers" with their Lee-Enfield, W.W. I vintage rifles.

We heard the dull, throbbing drone of these planes as Mother awakened us late at night. With calm whispers she ushered us half-asleep downstairs to the larder beneath the stairs where a soft bed of an old mattress and pillows had been prepared. A heavy hunk of stone in front of us that served to put milk and butter on because we had no other means of refrigeration, acted as a good blast protector. The sturdy structure of the stairs would act as protection against all but a direct hit. These nights of danger, even though it was remote are warm in my memory. We recall no fear of those times, with Mam close by, going occasionally to listen at the window, then the all clear sounding in the distance from the mill.

There were few of those nocturnal warnings. The days of serious German bombing were over in 1941 when Hitler turned East on Russia.

Once we did see a Dornier flying low being chased by a few fighters; it flew over the next village like a large bird at the mercy of pursuing hawks. We felt sorry for it, that huge bird. We heard that the pursuing fighters forced the bomber to land at a British airbase, and were relieved. Would we have been if we had been evacuees?

One sunny Spring day in 1944, a plane crashed only three miles away, a British plane, a bomber flown by Poles.

On a memorable trip to Blackpool in the second summer of the war we had met a polish officer, a guest of my uncle, a doctor in the town. He was in the R.A.F. and we had been in awe of him and admired him, as all British people admired the Poles then. We had also seen "Dangerous Moonlight" a moving film about Polish flyers, in which the Warsaw concerto was the theme song, to remain popular and meaningful for a generation to follow.

The Polish airmen, victims of this crash into our green countryside, had been returning in a crippled bomber from a raid over Europe. They crashed into the elms, oaks and sycamore trees along the River Aire and now in

flames plunged to the ploughed fields and exploded. None survived. There were tales of torsos pinioned amid the tree branches, of limbs lying in the fields; but most were burned in the wreckage; eight young men from Poland dead in a quiet Yorkshire pasture, with the cows beginning to come back in curious groups.

The area was cordoned off for days. Then we were able to inspect, along with scores of other schoolchildren. We marvelled at the scorched trees and the charred pastureland. Some of us were disappointed at not finding parts of bodies, not even a finger. I must confess to treading about with trepidation hoping not to find any such grisly trophy. We did find something to take home though, live cartridges! They must have been scattered all over the landscape, and in such numbers as to defy complete retrieval by the police and home-guard. Home we cycled with these samples to show our mothers. Ours took one look, horror-stricken, grabbed the lot and buried them deeply in our back garden under the rose bush with long thick thorns on its rambling branches. They must remain there to this day, probably paved over.

WAR ENDS

The village war memorial stood in the Park near the bowling green, a simple stone cross with bronze plaques on the four sided base. The names of the dead covered each side. Those who had died at the Somme, at Festubert, Amiens and elsewhere in the first war. How many new names would be added? I used to think as I stood there. I had no thought then of wars futility and to me those names represented personal heroes who really had given their lives for me personally. Death never came close. Uncle Jack was a prisoner in Germany, sending us occasional postcards by the "Kriegsgefangenen Post" depicting a gay life of parties and variety shows, the comraderie of prison life, safely out of danger.

Soon it was D-Day. For weeks long trains of khaki painted tankers had passed through the valley by rail, and troops had again trained in the hills. Tanks clanked through the village streets. As the spring passed activity of this sort increased, then everything became quiet and in the expectant silence that followed the old men muttered about a second front.

The young man who had been cutting our hair for price less than Willie Cooper over at Crosshills was called up. He had a younger brother at our school and he himself had just left Grammar School a couple of years before. We went to his home for the haircuts, and enjoyed his joking bantering manner, his ready grin. Anyway off he went and was killed by a sniper in 1945 in the last weeks of the war. This young man's death is the only one I can recall with a personal sense of loss.

