# Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!

# A. S. Neill

## A Note about the Title

Years ago, Hetney, a little boy at Summerhill, went round muttering to himself: "Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!" The phrase caught on and has lived for more than twenty-five years. To this day, small children follow me around chanting the words, and my usual reaction is: "Wrong again. Not orange peel—banana peel."

I have selected this rhyme as the title of my autobiography, because it sums up my life with children; indeed, it might be the motto for Summerhill, if we believed in mottoes. These words tell the whole story of my school and my life. They show how the gulf between generations can be bridged—or rather abolished—for they do not connote *cheek* or *hate:* they mean love; they mean equality. If every kid in the world could call his teacher Orange Peel, or an equivalent, my mail would not be filled with letters beginning: "I hate my school; can I come to Summerhill?"

The little boy's chant shows that there is no necessity for a gulf separating pupils from teachers, a gulf made by adults, not children. Teachers want to be little gods protected by dignity. They fear that if they act human, their authority will vanish and their classrooms will become bedlams. They fear to abolish fear. Innumerable children are afraid of their teachers. It is discipline that creates the fear. Ask any soldier if he fears his sergeant major; I never met one who didn't.

The Summerhill rhyme tells the world that a school can abolish fear of teachers and, deeper down, fear of life. And it is not only Neill that the kids treat with equality and fun and love; the whole staff are treated as pals and playmates. They do not stand on their dignity, nor do they expect any deference because they are adults. Socially, the only privilege the teachers have is their freedom from bedtime laws. Their food is that of the school community. They are addressed by their first names and seldom are given nicknames; and if they are, these are tokens of friendliness and equality. For thirty years, George Corkhill, our science master, was George or Corks or Corkie. Every pupil loved him.

Years ago, in one of my books, I wrote that when interviewing a prospective teacher, my test was: "What would you do if a child called you a bloody fool?" It is my test today, except that *bloody*—never a real swearword outside British realms—has been changed to a more popular expletive.

More and more, I have come to believe that the greatest reform required in our schools is the abolition of that chasm between young and old which perpetuates paternalism. Such dictatorial authority gives a child an inferiority that persists throughout life; as an adult, he merely exchanges the authority of the teacher for that of the boss.

An army may be a necessity, but no one, barring a dull conservative, would argue that military life is a model for living. Yet our schools are army regiments or worse. Soldiers

at least move around a lot, but a child sits on his bottom most of the time at an age when the whole human instinct is to move.

In this book, I explain why the powers that be try to devitalize children as they do, but the mass of teachers do not understand what lies behind their discipline and "character molding," and most do not want to know. The disciplinary way is the easy one. ATTENTION! STAND AT EASE! These are the orders of the barrack square and the classroom.

*Obey! Obey!* they say, but people do not *obey* equals; they obey superiors. Obedience implies fear, and that should be the last emotion encouraged in a school.

In the U.S.A., it is the student's fear of bad grades— idiotic grades that mean nothing of importance—or fear of not passing exams; in some countries—Britain among them, I hate to admit—it is still fear of the cane or the belt, or the fear of being scorned or mocked by stupid teachers.

The tragedy is that fear also exists on the teacher's side— fear of being thought human, fear of being found out by the uncanny intuition of children. I *know* this. Ten years of teaching in state schools left me with no illusions about teachers. In my time, I, too, was dignified, aloof, and a disciplinarian. I taught in a system that depended on the *tawse,* as we called the belt in Scotland. My father used it and I followed suit, without ever thinking about the rights and wrongs of it— until the day when I myself, as a headmaster, belted a boy for insolence. A new, sudden thought came to me. What am I doing? This boy is small, and I am big. Why am I hitting someone not my own size? I put my *tawse* in the fire and never hit a child again.

The boy's insolence had brought me down to his level; it offended my dignity, my status as the ultimate authority. He had addressed me as if I were his equal, an unpardonable affront. But today, sixty years later, thousands of teachers are still where I was then. That sounds arrogant, but it is simply the raw truth that teachers largely refuse to be people of flesh and blood.

Only yesterday, a young teacher told me that his headmaster had threatened him with dismissal because a boy had addressed him as Bob. "What will happen to discipline if you allow such familiarity?" he asked. "What would happen to a private who addressed his colonel as Jim?"

I believe that in the Russian Army after the Revolution there were no barriers between officers and men. They were all pals. But the system failed, I am told, and the army returned to its old ways of class division and stem discipline.

*Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!* is a title that may shock the "dead" teachers. But it will be understood by students in all lands—barring those in Iron Curtain countries who are never allowed to hear of Summerhill.

