

LONDON 1955-1963

Chesham Place

Osbert Sitwell in memoirs called, *Left hand, Right Hand*, tells of a house at 25 Chesham Place, Belgravia where he stayed in about 1905. Unlike most English houses belonging to what he calls “ordinary rich people”—such having only whatever furnishing “fate has decreed”—No. 25 had been decorated. Sitwell observes that the then-new vogue for decorating probably signified a waning of upper-class confidence.

When we came to London in 1955 this house no longer existed; it had received a direct bomb hit, and all that remained was a large hole filled with weeds, This we knew because for more than six weeks we stayed nearby in a block of service flats called 20 Chesham Place.

Mark was only four, so could not go out alone, although in the press of events, even this might have happened. He was independent at a young age and once, when told that he couldn't go with us by car to Sussex (80 miles) said, “Then I'll take a taxi.” At Chesham Place he was left in the care of women sent by an agency called *Universal Aunts* and was probably taken to play in a sad little park whose iron railings had been replaced during the war by chicken wire. Bill was put in the hands—I could better say grip—of school agents, *Gabitas and Thring* (called by W.H. Auden, *Rabbitarse and String*). But most often he was free to go where he liked, taking Jeff along. Jeff was eight; Bill, twelve.

They say that in London they did many forbidden things, but until recently I'd not found out what these were. Jeff did tell me that Bill never ate lunch at school, for which he cannot be blamed. He hid his lunch money in a wall behind a street sign, only to have someone discover and steal it after he had amassed a large sum. Jeff promised not to tell, a vow he kept for thirty years.

At Chesham Place, after days of terrible boredom, they resorted to taking a census on the sidewalk, asking all passers-by to say either “yes” or

“no”, and reporting that women most often say “yes” and men “no”. The London Underground fare for children was threepence or less (farthings were still in use), and I believe they got on and went everywhere, especially to the railway stations, of which there were at least ten—immense, glass-domed edifices, then filled with steam, smoke, and noise because coal-burning locomotives (of some grandeur) were still in use. These latter were named after England’s cities, castles, monarchs, and places of Empire—Richard the Second, Hereward the Wake, Boadecia, Margaret Rose, Aberystwyth, Udaipur, Aboukir and, mysteriously, Polyphemus. One in the “Halls” class was called Doldowlod which, as Bill has noticed, is nearly palandromic in a woldlike way—Dolwodlod. Bill later became a train “spotter” and still has a guide to all England’s coal-burning engines with those he has seen checked off.

Bill was also fond of the Underground and once asked what was my favorite Underground line—something I had not up until then considered. His was the Circle Line because for one fare, he could go around indefinitely, even perpetually. When after this I tried the Circle Line, it did seem very soothing. (I have recently read that the Circle Line was the first underground railway and was already built in Dickens' time—1850's.) Once, during a trip on the Underground, Bill asked when I would most like to live. This seemed an interesting question, and I let my mind run back over the centuries, finally, influenced by romance, deciding on the Age of Waterloo. “No”, he said, that isn’t what I mean. Would you rather live in the year 2000 or 3000?”

During the first weeks at Chesham Place I had to consult a doctor and was sent to a surgeon in Harley Street. His office was cozy with a coal fire in the grate and Turkish rugs on the floor—possibly also on the consulting table, although about this I may be mistaken. He was wearing a formal suit with silk cravat, and his manner was kind. It suddenly seemed to me that I had traveled right outside the clinical world into another where all is snug and comfortable and peril unknown, a feeling that I had in all circumstances in London, which is strange when one thinks of the bomb damage everywhere. It is a perception directly opposite from the Kafkaesque. I can remember at the time of the Suez crisis, when matters

were tense, having the very peculiar thought that I would prefer to die on Kensington High Street where I felt safe.

And only a week after our arrival we went to the annual diplomatic presentation at Buckingham Palace. Our trunks had not yet come, so we both rented clothes, mine extremely plain—a dress of stricken green velvet. Bob has a letter in his files from the Ambassador's secretary asking him to come "to practice positions and motions." And I have a letter to my mother, which she kept, describing the evening. At the door were footmen with rose-colored livery and powdered wigs, and inside were guests with knee britches. The Archbishop of Canterbury had britches and socks of purple. A few, including Anthony Eden, whose career while we were in London was to end abruptly because of Suez, wore a silver garter (Knight of the Garter).

The Queen, when she came, was preceded by a guard in red. He had a gold helmet with white feathers, and was carrying a pike. I remember especially the exoticism of diplomats from the Orient. A young Pakistani girl had magnificent, heavy, gold-corded braids that ended in gold tassels. Afterwards I saw Nehru waiting for his car; he looked extremely sad. We went each year to this presentation. At the last before we left, I decided not to be outdone, so wore a pink satin dress from Fortnum and Mason. It was a truly beautiful dress, very simple and bare at the top, but printed with cerise poppies. As we stood in the reception line I looked about and realized that the only person whose mode of dress was like mine was the Ambassador from Nigeria.

As the royal entourage, led by our ambassador, came down the Embassy line, it seemed always, each year, to make a stop at Bob. On the first occasion, our ambassador looked quite startled as he didn't know who Bob was (we had arrived only two days before). He recovered himself and quickly passed on. Some way down the line I saw the Queen Mother (still alive today, 1991) turn around. She then came back to us and said, "Who are you?" I think she generously didn't want anyone to be so insignificant as to be passed over. On another occasion, Princess Margaret, then about eighteen, also stopped to talk to Bob. "What, she said in a royal manner as if the question were abstract, "were you doing today?" "I was listening to the debate in parliament", said Bob." "And, how did you find it?" (Long silence

while Bob considered just how he found it.) "Noisy", he said. Once Prince Philip who, to relieve the tedium, often challenged those he questioned, asked an American Embassy staff member what he did. Discovering that he worked on the Middle East (the Middle East was then, as always, in a state of danger and conflagration) he then asked the unfortunate man, who I'm sure could readily see the question coming along, why, in that case, he was in London.

In this same letter to my mother I say that Mark was so pleased with two handkerchiefs which my father had sent that he took both to school for many days. Years later in Boston on his first day of school Timothy took, for reasons best known to him, a bag packed with five pairs of underpants and an electric iron!

I scarcely knew where the children were because I was myself thoroughly absent and confused. It was necessary first of all to find a house. There were houses everywhere, and often these had large signs proclaiming them to be *For Lease*, but do not think this meant that just anyone could rent one. A lease was something to be bought, and typically it was for ninety-nine, or perhaps somewhat fewer years. Even when we found the end of a lease, the house had invariably been stripped of what estate agents called *fittings*—not a light fixture, ceiling or otherwise, no carpet, and seemingly no floors: only rough board foundations for carpet. Certainly, no appliances. What was left was often grand but very bare. I have, in fact, read that the Duke of Westminster, as a final gesture when he sold his house in Park Lane, gave away the *top-soil*—donated it to the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

Sometimes we did find the ends of long leases, and one in particular was remarkable. It was an immense, south-facing flat on Cleveland Row with tall casement windows overlooking the front of St. James Palace, its sentry boxes and guards. Green Park was nearby, but we knew we could not live in Piccadilly with three children. On looking back I realize that it would have been handy to Lyle Street, where Bill went to buy radio parts. Houses on this street, he says, alternated between war surplus and prostitution. The unsuitability of St James for a family with children was only equaled by Smith Square where we also looked at a house. This nice

old square is behind Westminster Abbey, and there parliamentary division bells ring into the houses. The square had been badly knocked about by a bomb.

There was one other flat on the second and third floors of a block in Cadogan Square, Kensington, that we were truly sorry not to take. One entered from street level by a small lift that went to a balcony just under the two-story-high ceiling of the drawing room. From there one descended, as from heaven, a long staircase into the room below. There were again tall casement windows, these leading to outside balconies that overlooked the gardens of the square. But there were only two, nearly vestigial, bedrooms.

All the London flats had spectacular plumbing arrangements, usually including a geyser, a dramatic device for heating water. When lit, it made a loud explosion, and while burning it had a percussive, bright flame. There were regal sponge holders, chrome hot towel racks, willow-patterned basins, much-polished mahogany and water tanks from which hung long brass chains with ornamental porcelain pulls. I remember such pulls from my childhood, and the wonderful possibility that one might pull down the whole box. Pipes in London were always put on the outside walls in case they should freeze and need repair. Once when our inside pipes froze, the plumber suggested that we keep a lighted candle under the trap.

38 Edwardes Square

After five weeks we were very tired of hotel life—in Chesham Place, a kind of non-existence. Then came a miracle. I read a notice in the *Times* of a furnished house to let in Edwardes Square, Kensington. It was foolish to consider it because we had furniture, and the notice said three bedrooms, which was not enough. But we knew it was a beautiful square, ideal for children, and we were ready for any compromise, so I went immediately. It was just before Guy Fawkes Day, and the gardener with some children was building a bonfire in the square.

The house, No. 38, was beautiful and odd, its oddity apparent the moment one approached. The front door, made of wood, was also painted to

look like wood, with beige-and-brown trompe-l'oeil wood graining, this undertaken, we were told, by a man who also marblized columns at the Russian Embassy. Entering, one came into a narrow passage that had a linoleum floor—also a chair-rail. The walls above the rail were plain enough, but those below were covered with what looked like Victorian sheet metal, pebbled, of the kind found on ceilings of old hardware stores. Nothing in all this could, however, prepare one for the overwhelming impression inside the house of truly decreed—indeed ordained—furnishings.