Then it was over. We gathered wood for a huge bonfire, bought fireworks now available in limited numbers, and Mr. Robinson had a vast personal supply of rockets and Roman Candles for V.E. night celebrations. He and his wife put on a feed of brown peas in their garage for the neighbourhood around Hazel Grove, produced a few tins of pineapple and other exotic fruits hoarded since the war began. It was a memorable day, and at night, into the bonfire people threw away the remaining old wood of the Robinson's air raid shelter, now an amorphous mound of sandbags, mortar and various varieties of weeds fertilized by the large number of village dogs.

The natural reserve of Yorkshire people was cast away in the warmth of the great bonfires blaze and I recall

that the day after, standing in the ashes of the fire, picking up the thick sticks that had held Mr. Robinson's rockets and sniffing the cordite, feeling a sense of nostalgia that such days should come more often.

V.J. came as an anticlimax, despite the new bomb. So many new weapons had been introduced by the world in the final conclusive years of war. I listened to the radio about the total destruction of two cities with one single bomb. I remember my sense of awe when a commentator on the BBC told us that such a uranium bomb, the size of a pea, would blow up a house. Could the world ever be the same again?

Finally, in the early days of 1946, on a cold platform at Keighley Station, our family became complete again. Dad arrived to leap from the train and found no one waiting for him.

We were on the wrong platform! I remember first seeing him, almost a stranger, sunbronzed and in his white covered tropical cap, climbing the stairs towards us, a big smile with his broken tooth, on his face. The long years of war were over, everything would be good again.

Not long after joining the staff he was found to have chronic renal disease which after a few years led to end-stage renal disease. Despite this he maintained his teaching commitments even though at times he had to literally drag himself around with a home-grown oxygenator.

Peter underwent a successful renal transplant and was able to resume a full teaching and clinical career. This was commensurate with his excellent teaching sessions at the Charles Bell Hospital in 1970. Peter suffered the first of a series of coronary occlusions. He recovered and was back teaching when he had a second occlusion. This dampened his plans to take a sabbatical year where he had planned to study paediatric nephrology at the University of Rochester. He died following another coronary occlusion.

In addition to his outstanding teaching ability, Peter was an inspiration to us all a man who was determined to win the struggle whatever the odds. He was a man of courage whom we deeply miss. He is remembered by his wife Patricia and three daughters: Linda, Andrea and Cynthia.

H.E. McCoy, M.D.

Professor and Chairman

Department of Pediatrics

TRIBUTE TO DR. PETER WILCOCK

Dr. Peter Wilcock, Associate Professor of Pediatrics died October 27, 1976. Dr. Wilcock was born in Sutton-In-Craven, Yorks, England in 1935 and graduated from McGill University in 1959. After a rotating internship and a year of internal medicine, he took a residency in pediatrics at the University of Alberta Hospital from 1961 to 1963. He then went to England and took another year of pediatric training at Sheffield Children's Hospital. The following year he studied at the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto. He obtained his fellowship in pediatrics in 1965 and came to Edmonton where he was in pediatric practice from 1965 to 1967. In 1967 he was appointed to the staff of the Pediatrics Department of the Charles Camsell Hospital and in the Department of Pediatrics, University of Alberta. Peter became noted as an outstanding teacher and clinician at that institution.

Not long after joining the staff he was found to have chronic renal disease which after a short time forced him to undergo hemo-dialysis. Despite this he maintained his teaching commitments even though at times he had to literally drag himself around with a hemoglobin of 5 gm %.

Peter underwent a successful renal transplant and was able to resume a full teaching and clinical load. The students commented on his excellent teaching sessions at the Charles Camsell Hospital. In 1975, Peter suffered the first of a series of coronary occlusions. He recovered and was back teaching when he had a second occlusion. This dampened his plans to take a sabbatical year where he had planned to study community pediatrics at the University of Rochester. He died following another coronary occlusion.

In addition to his outstanding teaching ability, Peter was an inspiration to us of a man who was determined to continue the struggle whatever the odds. He was a man of courage whom we deeply miss. He is survived by his wife Perlea, and three daughters, Linda, Andrea and Cynthia.

E.E. McCoy, M.D.
Professor and Chairman
Department of Pediatrics