Why do I get hundreds of letters from children? Not because of my beautiful eyes—nay, but because the idea of Summerhill touches their depths, their longing for freedom, their hatred of authority in home and school, their wish to be in contact with their elders. Summerhill has no generation gap. If it had, half of my proposals in our general meetings would not be outvoted. If it had, a girl of twelve could not tell a teacher that his lessons are dull. I hasten to add that a teacher can tell a kid that he is being a damned nuisance. Freedom must look both ways.

I do not want to be remembered as a great educator, for I am not. If I am to be remembered at all, I hope it will be because I tried to break down the gulf between young and old, tried to abolish fear in schools, tried to persuade teachers to be honest with themselves and drop the protective amour they have worn for generations as a separation from their pupils. I want to be remembered as an ordinary guy who believed that hate never cured anything, that being on the side of the child—Horner Lane's phrase—is the only way to produce happy schooling and a happy life later on. As I am "Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!" to my little pupils, so I would like to be to all the children in the world—one who trusts children, who believes in original goodness and warmth, who sees in authority only power and, too often, hate.

Soon I must shuffle off this mortal coil, but I hope that coming generations will look back at the education of our time and marvel at its barbarity, its destruction of human potentialities, its insane concern about formal learning. I hope, against everything that makes me pessimistic: the wars, the religious suppression, the crimes. Cannot those who yell for the hanging of criminals see that they are treating a ruptured appendix with aspirin? Will not society recognize that it is our repressive system, plus the poverty of our mean streets, plus our soulless, acquisitive society, that is making criminals and neurotics?

I confess to dithering. One day, when I think of the challenge of the young, I am optimistic; next day, when I scan the newspapers and read of rape and murder and wars and racialism, I become engulfed by pessimism. But I guess that ambivalence is common to us all.

***Alexander Sutherland "Orange Peel'' Neill***

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## My Beginnings

I was born on the 17th of October, 1883, in Forfar, Scotland. Forfar, which today is the Angus County seat, is not far from Dundee and the Firth of Tay. The MacNeill clan originally came from the island of Barra and later joined Bonnie Prince Charlie. Those said to have deserted him before or after the battle of Prestonpans—before, I should guess—settled down in and around the village of Tranent near Edinburgh,

The MacNeills became coal miners, and my grandfather, William MacNeill, worked in the pits for many years. But as I first remember him, he had already left the pits and set up a fish shop in Edinburgh. He came to visit us sometimes, a tall, distinguished-looking man with a fine profile and long-fingered, sensitive hands. His hobby was fiddle-making. As a boy, I was afraid of him, for he had a sarcastic tongue and I still recall one occasion when I fell under its lash after trying to sharpen a pencil with his new hoi low-ground razor. I think my father was afraid of him, too, for he was always a little strained when the old man came to stay with us.

Though all my uncles had gone to work in the pits, my father was of less tough clay, and having a flair for learning, was sent to be a student-teacher. 1 never knew why he dropped the Mac from his name. Indeed, I never knew much about my father's early life, for he was not a communicative man. But I recollect his being very angry when his sister Maggie told us about his boyhood days.

My mother was Mary Sutherland. Her mother had been a Sinclair, and her maternal grandmother a Gunn. Granny Clunes Sinclair was one of a family of about twenty sons and daughters, born to a farmer with small holdings in Caithness. They all died of tuberculosis except herself. My Granny went to Leith (now part of Edinburgh) as a servant girl, married Neil Sutherland who had something to do with the docks, and began to rear a family on fourteen shillings a week. Then one night my grandfather was found drowned, and Granny had to take in washing to support the family.

How it came, about that my mother—her only daughter— became a teacher, I do not know. It must have meant tremendous self-sacrifice on the part of Granny. My father and mother taught in the same school in Leith, and so their courtship began.

I have one or two of my father's love letters, beautifully written in copperplate. They are not real love letters and resemble the letters I used to write home: *Today if was raining . . .Jim Brown sprained his ankle last week.* My mother had kept them all tied up in pink ribbons, but she had taken care to burn all her letters to him. Only as a postscript did my father usually send his love, yet I have a hazy memory of once uncovering something more. This happened at the age of twelve when I was prowling about the lumber room and found a box of Father's letters. I recall being a little shocked at one of them. He had just been reading *Venus and Adonis,* and his letter showed the eroticism aroused by this poem. Reading it then, I was sure my mother must have been morally outraged; now I am not so sure.