On either side of the door into the drawing room, and next to a harpsichord, stood two nearly life-size porcelain blackamoors of great sensuality and incongruity, and amongst French-baroque gilded chairs and sofas covered in fraying rose-damask were bow-front chests holding decorative china lamps with resplendent fringed and beaded silk shades. Some of the rooms had old, polished wood floors, and others had linoleum—the surprising change underfoot from one to the next so idiosyncratic to the house as to be almost what I remember best. It was a house not at all attached to the reality principle. And, we discovered, it *did* have enough bedrooms—three large upstairs and, behind the kitchen, a fourth, not mentioned in the newspaper. One bedroom had a fireplace and nearly floor-to-ceiling windows looking down on the square's gardens; and another, a large west-facing bay that overlooked its own garden. The kitchen had many windows, a door to the garden, a scullery, and a refrigerator from the 1920's which stood on legs and had, as its only identifying mark, a small metal plaque with the words, "Electric Refrigerator". At the back there was a paved, sunken garden with camomile and foxglove growing between the stones. A dovecote had been put up by our landlord in the hope that fan-tailed doves would come, but they never did.

Our landlord, Otilie Anquetil, came from an Anglo-Irish family that had lived for some generations in England. She had bought the house during the war when there was an anti-aircraft battery in the Square and when all the houses were empty. She simply went from one to another to choose which she liked best. Her nature was, we thought, kind, mysterious, eccentric, and libel to sudden visionary schemes. The first of these was to let the house and move into a small flat, sunny due to a wide stairwell,

which she had made in the basement. There she planned to shovel coal for the furnace to which the only access was through her flat. This she did, later installing oil and moving to a flat at the top of the house. Finally she let both flats and went abroad to marry her cousin, said to be the handsomest man in Jamaica. Now as I write, I realize that I miss her. She had black eyes that flashed subtle messages.

She had several old servants who came by the day, one of these called Budd (last name). He had polished the floors but became too old for that, so polished the silver instead. When she left, he came to work for us, and by then he was old indeed. He arrived (carrying his apron) and did not ring the bell, but just stood outside, smoking and breathing. She also had a charwoman. Once when Bob went to discuss something with Miss Anquetil, the woman kept passing between them. She was told to go and do something else, but she didn't. Finally, Miss Anquetil said, "Go!" and, turning to Bob, "They're so inconsequential."

There is in my mind no question that Edwardes Square is the most pastoral and romantic in London, perhaps more romantic then; now it has become trimmed and chic in appearance. It is a very large square built in about 1811 on land belonging to Lord Kensington who lived in Holland House (existing in a bombed condition in our day—now owned by the London County Council). He had the family name of Edwardes. The land was bought, not leased, by a developer named Louis Leon Changeur, and this was important because it meant that the houses were, thereafter, freehold and could be bought outright. During the eight years that we were in London and some ensuing years, the price of these houses went from £20,000 to £400,000 (£1,067,500 in 1991). It is said that the houses were built by Changeur in the hope they would be used by officers of Napoleon's army after England had been invaded, the Square, according to one account (*Old Court Suburbs* by Leigh Hunt, 1855), "adapted to the promenading tastes and poorly furnished pockets of lieutenants." Certainly the square was large and the houses, relative to it, small. It was also persuasive, to us at least, that Changeur went bankrupt after the Battle of Waterloo and that, in our house, the door knobs and key-holes were set unusually low, as if for people of lesser stature. Many artists and poets had lived in the Square, Walter Pater and earlier George DuMaurier at No. 12, and G.K. Chesterton at

No. 1. Leigh Hunt also lived in the Square, and I'm sorry that I didn't know this while my father was alive, as his favorite poem was Hunt's *Abou Ben Adhem and the Angel*.

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw in the moonlight within his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?'—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made all of sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still; and said, 'I pray thee then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow men.'
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great waking light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed—
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

(Leigh Hunt, a friend of Charles Dickens, was mercilessly satirized in *Bleak House* as the ridiculous Harold Skimpole.)

Houses, brick above and white-painted smooth stucco below, all having arched entrances and front gardens, surrounded the Square on three sides. At the south side there was a mews with artists studios, and at the southeast corner there was a pub, the *Scarsdale Arms*. The Square's gardens were enclosed by a black iron-spike fence with locked gates to which the houseowners had keys. There were gravel paths, two grass tennis courts that had not, I think, been improved by the anti-aircraft battery, a beautiful small white temple with Doric columns which was the gardener's cottage and, on a plinth, a cannonball.

The Square's most eloquent hour was, I thought, early evening, when sometimes the moon shone on the temple and sometimes a small owl hooted. Often there was also the comforting diesel sound of an idling London cab. Its best time of year came in November, on Guy Fawkes day, when there was a bonfire and unlimited, genuine fireworks—Bill says that many could be bought for threepence. They included rockets which the children shot over the wall into the Russian Embassy compound at the top of the Square, or, hoping for a really big explosion, into one another's pile of fireworks. He thinks, in fact, that the smoke from Guy Fawkes day probably started up the London winter fogs.

The Square's greatest appeal lay, however, in its intimate scale, the houses separated from the sidewalk only by small gardens in which there might be an urn filled with blue alyssum, a primrose, or a vine of fall clematis growing in a tangle. Once when the milkman came into our house, his horse tried to follow. We found her in the front garden, grazing in a flower-bed, the cart wedged in the garden gate.

The small children, and there was a coterie—Joyce Cradock-Watson, Sally, Susie and Alexander Fraser, Sarah Lean, William Pitt, Sarah Barnes, Penelope, Nicola, Mark and Lavinia—were always in the Square and always together, moving as one like a flight of birds. (Bill once remarked after a birthday party at his house, that the children sloshed from one end of the house to the other like waves in a tub.) Mark says they played French Cricket (with tennis racquets) and built houses in the shrubbery with sticks gathered into a pile by the gardener. Because the gardener did not allow them in the flower-beds and objected to the scattering of his sticks, he was called "Nosy Parker." The greatest fascination of all for the children, according to Mark, was the very large amount of buried pieces of old crockery and china. As no bomb (although perhaps shrapnel) had hit the Square, the origin of these mysterious remains remains mysterious. Mark's most recent explanation is that there could have once been a fair with china-throwing booths. There were many Russian children. We could hear their voices over the wall, but they never came to play in the Square.

Schools

While we were looking for a house, we also looked for schools. In Sweden and Switzerland, we had, for better or worse, put the children into the public schools. (I am waiting to learn from their memoirs how much they minded this.) It was more complicated in England. Our choices were private day or boarding schools. There were state schools, but we felt that the children's schooling had already been mixed and difficult enough. Once in Switzerland, we found Bill, age seven, bicycling well off the ordinary route from school—at that time he did not yet speak German. When we asked why he was there, he said cheerily, "I'm avoiding my enemies." When we arrived in England he had, at twelve, been only one year in an English-language school—not a good one. Our difficulties were, I thought, made greater by lack of candor on the part of the English. They wished to be discreet, and it was difficult to penetrate this discretion. Perhaps they were not sure which school to recommend to an American boy or which would accept him.

I think that despite our ignorance, or perhaps because of it, all turned out well. Mark began at the Chelsea Froebel School, which he described in a college entrance application as his best school. The teachers were young and pretty, and the children learned only as much as could be taught on a friendly basis. Whenever I went, they seemed happy. Sometimes I found them washing clothes in large tubs, and this they seemed to like particularly. It was run by Lady Edwards and her husband, Sir Charles, drove the school van. When it came time for Mark to apply, at age seven, to Colet Court, St. Paul's Junior School, we were told that he could not yet read well enough to be admitted. Reading may not have been the Chelsea Froebel's strongest point.

Mark went for an interview with the Headmaster at Colet Court and was with him for some time. When they came out the headmaster was smiling. He said, "I asked Mark whether he would rather live in England or America. He thought for a moment, then asked, 'Which state?' I was so taken aback that I couldn't remember the name of a single state." This was, I think, just after we had been to visit the Dunlaps in Kansas where Mark had a wonderful time catching tortoises in cellar holes, and he thought he would return to the U.S. only if he could live in Kansas. Some of the tortoises he, of course, brought back to England—Mark seemed always to be

transporting live and nearly live things through customs. Their names were *Myrtle* and *Lettuce*. (Laura Dearborn has, today, a tortoise named *Fluffy*.) On a recent visit to Phoenix, Mark took home in his luggage some large rocks from the bed of the Salt River. And when he was recently packing to go to Sweden, his small son James asked if he was going to take a rock.

Jeff, and later Mark, went to a boys' preparatory boarding school (ages eight to thirteen) in Sussex which we found with the help of Bruno and Virginia Brown, old friends of Gay Dearborn. We took some brochures from school agents to their house, and they noticed that an old and respected friend had sent his son to Stoke House in Seaford. So we drove down with Jeff to look at it. The school was nearly on the sea, and my first impression was that it seemed very orderly and extremely cold. It was a gray November day with a sea fog coming in, and all the windows were open. We were shown the school by the headmaster, Arthur Pyper, and his wife, Rosemary. They lived just next door and their small daughter was a Stoke House pupil.

Jeff and Mark will have to tell what life was like at Stoke House. I think it was more English than I am able to describe or even know. The school had a small twice-yearly journal called the *Stoke House Annals* in which one was likely to find reports of games. On Rugby Football—"Let it be confessed at once that this was a very disappointing season." or—"From our point of view this was a disaster, for faced by determined Tyttenhanger runners, our team showed no enterprise or spirit to attack." On boxing—"Mogens and Muirhead started briskly but failed to deliver many punches." In cricket—"A.F. Brown tirelessly and effectually pursues the ball. Not very skilled but he makes up for this by trying." Sometimes these observations rose to high levels of regret. When I asked Bob why an account of poor performance by, for instance, Mogens should be published, he said, "It's an honest assessment and teaches a fundamental lesson—some boys always do better than other boys." It may also have prepared them for what would come in life, or perhaps death. Ted has recently sent us an obituary from *The London Daily Telegraph* :

Paul Kingdon, scholar priest, who has died, aged 82, was well known in Oxford in the 1930's, but never fulfilled his early promise.

Jeff, after weeks at Chesham Place, thought Stoke House with its games and boys a good escape, which fortunately it turned out to be. We would not have decided to send him there, aged eight and far from us, had not the Brown's friend, Roger Lloyd (also, I think, a friend of Gay Dearborn), known Arthur Pyper and sent his son to Stoke House. This seemed reassuring. We would certainly not have sent him had we not liked the Pypers and had not Jeff been very eager to go. And we would *most* certainly not have sent him had we then read the accounts of preparatory school barbarisms that we have since read—those of Winston Churchill, Evelyn Waugh, Osbert Sitwell and Lord Berners, to name a few. Berners, who spent his days in a “benumbed condition” at a school called Elmley, tells of the headmaster's extreme ferocity (“blood-lust”) and “sadism without the extenuating circumstances of sexual aberration” and of the students' taste for the horrid and gruesome (it was rumored that a member of the school had been walled up alive inside the stone walls of one of the classrooms). He says,

If a student of folklore were able to live for some months in a preparatory school disguised as a small boy, he might be enabled to make some illuminating discoveries as to the origin of primitive myths and the growth of primitive religions.

Stoke House did, Mark says, have a boy-hypnotist. When, inevitably, he hypnotized a master, telling him to open an already (needless-to-say) open window, he was made to cease.

Seaford was a small town on the south coast. The large-scale ordnance survey map of that section of Sussex shows only ocean with Seaford, a small speck of land, almost off the map at the top. The wildness and beauty of the downs and the benefits of sea air brought many schools there. Now there may be none left, as the sprawl of housing estates along the seacoast from Brighton eastward, which began in the thirties, has overtaken the small towns. Mark once took Lisa to see Stoke House, only to find that it had been torn down. (When Berners after many years went back to see Elmley, he noticed “a feeling of gaiety and irresponsibility in the air that had been absent in the old days . . .” and was told that it had been

converted to a lunatic asylum.) It is true that the children seemed to profit from windows wide open to the sea, and from games played in appalling weather, but we once had the following letter:

*Dear Mummy and Dad, The school is full of germs.
Your friend, Jeff.*

The school was large, but not extremely large. It was red brick with many wide bays, trimmed in white, and it was set amongst playing fields. We were shown the classrooms, light and south-facing, the dormitories high under the eaves, a games pavillion, a Fives court and a small swimming pool in which Mark learned to swim. (Jeff had learned to swim the previous summer at Landon Boys' Day Camp in Maryland, where his instructor was Mr. Drown.) And there was a school museum, small but exotic, with tiger skins, elephant tusks, and African spears, sent over many years from far places in the Empire. Its particular charm had, though, to do with the admixture of birds' nests and objects from the carpentry class. The tiger skin had, I remember, an ink stain.

The greatest drama of Jeff's time at Stoke House was a fire that started at night in the dormitory. Fortunately it was quickly discovered, but the boys had to be got out of bed and sent outside. Jeff wrote a poem about this,

*In the Easter term of '59
We had a fire with a glow and a shine
And the whole of Stoke House was filled with smoke
And all the boys in the school awoke
Miss Ansell sounded the fire alarm
We rushed downstairs but we took it calm
All of the common room was alight
And it looked to me like Guy Fawkes night
And nobody came to any harm
Except Pickering who sprained his arm*

From Stoke House Mark once wrote us a letter saying that he had got a star for "eating his kippers tidily."

Meanwhile Bill had, after some time with Davies Tutorial, been accepted at St. Paul's. I think this was an act of friendship on the part of the school, as Bill had so little English language training (although tutors spoke of his promise), and we were very pleased.

St. Paul's School was founded by John Colet, Dean of the Cathedral in 1509, and it remained in the City for many years. Milton and Pepys were pupils there. In the nineteenth century it moved to a magnificent, high-Victorian, brick building in Hammersmith. After we left London it again moved, this time to Barnes, and the Victorian school building was torn down. It is hard to think that this was a good decision. Bill was put into Form 5N, N for "No Latin." He says the students in this form were accepted for other than academic reasons, and one could scarcely begin at a more lowly point. He soon fought his way upwards, however, and got into a mathematics stream where the teaching was excellent and where he did well. One could say, though, that at twelve he had to learn instantly everything, at least as regards English, that is generally learned earlier. (We have his Swiss copy-books, inscribed *Wilhelm*, which tell of glaciers, goods manufactured in Münsingen, and the yearly and daily path of the sun.)

Die feurige Sonnes sinkt im Westen unter. Es dämmert. Die Blumen, die Ture und die Menschen legen sich schlafen.

He became a cox and a Queen's Scout (this honor bestowed at Winsor Castle by the Queen) but seems to like best the time when he and his friend David Rates explored the school's immense 100-year-old, 15-foot-round heating ducts, using rock-climbing gear. To my dismay, he bicycled to school along Kensington High Street, a main thoroughfare. The school uniform was a black blazer, black shoes, black cap and white shirt with detachable, stiff, white collar. Whether the shirt or the collar was most supposed to require detachment I never knew. In spring, the caps were replaced by straw boaters, decorated with black- and- white-striped ribbons.

Finally we moved into Edwardes Square. Bill had the west-facing bedroom with large bay and French-rococo caned furniture. The floor—linoleum—had a faded Aubusson carpet, very worn. I remember finding resistors and transistors from his electric projects in the worn places. We had a bedroom on the front—it was from there that I could hear the owl, and Jeff and Mark had another front bedroom whose greatest drawback was that our *au pair* girls and I had to go through it to reach our shared bathroom. Every aspect of the house and Square made us happy—except the electrical arrangements: different voltages, different plugs, different cycles, transformers, and from room to room different receptacles. A specialty was the kind of brown, twined fuzzy cord with bare patches that is generally found on radios from the Twenties.

My Father's Death

Our first happiness there was, however, short-lived, because in January 1956 my father died. As a small boy he had rheumatic fever which doctors thought left him with a weakened heart, and at the age of fifty-eight he had a heart attack from which he never really recovered. I can remember that I heard on a morning of flawless beauty. Small English robins hopped up and down the lawns of the Square. I flew to Boston immediately and stayed with Mother in Valley Road. Bob was left with two children and no help (not, I will say, for the first time—when my father had his first heart attack I left him in Washington to take care of Jeff who had measles.) He resourcefully found at *Universal Aunts* an Austrian woman, Cathy Coates, and when I came back, she stayed on for more than a year. We became good friends, and after the children had gone to school drank coffee and discussed Vienna. She had known the Freuds well both in Vienna and London. When I came back from Boston I found the house full of tall catkins which she had brought from the country. They dropped a beautiful fine, yellow powder on the furniture.

Freud had not yet become today's "false prophet" (a new Paul Taylor ballet, entitled *The Sorcerer's Sofa*, is about a condition called *Shrinkhood*), and his influence was so powerful that people behaved in Freudian way because these had been described—like the woman who, when asked why she shot someone, replied, "I shot him because I could." My opinion now is

that Freud *was* the true prophet of the 20th century and its agitated, obsessive behavior. Kafka runs a close second. Strange that so many as-it-were prophets of this century should have come from Central Europe—Hitler, Wittgenstein, Mahler, Klimt, Schiele, Kafka, Freud and, geniuses of the atom bomb, Leo Szillard, Edward Teller, John von Neuman and Eugene Wigner, the latter four all Hungarians and all from the Jewish middle-class.

My father did not have the best breaks in life, but he was, I think, happy. He was the only one in our family who sang all the time. He could not keep a tune, but that was unimportant. His two favorites when I was small were *Barney Google* and *Yes, We Have No Bananas*; also *Oh, Mr Mortimer*, *Yes, Mr Shean*. I liked him to sing, especially since he knew sophisticated songs such as.

Barney Google with the great big googley eyes
Barney Google had a wife just twice his size
Then she sued him for divorce
Now he's living with his horse
Barney Google with the great big googley eyes.

He also sang while putting a wonderful black salve called ichthyol on my bruises and cuts.

He had that very rare thing, a beautiful smile, which came from his eyes and probably from his soul. As he had two misplaced canine teeth, the smile was even more strangely beautiful. And he had something else that is rare—a passion, and it was for the autumn woods and bird-shooting. (It also included my mother.) He was always very protective toward his family and, when he saw the approach of the Second World War, got in large supplies against the future, including countless small cans of mandarin (what he called “Jap”) oranges.

He sought adventure, in his youth had a motorcycle, and in the First World War trained as a naval aviator on Long Island. There many men were lost because of engine failure or structural faults—several each day, he said. He would never let us fly with barnstormers, or in my case with a friend who flew a small plane. (My friend later, as a bomber pilot, survived thirty-six

missions over Germany and Rumania and was decorated.) He loved projects carried out in the basement, particularly large-scale ones such as boats made of newspaper and airplane glue. What is airplane glue?

As he was by nature very generous, it was hard during the Depression to have little to be generous with. I remember once when I wanted to go to summer school and was told by my father that he couldn't afford it, one of my boy friends said, "Well, just stand up to him. Tell him you must go." I thought, this friend really is quite stupid; my father would of course, if he could, give me his last dollar. For ten or more years many dollars were nearly his last. Only a really epic struggle carried on each day kept Warren Publications and the Banker and Tradesman Press in existence under conditions that cannot be understood when not experienced. If I were Arthur Miller I would write about the pressmen and linotype operators whose jobs he was struggling to preserve (most had worked there many years) while Roosevelt (the antichrist) was encouraging them to rise up, join unions, and take measures that would without question put him out of business. An added irony was that my grandmother Warren, even though she loved my father, always supported and voted for Roosevelt. My Mother's brother, Keith Warren, in his memoirs, called my father "the kindest of men." In many ways he was, I think, also one of the happiest.

Shops and Artifacts

Not surprisingly, during most of the years we were there, London was still under the spell of all that had happened during the war. Lyons Corner house at Earls Court Road, whose top had been taken off diagonally by a V-bomb, remained that shape, whilst the bomb crater filled with tall weeds. Ramshackle hoarding put up on the north side of Knightsbridge to cover bomb damage had not been removed, and many of the squares seemed abandoned and overgrown. A London County Council live-termite exhibit in a shop window on Dover street lasted, as if forgotten, almost all the years we were there, as did the whale-boned corset display in Ede's shop window on Kensington High Street.