Granny Sinclair lived with us until her death when I was fourteen. As her favorite grandchild, I think I must have loved her as much as a boy can love an old woman. She used to suck peppermints, and her way of showing her love was to kiss me while shoving a peppermint from her mouth into mine. She was very religious, read much in the family Bible, and liked to tell us that as a girl she had walked nine miles to church every Sunday and nine miles back. Her faith was a simple one of sheep and goats, with no doubts, no skepticism whatsoever. I remember discovering the word *bugger* when I was about seven, and Granny making me kneel down beside her to ask God for forgiveness. My early fear of hell must have come from her. She made us read aloud to her from various books of sermons, including Boston's *Fourfold Stale.* Boston, apparently, had no doubts either. For me, the most terrifying passage of that book was one in which the Man of God, as Granny called him, gave a minute description of the pains of hell. It began in this fashion; "If you want to know what the torments of hell are like, just light a candle and hold your finger in the flame." And because Granny and Boston had no doubts about what was going to happen to sinners, I also had no doubts, but knew, as if by instinct, that hell was my destination. Yet there was no hate in Granny. She was a very human, loving old woman, and one of her joys was to listen to the often obscene gossip of the woman from the cottage over the road.

My sister Clunes (named after Granny) had less timidity' and faith than I had. She wouldn't have hell at any price; and when she took the next step and wouldn't have God and his heaven, I actually feared that she might be struck down dead on the spot. My fright was caused by a grim story in Granny's annotated *Shorter Catechism* about a servant girl accused of stealing a silver spoon. "May God strike me down dead if I stole the spoon!" she cried; and, of course, she fell down dead there and then, the silver spoon tinkling on the floor. I reminded the atheistic Clunie of this tale more than once, but she

laughed me to scorn, and threatened to commit the unforgivable sin—blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. She never did, but when my oldest brother Willie, at the age of thirteen, stood out in a thunderstorm and invited the Almighty to strike *him* down dead for asking God to perform an unnatural act on the Holy Ghost, I was terror-struck. As the thunder crashed, I shut my eyes tight, opening them to whatever degree of skepticism I was capable of having in those days, for Granny's silver-spoon story had lost some of its glory. It is of interest to note here that Willie became a minister.

When the psychologists say that our early experiences rule our lives, one is apt to question. But I have had no doubts about this since 1918, when my dearly beloved sister Clunie died of pneumonia at the age of thirty-four. In all her years, she had never compromised her atheism. To her the Christian religion was both superstition and a cruel humbug. Yet on her deathbed she kept muttering the prayers she had learned as a baby, imploring God to save her soul. In the weakness of dying, she returned to emotions that had slumbered for thirty years. To me, that was convincing proof that the feelings of early childhood live on for a lifetime.

My granny was psychic. She had none of that second sight so often mentioned in Scottish tales I heard all my youth— tales like the one about Old Tamson touching Mrs. Broon on the shoulder in the kirk, and whispering: "Better go home, for your laddie has just broken his neck"; after which Mrs. Broon drives the seven miles home to discover that exact calamity. Many such stories were told in my boyhood, but it was always a case of "I know a man who heard about it from the beadle," No, Granny contented herself with more simple phenomena: her special department was knocks. "I'm no' long for this life," she would say, coming down from her room of a morning, very-very depressed. "I heard three warning knocks, loud and clear. My Maker has called me." And she would go upstairs again to get her death linen in order. Naturally, we grew accustomed to her premonitions, but suffered some remorse in the end when she died after hearing her knocks.

It is difficult to look back and come to any conclusion about the over-all influence the old woman had on me. She used to say to my mother: "Allie will be the best of the family to you in your old age." And it is true that I never neglected my parents in their old age, although other members of the family may have given them more practical help than I did. I do think that what older folks say to a child may have a great effect on later behavior and thought. One of our neighbors once looked sadly at me when I was about ten. "Eh, Mrs. Neill," she said, "that laddie has death written in his face. He winna live lang." That remark haunted my life for years.

Death was no stranger to me. I had been at the burial of little members of the family more than once, and knew the trappings of death and the tears—yes, and the airy relief after the body was left in the grave. I must have attended three funerals before I was ten. Counting a still-born infant, my mother had thirteen children in all. Years later, when we used to criticize her for having so many, she indignantly told us that it was God's will, and she got furious with Clunie for saying: "That's ail very well, but you had no right to have me eleven months after Allie; and if you call that God's will, He is to blame for my poor health."