The traditional department stores on Kensington High Street—Derry and Toms, Petits, and Barkers—may still exist but they cannot now have the gentility and extensive show of “notions”—thread, elastic, garters, patterns, and darning wool that I remember. (When, some time later, Harrods was sold to Barkers, a cartoon in one of the evening papers showed two elderly women having tea. One says to the other, “My dear, the next thing we know, they will have *merchandise* at Harrods.”)

Notting Hill Gate seemed most under this wartime spell with so many hoardings as to be scarcely a place, but here and there, especially at the top of Kensington Church Street, small antique shops survived. These specialized in objects very out-of-favor and of such dramatically bad, yet exciting, taste that I went again and again. Many had a startling morbidity, especially porcelain, dismembered-arm ring holders and mourning brooches containing serpentine locks of all-too-real hair. While most things were Victorian—ornate metal *épergnes* and unnaturally white parian busts—the neighborhood was close to Melbury Road and other streets where aesthetes and artists with advanced tastes had once lived, and the shops also reflected this. There were bamboo tables with gilded sparrows painted on black lacquer tops; Japanese prints in narrow, ugly frames (scenes of Yokohama and Tokyo—Fuji an intense, inky blue); faint pencil sketches, never completed; tiles designed by Walter Crane; and countless, small, etched-silver mechanical pencils. So many things were broken, chipped, or tarnished that these shops had for me an allure quite like, recalled from my childhood, the Wellesley Hills dump. I especially remember ceramics and tiles of a compelling, artificial blue. In Addison Road, there was a house whose entire exterior was tiled in blue.

Most despised at the time was *Art Nouveau*, which a neighbor, Grant McClanahan, had persuaded me was interesting and underrated. How he came to take an interest in it I don't know. He had grown up in Egypt and so perhaps did not think or see as others. In any case I can remember buying for a few shillings an *art nouveau* serving dish made of pewter with blue-green enamel overlay, which, when I got it home, suddenly seemed so repellent that I couldn't keep it. I hurriedly gave it to Grant, knowing that he would tolerate anything. (As a consequence he has some rare and beautiful things, long since back in fashion.) I did find, tarnished and cast

under a bench, a hammered-silver *art nouveau* vase with etched dragonflies which we still have and greatly prize. It was so black that I thought it was copper until I polished it.

Victorian artists were entirely out of favor and I, at least, must still make an effort to like their paintings, even while mesmerized by their very odd perceptions. Some huge canvases by William Etty were at that time cut up and sold in sections! (Etty's *Three Graces* is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.) The Tate Gallery, which has a large collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, kept them well under wraps in the basement. William Gaunt in his book *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream*, compares these paintings to those of Salvador Dali in their obsessive, hard-line, glassy technique and surreal preoccupations.

Near us in Kensington, on Holland Road, was Leighton House, built in 1864 by Frederic Leighton, artist and President of the Royal Academy of Art. (It had an Arab Hall, added in the next decade.) We quite often took visitors there, and sometimes I went alone. The house seemed to have a mystery that I couldn't unravel, the mystery of Victorian taste, at once exotic and domestic. The Arab Hall, on the ground floor had an anteroom whose tiles were of the brilliant ultramarine blue that I have mentioned—it is the color of a tropical kingfisher. The Hall, itself, based on the entrance room of the Moorish Palace of La Ziza in Palermo, had walls, alcoves, and a pool, all decorated with medieval, patterned tile brought from Damascus by Leighton and his Arabist friend, Richard Burton. As even the common London light, passing through stained glass (also brought from Damascus), was there subdued and orientalized, one had an extraordinary sense of Eastern exoticism. Yet the rest of the house was that of an academician and collector, controlled and orthodox.

Leighton's paintings are equally puzzling. He was trained in Germany and later Italy, and his style was generally restrained, yet suddenly with romantic power he could paint the foreboding *Perseus and Andromeda* and the sensual, serpent-entwined figures of *The Garden of the Hesperides*. His most beautiful painting is *The Captive Andromache*, with the solitary classic and robed figure of Andromache one of mystery and sorrow.

Harrods had a fascinating second-hand section with out-of-fashion oak furniture. I used to look at the chests and sideboards and speculate on their relegation to the realm of bad taste and to Harrods second-hand department. The sideboards often had dangling drawer-pulls of beaten metal. I think I remember such furniture in illustrations of *The Three Bears*.

As my uncle had an attachment to the Royal Family, so I have an attachment to Harrods. I know this because almost all my bad dreams take place in Harrods' elevator. I am in the elevator with people who are both familiar and strange and at once dead and alive—and Harrods is crumbling about us. (This is not as bad a dream as one I recently heard from an acquaintance in which she was fending off relatives with a dinosaur bone.)

Guests

I'm not sure how I come to be writing about antiques. I could, needless to say, not buy any and add them to the Swedish modern that we already had. Much of my time was taken up with entertaining. At first I wondered what guests would think of our drawing room—it was, I thought, quite fragile and strange. But with a fire and flowers, it seemed to improve. One could buy flowers on the High Street for very little, bunches of small, wild daffodils and wallflowers in spring. Fruits came from places in the Empire and included some that we had not had before—blood oranges, pomegranates, and muscat grapes.

For dinner parties Mrs. Coates made a Viennese cake in many thin layers, using ground nuts instead of flour. I have still the grinder, which is extraordinarily old-fashioned with many bolts, butterfly nuts, and cylinders. The cake had in some layers a very difficult-to-achieve, mocha and butter filling; in others, whipped cream. She taught me to make this, and I did always on Christmas Eve until I discovered that Jeff didn't like mocha. Lately I've found that I was wrong, he does like mocha. I think, in fact, that Jeff made the cake last Christmas.

Once on holiday in France I boasted about Jeff's cooking when Bill was there. I may even have said, "How is it, Bill, that you don't cook?" "But I do," he said, and went to the kitchen and made a Grand Marnier

soufflé. The next night he made a chocolate soufflé. It was on this trip (Lisa was with us) that we had a pigeon pie made by a local farmwoman. It was delicious but surprising, as the pigeon lay whole in the pie with its eyes staring balefully. After dinner Barbara found Meg and Amanda sucking in their cheeks and crossing their eyes to look like the pigeon.

For dessert we also had an ice cream, melon-shaped bombe which could be ordered at any hour and delivered at any hour from Harrods. It had pistachio ice cream in the center and vanilla on the outside and came on a bed of spun sugar. It is true that one could order anything from Harrods, even at three in the morning—Ronald Boone, an Australian friend, once long after midnight ordered smoked salmon and champagne to be delivered the next morning, and we had them for breakfast. Harrods also had a lending library from which they would deliver regularly in special green composition boxes whatever new books were wanted. We even ordered firewood from Harrods, so it is no wonder that it possesses me in sleep.

We had many visitors, especially, of course, Mother, who came at least three times. She charmed everyone and made her way directly to the front of queues because she didn't believe in them. I held my position in back to prove that we were not all wicked. But once when it was a question of smuggling, she lost her nerve and asked me to do it. I refused, the only circumstance when, since grown, I have refused my mother (probably out of cowardice). She did it herself.

She came first in the summer after my father died and had one sunny day, otherwise rain and cold. We had a large party for her, which must have also been on the sunny day because we used the garden. Mother was apprehensive about meeting so many strangers so decided to have a whisky before they came. This was the beginning of a memorable although quite disastrous evening. The bartender was English, not used to American 100-proof alcohol. He may also have been a madman because someone saw him fill a tall glass with bourbon and then add only a small amount of soda. The effect on Mother and many others was calculable. Quite soon we had to keep Mother more-or-less propped up against the garden wall, from which vantage point she smiled in a friendly way. Later we put all the "drunk" people in the kitchen. When I went in I found Mother and Ronald Boone

sitting companionably at the kitchen table. Ronald was leaning across the table, looking into Mother's eyes and saying, "Mrs. Cross, why is it that I like you so much?" Carin must also have been in London because I remember her in the kitchen.

It may have been on this occasion that Carin invited me to go to Fortnam's with her to have lunch with Jussi Bjorling. I foolishly said that I couldn't—I thought I had to stay at home and make hors-d'oeuvres. I remember, as one always remembers striking details from significant moments, that there were short strips of bacon hanging in rows from the kitchen drainboard, like adhesive plaster ready to put on wounds. She went, and when she came back told me that I was even more of a fool than she thought because Charlie Chaplin also had lunch with them.

On one of Mother's trips, she, Bob and I went on a Swann's Cruise in Greece and Turkey. We drove the children through France to Locarno in Switzerland where they stayed with a truly charming Italian girl who had helped us in London, Grazia Frigerio. (Grazia and Mark ate together in the kitchen in the evenings, both usually reading comic books. Grazia reported that Mark once got up after eating and said, "Well, that was a good comic-book!" Grazia's family had a mountain cabin in a vineyard high above Lago Maggiore, where they stayed. Bob and I then drove on to Venice where we met Mother. I remember that before leaving the boys, we one day searched for a good picnic place, never finding one that was quite right. Finally, we ate in a sand pit. All of us remember the small and delicious Charentais melons that we ate in France.

The cruise was perfect in all ways, except perhaps food. Mother ate only breadsticks. We went to Olympia, Delphi, Athens, Delos, Patmos, Mykenos, Istanbul, Troy and, on the way back, Dubrovnik and Split, in Yugoslavia. Not only were there classical lecturers, Maurice Bowra and Kathleen Kenyon, but there was also a church scholar, Canon Pentreath, to talk about Christian events and sites, particularly the travels of St. Paul. At the theatre at Epidaurus, Bowra read aloud in Greek from the *Illiad*. Few of us could understand, but it was so stirring that workmen on the site applauded. Bowra and Kenyon had, of course, been to Greece many times so were accustomed to drinking lots of *ouzo*. On one small island we

noticed that women kept beckoning, and finally we followed. They took us to see their prune ovens. We were baffled and wondered if we should offer to buy prunes, but finally we came to realize that they were simply showing us their greatest possession. When we returned to Locarno, the children looked tan and happy.

Mother may also have been in London on our most memorable Christmas Eve. We had then a beautiful Spanish girl to help with the children, Pilar, called Piluca. During the evening we asked her if Christmas Eve in Spain was at all the same, “No,” she said, “it is not so dull.” Challenged, we drank more wine, put on flamenco music and used kitchen instruments for castenets, cymbals etc. She may have thought that we overdid it, but we enjoyed the evening a lot. Jeff sat watching for a very long time. Suddenly he got up and moved across the room in an impressive, if trance-like, flamenco manner. Then he sat down again, and that was it.

Other visitors were Keith and Barbara Warren, Jerry and Joan, Bob’s father and mother, and some time later two young girls from Lawrence, Kansas. All of these visits were memorable. Uncle Keith went each day from Brown’s, where he stayed, to watch the live, London County Council termite-show. It was just nearby. He doesn’t mention it in his memoirs, but I know that he regarded it highly.

Bob’s father and mother were at the start of a Grand Tour—Holland, Denmark, Switzerland and Italy. At the Swiss-Italian border, Bob’s father got off for a smoke. The train started before he could get on, and Bob’s mother shot over into Italy alone. She kept calm, and he found her later.

Jerry thought that he wouldn’t like sightseeing, so he went instead to the Scarsdale Arms, not a bad idea. There he made many friends and was invited to play snooker at the Earls Court Police Station. Once we sent him out to buy something for tea, and he came back with a large steak—he had been unable to pass up the butcher whose name, in large raised gold letters on the shopfront, was *DEATH*.

Jeff too did not care for sight seeing and at Chichester Cathedral pulled the car rug over his head and said, “I won’t look.” In reading old

letters and report cards, I realize that while living abroad our children were extremely independent. Headmaster's complaints on this subject are a steady theme in report cards. It is a trait of obduracy and dignity which comes from their Bean ancestors, because I am the world's first conformer.

After we had been in the Square some months, one of the neighbors told me that Mark, when invited to tea at another child's house, always brought with him a tea bag . He didn't like "tea weed" in his tea. Confronted for the first time with caviar, he said, "Do I have to eat those seeds?"

When Bill was called in by the head, called Highmaster, of St. Paul's, a quite formidable person, and asked to explain Thanksgiving (we had requested that he be excused that day), Bill had, I think rightly, a sense of confrontation. He thought that the Highmaster wanted him to describe Thanksgiving as a religious holiday, and this he was unwilling to do—so he wasn't excused. As Bill says, the Highmaster held all the cards.

I must here include my favorite report card, one of Lisa's at Brierley. It says (I believe), "Lisa has been inattentive and accomplished nothing this term."

The girls from Kansas were on their way to Greece, which they planned to tour on Vespas. Some weeks later one of them came back. The other, she said, had fallen in love with a Greek Vespa mechanic. I believe she later married him. The friend's comment was, "He only wanted her for her Vespa."

Another memorable visitor confrontation was had by a Washington friend, Henry Bitterman, at the Goring Hotel where he and his wife, Kathleen, liked to stay. They asked us to have dinner there, and we noticed during the course of the meal that Henry was becoming increasingly preoccupied, staring into space in an odd way. Finally we questioned him, and he said, "I can hear the chambermaids talking to one another on my new hearing aid."

Diplomats and Working Wives

We were in London under three ambassadors, Winthrop Aldrich, John Hay Whitney, and David Bruce. I particularly liked the Aldriches. They gave a large dinner-dance for Princess Margaret to which they invited not only the high ranking American diplomats, but most of the Embassy staff. This, I thought, was typical of the Aldriches. There was marvelous music and food, little formality, and everyone, including Princess Margaret, had a wonderful time. I remember seeing her sitting on a sofa, talking and laughing and, in a quite natural manner, filling her cigarette case from a box on the table. I'm sure this was always her custom wherever she was.

Mrs. Whitney, though frail, was extremely pretty and had beautiful clothes. She had many good English friends and asked some of them to speak to the Embassy wives, a large group, perhaps fifty including the military wives. I remember especially Edith Sitwell, who read from her poetry; she had an extraordinary pallor, an immense red-fox hat, and an emerald ring whose stone seemed, on her long pale fingers, the very principle of aristocracy. Her brother, Osbert, describes her when young as having "hair of shallow gold that was almost a polar green."

The Whitneys had many Impressionist paintings which hung over arrangements of flowers flown in each week from greenhouses in Bermuda. When the Bruces came I thought they might have difficulty following on the Whitneys, but shouldn't have worried. Evangeline Bruce was very elegant, and paintings in the Embassy Residence came from the Asa Mellon Bruce collection. At Embassy receptions I often met writers whom I much admired, such as Rosamond Lehman and Rebecca West, but was only able, perhaps fortunately, to say something commonplace and stupid. The Residence was in Regents Park, where in November sometimes the fog was impenetrable. I can remember an evening when Bob walked in front of the car to keep us on the road. People who live in Regents Park can hear the lions roaring in the zoo.

Many of the Embassy Wives did volunteer work for the Women's Volunteer Services, working very often with aged people who in this huge city seemed stranded and derelict. For several years I went to see an old Russian woman who came to England when she was twelve and from that

moment had not again seen the sea. She lived on Holland Avenue, a straight and quite hellish thoroughfare with lorries and fumes, which led from Kensington to Shepherd's Bush. Her single room was at the back of a boarding house run by a Polish Landlord whom she deeply mistrusted. On returning to her room she would always look carefully at the paper bags in which she kept her belongings to see if any had been disturbed. The paper bags were very old, soft and creased and I came to believe that she could actually, as it were, read the bags, since she declared that she tell by the changed creases whether or not the landlord had come in. It was just after Easter when I first went, and she offered me a red-dyed egg in which the red had so penetrated that it was a totally red egg.

We went often by bus to a North London Eye Clinic where, like Mother, she did not stand at the back of the queue. Her relationship with God was so intimate that she felt he watched over her smallest need, and to cross Holland Road with her was hair-raising. We had so many narrow escapes that I came to believe in her Protector. Her name was Mrs. Fitzgerald, so I imagined that she had once been married, but all memories of that marriage had long since vanished. She died when I was away, and I knew nothing more of her—whether she had a funeral and if anyone was there.

Lady Dorothy Mac Millan was head of the Women's Volunteer Services, and she once invited all the American volunteers to tea at 9 Downing Street. Mac Millan was then Chancellor of the Exchequer. She was especially pleased to show us that she was growing geraniums in old battery cases.

Friends

We knew most people on our side of Edwardes Square—few on the other. Next door, when we first moved in, I saw in the front garden a large pram with a beautiful baby that had rosy cheeks and blue hands. When I looked into the garden next to that, there was another pram with another baby, this one very large—with red cheeks and quite blue hands. Although under a year old, these babies seemed happy to be outside together in the cold, and they never protested. I thought to myself, "English babies are

more adaptable than American,” but I soon found that both had American mothers—Gay Cradock-Watson and Charlotte Fraser, married to Geoffrey Cradock-Watson who worked for Shell Oil and Peter Frazer who was in the British Foreign Office. It was surprising that three American women should find themselves next door to one another in London. We became friends and still are.

Peter had been a prisoner of war in Germany almost throughout the war, and there became an expert bridge player. Something he once said about bridge I have always tried to remember. He said, “Americans don’t double enough.” Peter was extremely charming, and when he went out in the morning, with bowler hat and furred umbrella, always carried the trash. Charlotte came from New Orleans and was striking with startling blue eyes and black hair. She once modeled for Augustus John. I used to like to go about London with her because there was everywhere constant flirtation, carried on with her and by her. The Frasers had an old sheepdog, named *Bimbo*, and he could often be seen alone on his way to Holland Park—crossing Kensington High Street on the zebra crossing.

Gay Cradock-Watson had grown up in Boston. (It was she who, when her mother came to school in a sophisticated French hat and boa, denied her absolutely.) She is a talented painter and an honest and charming friend. Geoffrey was, we have since discovered, decorated by both the British and the Americans during the war. I was always especially happy when at the end of an evening, after some whiskies, he would recite for as long as we liked from Shakespeare and the Romantic Poets. Joyce, their daughter, once went to live in an ashram in Poona, and Geoffrey was not happy about this. When they finally went to India to see Joyce, Geoffrey was further chagrined to find that the ashram was on the grounds of his old polo club!

Other friends were Ivy and Frank Wilson. Ivy was Norwegian and Frank, English but from Mauritius. They had children slightly older than ours, the eldest of whom was Wendy. When she decided to marry an American, Frank was so upset that he could never remember the groom’s name—and neither, for that matter, can I. Many years later when Warren, Gorham & Lamont were remodeling their offices in Boston, Bill discovered

that the architect was Wendy's husband. Frank was an abstract expressionist painter, and we have two of his paintings—two because he didn't like the one we bought so gave us another. We like both. In one of two books which he wrote about painting, very cerebral and interesting (I have recently reread them), he describes different classes of modern painters, putting himself into the abstract expressionist class of *Multiple*. But I would rather put him in another class which he calls *Meta Image* because I can well remember his show at the Redfern Gallery where only a few paintings, hung on white walls, seemed like bright, powerful, primitive symbols.

Ivy's father collected paintings by Edvard Munch, and Ivy had in her drawing room Munch's beautiful lithograph, *The Madonna*. Frank told us of a native in Mauritius who climbed to the top of a palm before an approaching hurricane. When the hurricane passed he was still there, but his clothes had blown off. The Wilsons gave a dazzling party in their house at which there were many beautiful young guests, a Trinidad steel band, and a juke box. One of the most beautiful guests was Samantha Egger, a young actress, whom I had earlier seen in the Square helping to wash a motorcycle, her long golden-red hair flowing expressively down over the machine.