Father walked back and forth to his school at Kingsmuir, two miles out. Later, when I was about eight, we moved there after a new schoolhouse had been built. My earlier

memories of Forfar are vague and hazy. We lived in a third- or fourth-story flat, and one of my pleasant recollections is playing trains in the long hall. Saturday morning was market time for the farmers' wives who brought in their butter and eggs; a hopeful time for a small boy who might get tuppence for holding a horse, though my fear of horses then makes me wonder how I had the pluck to go near one. To this day I pass a horse's heels uneasily. Sometimes on those Saturdays, we did manage to pick up a penny or two, largesse from kindly farmwives whose bairns were at Kingsmuir School. This had to be accepted surreptitiously, for one of my mother's stern rules forbade us to accept money or food from other people under any circumstances. For her, to have the children accept little presents from others would have been classing her family with the lowest orders. But we children found it hard to give a reasonable excuse for refusing Mrs. Findlay's offer of a delicious piece of bread with thick fresh butter and damson plum jam.

One day when I proudly told Mother that I had refused such a tempting dainty, she smiled and told me I was a good boy. "Of course you said you weren't hungry, didn't you?" "No," I said with confidence, "just 'Thank you, but my ma says I mustn't take it.' "And she slapped me hard.

She was a proud wee woman, my mother. To us her rule seemed cruel: naturally, we did not understand the fear of patronage that lay behind it, a fear that came from her lowly upbringing in a humble Leith home. Mother had high ambitions for herself and her family. She was a snob, and she made us snobs.

The brothers and sisters of both my parents were poor folk of the working class, speaking in dialects you could cut with a knife. Gradually, we came to believe they were beneath us, and we acquired the well-known "poor-relation" complex. My mother dexterously managed to keep her own relatives from visiting us—they were a hundred miles away— with one exception.

Eccentric Uncle Neil was a barber in Brechin—a most unsuccessful one. He would suddenly lock up his shop and go for a long walk. Legend said that on one occasion he went off for a stroll in the midst of shaving a customer, leaving the man with one cheek unshaved. He talked to himself a lot, which may explain his lack of success: a barber who talks to himself while handling a razor will not build up a large business. But he was a harmless man, and we were all very fond of him. When his business failed shortly after Granny's death—she had been helping him with her saved-up coins—he carne to live with us. After a while, Mother began to suggest it was time he did something for a living. One morning he got annoyed with her, bundled up his few belongings, and left. We never saw nor heard of him again. The children missed him, for he was always generous with sweets. I often wondered what happened to him.

Father's people, apparently, were less immune to hints and sometimes would come to stay with us. Old William MacNeill, my grandfather, was a man of strong convictions. He had all the dourness of the Scot, and any subtle suggestion made him stiffen. My mother could not forgive him his neckwear; he refused to wear a collar but wore a black handkerchief instead. As I have said earlier, he was a distinguished-looking man; in my mother's eyes, however, a man whose neckwear betrayed his low-class origin. He could make a fine fiddle with a penknife; he could make wonderful furniture with hidden dovetails; he could tackle any mechanical job with skill and some art, but he would not wear a collar. Worse yet, he always had a cackle in his throat and would spit anywhere.

Even as a child, I felt a tense atmosphere between my mother and him. He had definite ideas about women: they were something lower than men in the scale of humanity; they had to be kept in their place. Possibly Mother could have forgiven him his neckwear and his spitting if only he had given her the right to be at least as important as he was.

There also was some confused story of my father's family having spoiled Mother's wedding in some way: something about the MacNeills' keeping father to themselves when he ought to have started on his honeymoon. To her, the old man remained a bossy old interferer.

Saturday mornings stand out as happy times. I can still smell the fresh, unsalted butter in the market, still see the farmers' gigs with their smart ponies. By midday, the ponies had ail taken their masters home—literally—for in those days many of them got so drunk that the pony had to find its own way without guidance. When motors came in and an agent tried to sell Farmer Mosside one, Mossy looked at him beerily. "Here," he said, "if you can sell me a car that'll bloody well take me home when I'm fu', I'll buy it."

Glory departed with the gigs; Saturday afternoon was dreary and dull. We wandered around the gray streets, often searching the gutter for treasure. Sammie Clark averred he had once found a penny, but search as we might, we never found money. The richest treasure I recollect was a cap gun with a broken trigger. Sometimes the town band would play, and we would march along the street to the music. Clunie and I followed the band one day to the Market Muir, a long way from home for toddlers' feet. I had a sanitary accident; and when I got home, my irate mother marched me down to the outside washing house, took off the offending pants, and sent me running home with a hearty slap on the bum. I must have been about six, yet I still can recall my fear that someone would meet me in that pantless sprint. Mother seemed to get some amusement out of the incident, for years later she referred to my speed that day as a criterion for swiftness.