The Hibbert Connection

While we had friends in the Square, our life in London would have been very different had we not known Gay Dearborn's family and friends. Gay's mother and father, named Hibbert, lived in a tall, Edwardian house on Tregunter Road. This house so cast a spell on me that the memory caused us to buy Q Street, an unconvincing imitation. The drawing room was long, high-ceilinged, and to me incomparable, with an as-if-fated, easeful beauty, its colors what I imagined to be those of ancient Persian roses, carried about by crusaders and apothecaries. The floors had pale rugs on bare parquet, and in a vase on the mantel there was likely to be a single, nearly achromatic rose of great size, grown in their small city garden. These roses seemed to grow ever larger over the years becoming, in fact, whoppers.

Gay's mother was a woman of talent and intelligence who had more modern views than I. When she married she decided to educate her children herself, and, as a consequence, had gifted and adventurous children. Gay's

brother, Grant—known as “Paddy” owing to a misprint in a telegram of congratulations on the fine big laddy—was in the Special Air Services during the war and went behind enemy lines in North Africa, Italy, and France to blow up vital installations. He was slim and tall and had both the manner and look of a conquistador, this look heightened by intelligence, a quizzical smile, an air of mystery, and a single gold front-tooth.

Mrs. Hibbert, when I had been quite ill, wrote to my mother to say that she thought I should be taken away from London for a while as I didn’t seem to be recovering. Mother of course acted immediately, and we went together to Jamaica. I shall never forget Mrs. Hibbert’s great sensitivity, kindness, and enterprise in this. Gay’s father I scarcely knew, as he died not long after we arrived. His manner was, I think, very like that of his grandson, Jo Dearborn, alert and mysterious. Her grandfather, Gay tells us, patented a device for using the foil from champagne corks. In the attic of another ancestor was found a box labeled, “Pieces of string, too short to use.”

About my dear and beautiful friend Gay and our ever-absorbing interests and conversations, I shall write another paper. Here I’ll only say that after her last visit to Phoenix, I found the following list of suggestions for the betterment of my life—chicken and ginger, *Vampire Lestat*, Twin Lab II Theragram M, Bicelana High Zinc, wasabi, *Lovely Ladies* and oranges with Grand Marnier.

Had it not been that Gay’s mother knew General Pownall, Ella Pownall-Gray would not exist as her present self, for General Pownall adopted his wife’s son, Willoughby Gray, adding his own name to that of Gray. Willoughby was a childhood friend of Gay and Paddy Hibbert, and it was through Gay that Lisa met Willoughby’s son, Dickon, who was Paddy’s godchild.

Virginia and Bruno Brown, both of whom Gay knew when young, lived on Allen Street, not far from us. I have mentioned that they helped us find a school for Jeff—this a never-to-be-forgotten kindness, as from amongst all kinds of schools we found Stoke House. But that was not at all the end of their kindnesses. I especially remember that when, just before

leaving London, I had an operation, Virginia watched over Mark almost every day, taking him with her children to the Chelsea Swimming Baths.

Bruno has for so many years been taken for Rex Harrison that he expects it. In his youth he represented the Oxford University Press in Singapore and was caught in one of the terrible Japanese-prisoner death marches—on which he carried a typewriter that he has today. After the war he rose to be head, called The Publisher, of the Oxford University Press.

Virginia was dark and beautiful, which is not surprising, as her mother was said to be the most beautiful woman in London, a status for which there are many rivals, including (a generation later), as Willoughby has told us, Gay. On her mantel Virginia had two blue vases which I so associate with her that I cannot think of her without also thinking of the vases.

The Brown's son, John, is also a successful publisher—of *Viz*, a magazine he thinks (probably rightly) too bawdy to be promoted in the U.S. When John once came to visit us in Rehoboth Beach he bought on the boardwalk a T-shirt which had a fried egg, sunny-side up, printed over each breast. He wore it for tennis and for almost everything else. His sister, Julia, another beauty, when she came to stay in Washington was the first person we had seen in a mini-skirt. As the shortness of her skirt was accentuated by straight honey-colored hair yhat reached below her waist, we were instantly taken with the fashion. Julia's friend, Belinda Scarlett, who came later, also had long golden hair and a mini-skirt—and a mini-coat of bunny fur!

Of the Boones, other old friends of Gay, I will be tempted to say too much because with them, in either London or the Cotwolds, life seemed to change and become an idyll. Gay had known Susan when both were very young women at the Byam Shaw art school. I first met her when she asked me to come to High Wycombe where she and Ronald, her Australian husband, lived in what seemed like an unheated house. It was December, and when I arrived Susan was bathing her youngest child, Nicky, in a tub above which the window was wide open. In fact, I think that they lived in not just one unheated house, but two—and to get from one to the other they

had to go outdoors. Later Susan came to London by bus—I remember meeting her by the hoardings in Notting Hill Gate—to see *Waiting for Godot*, then a new play. Susan always thought that it was sophisticated of us to go to a play at which we understood nothing.

Later the Boones lived in Upper Slaughter, and there we often went. When I say that our times together were idyllic, I do mean to use just that word—none other would describe the pleasure we had in the Boones' company and the extraordinary beauty of the Cotswold countryside, especially in winter when the plowed earth was black and the bare trees grey and silver. On summer mornings we had breakfast at a table at the front of the house beside a bed of nicotiana, then swam in a deep black lake, at the bottom of which was a sunken coach, driven there in some tragedy. We followed the hunts, watched the children act as beaters—running through the brussel-sprout beds and over stone walls with the guns behind, went to church at Stow-in-the-Wold, where the vicar changed his sex and ran off with the choir-master, read Susan's collection of Georgette Heyer, and were taken to the pasture where once the Boones on a picnic found a buried Roman mosaic floor, which they covered over again and reported to no one. Susan tried to give Bob some oil painting lessons in her studio behind the house, but he stubbornly refused to paint bottles, so she gave up. "But, you must begin with bottles, Bob." "No, I don't like bottles."

When they came to London, it again seemed as if our ordinary life was transformed. They supposed London diplomatic life to be decadent, so Susan, each time they came, went first to Harvey Nichols to find a suitably depraved dress. And, of course, diplomatic life did then shine anew. To this shining Ronald also contributed, as he so well understood how to be happy. He came to England in 1938 to play at Wimbledon and only once, many years later, returned to Australia. He had learned tennis as a small boy because he liked to chase the balls hit out of a nearby court. Noticing that he was so keen, the owner of the court taught him to play. At the beginning of the war he trained with a parachute battalion, but on the day before Arnheim jumped and broke his ankle—so was spared Arnheim.

Susan, who has died, was so charming a person that I am unable to describe just how she was. But I always think of her sudden smile and disguised wit.

London Hospitals

While in London one or another of us was often in the hospital. Mark and Jeff went to the Hospital for Sick Children—Mark for removal of tonsils and Jeff for removal of a large cyst. Bill went suddenly to St. Mary Abbots with a red and swollen ankle. Our doctor, Beatrice Tanner, a very intelligent and discerning American married to an Englishman, had known immediately that it was osteomyelitis, a dangerous infection of the bone marrow, and sent for an ambulance. Bill was put on large doses of penicillin which saved his leg and perhaps his life. He was there a month and was always cheerful when we went to see him, although in a men's ward with some very old patients. Next to him was a younger man, an electrical engineer, who had been in a motorcycle accident. They played chess, and he taught Bill all the first elements of electronics.

While I think of it I should describe Mark's experience when only six, in a Minnesota hospital. We were with Bob's family at a lakeside resort when Mark became very ill. He had such a high fever that he had to be taken to a hospital in Park Rapids. In the next room there was an impressively large and genuine Indian with an equally high fever. In his delirium he would come into Mark's room, and Mark, also delirious, thought him an authentic vision.

Bob, after a skiing trip in Switzerland, fell ill and was told that he had hepatitis, very unpleasant. He seemed to recover but a year later became worse. Thinking it was still hepatitis, he didn't see the doctor until he could hardly stand. Dr. Tanner sent him to a specialist. Tests showed scar tissue from the hepatitis, and anti-bodies stimulated by the scar tissue were doing further damage. These were terrible moments. Without cortisone, which reversed the process, he might not have survived, but survive he did. He had a surgeon named Avery-Jones and in the London Clinic, under influence of morphine, wrote verses which he pinned to the wall:

*His pulse barely fluttered and quivered;
His temperature sank as he shivered;
And so he inferred
That he couldn't be cured
Without being rapped and de-livered.*

*Said the Doc, "What you need is a rest,
"And we'll take some more blood for a test."
Said I, with a cry,
"I'd like to comply,
"But I haven't very much left."*

*Said the dean of gastro-enterology,
"We seem to owe you an apology.
"We drained your blood for our biology,
"And now there's none for your phys'ology.
"You have our deepest sympathology."*

*"Although you look sound as a bell,
"Your liver's beginning to swell.
"It may seem a bore
"To remove this small core.
"But how else can I tell if you're well?"*

*Said Dr. Jones to Dr. Avery,
"This liver looks a bit unsavoury."
Said Dr. Avery to Dr. Jones,
"We'll bury it in Mary-les-bones."*

I went to a hospital, whose name I don't remember, for a week's stay and a minor operation. Then I went to a different hospital for another operation, and finally, thinking that wasn't enough, I got Bell's Palsy and went to University College Hospital. Dr. Tanner began to believe that London was unlucky for us. She was interested in psychological matters and once told me that my Boston childhood (Wellesley might have been harder to assess) meant that I had what she called "one strike against me."

I puzzled over this for many years and finally decided that such a generalization was foolish. But recently when my friend Gay Cradock-Watson, much more a Bostonian than I, came to stay in Phoenix, we discovered that we have dreams identical in every detail. In one we are giving a dinner party. The table is beautifully set, and the guests are seated, but there is no food. In the other, our baby is shut away upstairs and has had no food for several years. When we rediscover him, he is in perfect health. (After I was born my mother used to dream that I had been shut away in a bureau drawer. She would wake in alarm and say to my father, “Gorham, quick! Poss is shut in my bureau drawer.” Suddenly awakened, he would leap out of bed and open all the bureau drawers.)

Cornwall

In the spring of 1957 we went for Easter to St. Ives in Cornwall, staying for a week in a large hotel. There we found wide beaches, sunshine, calm seas and seaside decorum. So, when in the summer we returned, this time to the south Cornish coast, we were not at all prepared for its elemental grandeur—jagged rocks, crashing seas, hidden coves, and tropical vegetation. We were on the grounds of a large estate, called Boscawen, and our cottage had once been a stable, the stalls turned into bedrooms and the paddocks into gardens. In the front stable-yard, nasturtiums grew over the walls, the most glorious, rampant display of nasturtiums I have seen, and within our view was a tremendous old tree about which rooks circled and cried. To get to the sea we walked down through pastures to a dark woods in which there were hydrangeas of an astonishing, artificial blue. At the bottom of the woods was the rocky coast where we swam, on rough days in pools and on calmer days in the ocean. The water was cold and intoxicating.

Sometimes we went to the beautiful and secluded beach at Porthcurno where the sand was tiny pearl-like pieces of shell, passing on the way a pasture with ancient stone rings. Jeff says that he remembers that it

rained a lot, and I remember no rain at all. We went back to look at Boscawen in 1980 and found nothing changed.

Travels with Mother

When the children returned to school, I went with Mother to Venice and Rome, ignoring the advice of Caresse Crosby, author of *The Passionate Years* and inventor of the bra (two of her four husbands were nephews of J. P. Morgan), who said that one should certainly not go to Venice with one's mother. Our friends, Edgar and Frances Brooke, had known Caresse for many years, and we met her at their house in Cottismore Place. This was a magnificent house, just behind the Brompton Oratory, which they rented. It had no heat, a drawing room of palatial size and, leading up to the drawing room, a stairwell hung with Sargent portraits of the family, whose name was Meyer. The Brookes, Americans from Virginia—Ed was Information Officer at our embassy, became such good and well-loved friends that I will have to write an entire paper about them.

Mother came across by ship with a friend from Wellesley whose life had been tragic. She had only just managed to save enough for a trip to Europe—the last, she thought, before she died. On shipboard she met an older man who fell instantly in love with her and telephoned in every city to which she went. He was an enthusiastic traveler and very rich. They were married, and when Mother last spoke of them he was ninety-two, she only somewhat younger, and they were still traveling, she reluctantly.

The weather in Venice was glorious, and we were stunned by what we saw. In Rome we stayed at the *Residenza*, a small hotel just off the *Via Veneto*. We had a room at the front with a terrace where Mother, in hanging up her bloomers on an elastic, clothes line, managed to shoot them out into the street. If this seems a somewhat impoverished description of Rome, I can only say that it seems to be what I remember.

Trips with Mother often had a surreal quality, and I sometimes thought that a demon danced in front of her offering up comic possibilities. In Athens, the elastic in her silk bloomers gave way, and they fell just as she entered the Parthenon. In Vienna she left a jeweler's shop with a diamond

bracelet on her wrist. Not until she was having lunch did she discover it, and not until she returned did the shop discover that it was gone. On a train in Switzerland she was taken for a jewel thief because while the police searched the train, she was in the lavatory, the only place they hadn't been able to search. When she came out, the police and a large crowd had assembled. (I think she was always prepared for an audience and probably smiled regally.) In Florence, on a carriage ride to San Miniato, she wore a knit hat that had tiny gold bells around the brim. These tinkled as we went along, causing everyone on the road to applaud.

The chance of something precipitous happening in my mother's company created about her a nimbus of excitement. I think Bill knew this as a very small boy, and he used to hum to himself, "Ti-ta-de, da Garney, da Garney." (Hence the name, Garney). When Bill was five they drove into a field and turned over. As they got out, Mother said, "Bill, watch out for the poison-ivy." She might crash her car through a garage door (she thought that probably she was the only person who had driven *out* through a closed garage door); also crash her car into that of her *insurance agent*; drive unmindful about on front lawns while showing me Cape Cod; fall out the door of Ted's car onto the Meritt Parkway, unhurt because she landed on her new fur coat ("So fortunate that I had on my new coat"); when standing in front of the Hotel Conaught have a taxi pass so close that it took a folded sweater off her arm; and, in her old age, fall and fall—off porches, into shrubs, into snowdrifts, in the night—with never an injury. ("Wasn't it lucky that I wasn't hurt.")

Of all of us, I think Ted follows most closely in her tradition. A trip with him has unsurpassable rewards. Twice he has almost burned down the Connaught, and a further paper should be written about his trip to India. On his arrival in Delhi he asked, "Where is my wife?" "She is not here in Delhi," replied Rakiz Sultan, the guide. "Yes, she is," said Ted, "and I would like you to call all the hotels until you find her." (They go out to a old car where the driver is sleeping. Sultan bangs on the hood, and the driver who has been sleeping pops up.) Sultan calls but knows he will not find Mary as she is in Bombay. Ted remains unconvinced and when, a day later, he boards the plane for Bombay, his last words are, "When my wife arrives, tell her that I am in Bombay." In a dispute with the travel agents in Jaiphur, he tells

the agents that he will stay in their office until the matter is settled. For several hours he and the agents look at one another—they all have soft brown eyes. Finally when I go in to take him a banana, he says, "Poss, please go out to the nearest police station (street was full of dust, goats and camels) and report these men". When leaving the hotel in Jaiphur, he absent-mindedly packs up the hotel bedspreads.

There is a story about one of Mother's raincoats that follows the wandering path of her psyche. She had a new raincoat from Burberry's which she lost. She called all the places where she had been and concentrated on where she had been last. (The words, "Think of where you were last," I shall order put on my own tombstone. They have for me a poetic ring, appropriate to a life devoted to losing things. I shall lie in my grave and think of where I was last.) She asked Anne, her nurse, to call all her friends—with respect to telephoning, Anne virtually *was* Mother—and ask them to look in their closets. Finally she gave up. Much later she found a new hearing-aid specialist and went to see him. (He was in one of the buildings in Wellesley Square that have been sheathed in metallic clapboard.) As she passed down the corridor, the door to an office stood open, and inside, before her on the coat rack, was her Burberry coat. It was in the office of a dentist to whom she no longer went. ("Wasn't it really fortunate that I needed a new hearing-aid?")

On a later trip, to Florence, we left the city on the morning of the great flood, just hours before it started. I had the day before walked beside the Arno and noticed that it was absolutely dry. Our pensione was beside the river, and during the flood the waters reached its second floor. Automobiles were, it was said, rolled and tumbled down the street by the floodwaters. Mother bought me some antique garnet earrings on the Ponte Vecchio, paying with a check. When her check was returned, it was covered with mud, and when some years later I went back to the shop, the owner told me that nothing in the shop was saved. He said, "Wasn't it lucky that you came on the day you did."

Travels with Robert

Bob and I went several times to Italy from London, once soon after his illness. We stayed first in Rome and then, on the recommendation of the concierge at the Residenza, to a small and beautiful pension, high above the town, in Positano. From a balcony with tiles the color of the sea, we could look down upon the great, tiled dome of San Pietro. Trips with Bob were wonderfully real and calm.

We somehow managed during eight years in London never to go to Scotland or Ireland, but we did once go to Wales, to the town of Denbigh in the north. According to a genealogical chart of my father's, his Roberts ancestors came from a place in Denbigh called Ty Maur Green. This we found to be a quite ordinary, although in parts Elizabethan, farmhouse with no one at home and pigs in the garden. So we went on to the church where we found parish records and tombs of Roberts, but none seemed to belong to our family. When we decided to have tea, we parked our car, an old black Jaguar, in front of an ancient cottage by the village green. Instantly a tiny, old woman darted out and said, "Please don't park that car here. It darkens the house so."

We also went once with the children to a ski hotel at Crans-sur-Sierre in the Swiss Valais. There were very steep slopes, often icy, down which most of us came down with caution. Bill, however, who had learned in Sweden to stay very low and devote himself to speed, came straight down. I imagine that he knew how to turn, but he never did. Bob, Jeff, Mark and I went into the ski schools where they did well and I, less well. After the ski instructor had seen me go down once, he said, "Mrs. Bean, I can see that you've skied for a very long time, very badly." The hotel had delicious food and entertainment for everyone.

8 Edwardes Square

Two years before we left London, Miss Anquetil decided to sell No. 38. She first asked us if we would like to buy it for either \$60,000 or £60,000, I can't remember which, the difference in any case unimportant when measured against later amounts for which the house was sold (in 1991, £9,067,500 is asked for a single house in the square) or against the

possibility that we would at that time buy it. Bob was trying to recover from his illness, and Bill, without much help or advice, was taking college boards and applying to American colleges. One evening, after studying an entrance form for a long time, he came into the bedroom and said, “This form asks me to describe my ‘most important intellectual experience.’ What is an intellectual experience?” I imagine that he thought it was a question akin to, “What is Thanksgiving?” Bob was away, so I did my best. When I’d finished, Bill thought for a while, then said, “I’ve never had one.”

In 1960 Jeff won a Founder’s Scholarship to St. Pauls, this a very high and ancient honor established by John Colet, the 153 scholarships fixed by Colet to correspond to the fishes caught in the Miraculous Draught. I was *very* proud and happy. It seemed to me, who has never won an honor, (Bob has reminded me that I did get a badge for going down into the Grand Canyon on a mule) as exciting an achievement as I could imagine, and particularly so as Jeff accomplished it in his customary modest and easeful way. (He was given a silver fish to wear, but I think he never did so, and I wonder if he still has it.) The difficulty was that such scholars were expected to study the classics, and Jeff wanted to escape from these. He finally did. I must accept the great value of classical study because in England the consequences are so impressive. In many of the Public Schools in the late nineteenth century, only Greek and Latin were taught—no other subjects. This seems strange, but I have learned that many, if not most, things in England must remain mysterious. First amongst these are Christmas pantomines, incarnate mystery from beginning to end. (I should have paid more attention to pantomines; they may be the last vestige of rowdy old England.) Jeff did not share our view and refused to leave the theatre. He wanted to stay until it started over again.

Just at the time that we found we must move, we discovered that another house in Edwardes Square, this one owned by the American Embassy, would soon be available. It was No. 8, on the East side of the Square. Not only was the house a great windfall, but the McClanahans who had lived in it, wanted to leave with us Dinkhu, their Ethiopian servant. They had brought Dinkhu from Dahran, where he had been trained in an Italian, diplomatic family. He was slight, clever, quick, polite and, for the two years that he was with us, an unimaginably perfect servant. He came

from Eritrea and had a large ceremonial scar on one cheek, very impressive with the black bow tie and spotless white jacket which he always wore in the house. Once when I was in the hospital, he planned, cooked and served an excellent dinner given by Bob for dignitaries.

When Dinkhu came to America to work for my brother Ted, he became single-mindedly intent on learning to drive, and there were some disasters. But in the end he did learn and was seen about New York in a chauffeur's uniform, driving a Rolls. He once came to see us in Washington, and a short drive with him I count amongst the most terrifying experiences of my life. He shot across lanes of traffic and behaved generally as if in Eritrea. Mark had an African spear, relic of the Stoke House museum, which Dinkhu, in demonstrating, put right through a neighbor's metal-clad garage. The hole remained, and I always looked at it fondly.

The Embassy house was unfurnished. It was not as shabby and appealing as No. 38, but still was charming. It had a second-floor drawing room with long French windows, looking onto the Square's lawns and temple, and the fireplace had a most beautiful high mantle with a plaster frieze of shepherdesses. It had been an Embassy House for a long time and so had every comfort. Our bedroom, at the top, had a coal-burning grate which we used most of the winter as there was no central heat. We had very efficient oil-filled, electric radiators, but for true comfort and happiness, coal grates are best. Our comfort was made perfect by a tape-recorder made by Bill (constructed from nothing with parts from Lisle Street). We loved this machine and recorded the news of the Soviet sputnik, later finding that, run on American cycles, the recording had a particularly appropriate, New Age sound.

From this house we once made a sudden foray on Princes Gate. We had a friend who lived there, just across the street from Winston Churchill. I wanted the children to see him—it seemed historically important, like seeing Lincoln or Napoleon, so our friend agreed to alert us when his car and driver were waiting outside. When she did, we hurried over. He soon came out of his house, looking very much himself and smoking a cigar. When the driver put a car rug over his knees, we saw that it was a large, plush Union Jack.

Crime and Entertainment

Before finishing I should say something about burglars. It has always seemed to me that each country has crime suited to its national character and even to its geography. Russia has had pitiless despotism carried out over vast distances ever since the time of Ivan the Terrible; the dark, forested Carpathians were the home of Count Dracula, berserker, impaler, and vampire; and we in the U.S. have had violent, predatory gangsters and mobsters. As Jerry once said about my childhood jacking-up of the playhouse of another child who was expected to die (he didn't), "That's right, always pick on the weak, it's the American way." In England crime has traditionally been more moody and ghoulish, with poisoning and dismemberment.

Fortunately, we had no experience with terrible crime while in Edwardes Square, but burglars of boldness and virtuosity were always about. Friends, who lived in a house with dining-room on the second floor and drawing-room on the ground floor, had all the furniture from the ground floor carried away during a luncheon party. When they went upstairs, the rooms were fully furnished; when they came down after lunch, the rooms were empty. When a neighbor in Edwardes Square was alone and in her bath one night, a burglar passed by the open bathroom door. She stayed where she was, and after a time he passed by again and left, through a transom in the roof. After this they sheathed the entire back of their house in barbed wire, giving it a strange, metallic briar-rose appearance.

A few days before we left No. 38 we had a call from a firm of appraisers wanting to make an appointment to appraise Miss Anquetil's china, prior to auction. She had incomparable china—very early Bow and Chelsea figurines of wonderful delicacy. So we put it all out on tables, and the appraiser stayed four hours. I thought he might be weary towards the end and gave him coffee. Later when we told Miss Anquetil that the appraiser had come, she said, "What appraiser?" So Bob had to spend the last night sleeping in a near-empty house, guarding the china. We'll never know if he took anything during the "appraisal". Miss Anquetil had so

much that she couldn't know, and as it was all kept in cabinets behind glass, we certainly didn't know. Miss Anquetil was, as always, unperturbed and only flashed some glances.

More important than burglars, of course, is the life which Bob and I led. Although we went to hospitals more than we liked, we found ourselves in London at a wonderful moment. Maria Callas sang at Covent Garden, her performance in *La Traviata* and *Norma* extraordinarily beautiful, and we heard Joan Sutherland sing *Lucia* (Covent Garden Market, where Sikes could find fifty boy-thieves every night, was still next door to the Opera House.) Margot Fonteyn was at the height of her career and danced in *The Firebird*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella* and, most memorably, *Ondine*. I am not able to describe the beauty of all these performances. It was of the sort that makes one decide that it's not necessary to live longer.

We entertained and went to parties all of which we've forgotten. We went often to museums, and had life-drawing lessons at the Kennington Art School in the evening. There I was told not just to outline a figure, and at Arizona State University I'm still being told this. (I see the body's outline—the rest is mystery.) I had drawing lessons at the Victoria and Albert, given by an artist of the old school. He told us to disperse in the costume galleries and to spend three hours drawing just one costume. (The costumes were on forms.) When he, in moving about, finally came to me, I had become well-hypnotized by some fringe. He looked at my drawing, took a pencil, and in a few deft lines gave it form and existence.

We drove to Sussex to see Jeff and Mark about every third weekend, so much of our time was spent in *Little Hallands*, a beautiful country house, hidden in the Downs. Here the food and comfort were unsurpassed.

We walked on the beaches and the Downs, had tea at small village tea rooms, and went often to the Pavilion. We have a photograph of a picnic in which I see the wonderful *Smokey the Bear* charcoal grill (it was really just a pail) we always used. Carin is in the picture, looking elegant, and I have on an historic, bright, Christian Dior coat—not the thing, one would say, for a picnic but it was so dear to me that I scarcely ever went without it. It was a talisman. At the moment when Bob lay, at the worst of his illness, in the London Clinic, I felt myself so distracted with fright that I didn't

know where to turn. I can in no way explain what I then did, although I have since read of someone else who did the same. I went to Harrods and bought an expensive, bright-colored coat. It seemed to make everything better.

Bill, who enjoyed hiking and mountain climbing, especially in Wales, once *walked* to Seaford, eighty miles! I one time went there alone by train and bus, boarding the return train in the evening at Newhaven. I took out my book and did not notice time passing. Eventually a switchman got on and said, “Madame, this car is on a siding.”

When I think of London, no particular image comes to mind. Instead I feel the climate and hear the weatherman saying, “Today there will be rain with occasional showers. There is a possibility of bright intervals.” It is England’s mists, clouds and sudden oblique rays of sun, as in Constable’s landscapes, that I remember best. These and, in our time, the monstrous fogs. (I have recently read that the 1991 pollution in Mexico City is only almost equal to that of the 1952 London fog.)

When reading Sherlock Holmes I always imagined a fog to be a soft, grey mist. Instead it was a harsh, yellow, acrid, gritty, sulphurous beast—what Dickens called “unblest air.” Most houses were still heated by coal fires, the prohibition of these in Kensington only just begun, and sometimes the fog would last almost a week. And it came into the house, seeping under the closed windows of the dining room like a yellow genie. During one particularly long-lasting fog I remember thinking, “One more day and I shall leave London never to return.” It may be that the fogs that I remember so fondly from Sherlock Holmes were, after the war, worsened by traffic fumes. (We were between Kensington High Street and the Cromwell Road.) When we left London and came back to Washington, I missed the English climate—it is comforting and has an intimacy not found in the American atmosphere, once described as like a wide stare.

One image does come into my mind, and oddly enough it is of a Kensington neighborhood where I seldom went. There was no particular traffic, and the houses were alike, set in uniform rows. It was the kind of neighborhood often seen in Beetle films, chosen for its ordinariness, each

house having an identical small front garden—except, in this case, one. This house had a lawn, and coming up through it like a resurrection were damaged statues—portrait busts, parts of horses, limbs of generals, pieces of column. It is a scene which keeps returning to my mind, and the resurrection image is strong—these are the dead, arising in stone.

I cannot end on a lawn in West Kensington. I remember best things which seemed most English or most ancient, amongst these some records of the Great Plague found in a City church. One listed cause of death was “found in fields and ditches.” I would want to include the Traitor’s Gate at the Tower of London; the small church at Shere where in the Middle Ages an anchoress was walled up for her lifetime in a stone cell, with only a small opening through which she could see the altar cross and receive communion; the paintings of Samuel Palmer; the glass enclosed room, high on a rooftop in Yorkshire, where our friend, Adrian Head, can see—were it not for the curvature of the earth—all the way to Wrangel Island off eastern Siberia; the larks rising into the heavens above the Downs; the walk along the Thames at Chiswick; the man with boy, cart, and horse who came to bring manure on Christmas Eve; and an incident I once witnessed on Kensington High Street when, during a traffic altercation, one man became so impassioned that he bit the other man’s ear.

During our last days in London, there were harbingers of a new age—the closing of Marble Arch to traffic; a betting shop that replaced John Buckle, Greengrocer; disappearance of the large, white £5 notes (bearing depositors’ signatures in ink); Anabelle’s; espresso bars; and *Last Year in Marienbad*. But what reader of omens could have foretold, or even summoned up as an apparition, *The Yellow Submarine*, *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* or even *The Beetles* themselves, supernatural beings of the next decade?

*Sometimes you ask her,
And she answers quite nicely,
The girl with kaleidoscope eyes.*

Phoenix, May 1990