Sundays always seemed a depressing time, when we were rigged up in Sabbath clothes with starched collars and cuffs. We were accustomed to the collars, because Mother prided herself on the fact that her boys wore genuine stiff collars even on weekdays. She spoke bitterly of the lazy limmers who dressed their sons in ordinary waterproof ones.

Getting ready for the kirk was hateful to us. We struggled with clumsy cufflinks: we resentfully stood to have olive oil rubbed into our hair. We were all dressed up with nowhere to go—nowhere, at any rate, that we wanted to go. We knew

there lay before us an hour and a half of extreme boredom, of sitting on a hard pew with upright back—only the rich had cushions—of listening to dull psalms and hymns and a seemingly interminable sermon by Dr. Caie. The one bright spot in the somber picture was the tight-laced woman who had the pew in front of ours. Her waspish waist had been gained at the expense of internal gurgles, and we beguiled the time during the sermon by counting the intervals between gurgles. As the sermon dragged on, we found that we had enough to do just keeping our sense of gravity. Occasionally, I imagine, the sounds from the wasp-waisted one were drowned by our own unsuppressed splutters of merriment. I don't think the lady was conscious of our ribald attentions, for she often turned around and gave us peppermints.

I was just getting on to Sunday School age when, luckily, the schoolhouse (our new home) was finished, and we moved to Kingsmuir. Evidently my parents did not think it necessary to send us to a Sunday School two miles away. Moving to the country stands out as a happy milestone in my life. At five, I had gone to school in Forfar, daily toddling the long two miles while holding my father's hand. He was always a fast walker— even at seventy-five he could outpace me—and my childish steps must have irritated him.

My father did not care for me when I was a boy. Often he was cruel to me, and I acquired a definite fear of him, a fear that I never quite overcame in manhood. I see now that Father did not like *any* children; he had no contact with them. He did not know how to play, and he never understood the child's mind. The boy he admired was the boy who could beat the others in lessons; and since I never had any interest in lessons and could not learn, I had no hope of gaining Father's interest or affection. But in the time I am writing of—the time I attended school as a toddler—the lesson element had not yet appeared on the horizon. To him, I was merely a drag who made him late for school. He had a lady assistant at that time, a long-legged girl who kept up with him athletically, and I still see myself falling behind and whimpering in dread of being left.

I also remember another fear of those days: cattle. The Forfar cattle market was held on Mondays, and the roads were full of cattle droves. I soon found that the droves frightened Father, who sometimes even jumped a dyke with me when we met what looked like a dangerous beast. In the manner of all boys, I believed that my father could fight a score of lions, and to see him scuttle ignominiously over a wall to escape a herd of bulls must have pricked the bubble of my faith. Like his father before him, he was a timid man.

Old William MacNeill was so afraid of the dark that when he was courting my grandmother, she had to come from her village to meet him in his. My father always feared the dark, and in later years when he returned from Edinburgh by the midnight mail, my brothers and I had to meet him at the station about two in the morning.

My mother was fearless, partly because she had less imagination than Father. I recall the day she set off to town, presumably to shop. She returned, having had all her top teeth extracted. Local anesthetics were then unknown, and only the rich could afford gas.

We certainly were not rich. My father's salary was never more than 130 pounds a year, and how they brought up eight children, sending three of us to the university, is a mystery. Only great self-sacrifice could explain it. My mother augmented our meager income by dyeing and curling feathers, and my father spent nothing on himself. He neither smoked nor drank. Other teachers could have their golf and their bowls; he had no games and no hobbies. Once he tried to join in a village game of quoits, but my mother put her foot down: "George Neill, think of your position! You can't lower yourself to play games with plowmen and railway men,"

I fear that mother's emphasis on social position cramped our style. In summer, when the whole school went barefoot, we children alone had to wear hot stockings and boots—also those stiff starched collars.

Mother had a mania for laundry, and she washed well and ironed perfectly. If her family did not become ladies and gentlemen, it would not be her fault. We had to speak English in the house, but of course we spoke broad Forfarshire outside. How we managed

to change slickly from one to the other is astounding: we never seemed to make a mistake. The inside *boots* automatically became *bates* when we talked to Jock Broon.

One of our grievances was not being allowed to work as the common children did. In the potato-harvest holidays, they all went gathering on the farms. In the berry season, they all went picking strawberries. The "aristocratic" Neills could not be allowed to behave as menials. But a day carne when economic circumstances overruled snobbery. Then thirteen, I was sent to the strawberries and potatoes, and hated the toil. Snobbery gave way because my oldest brother Willie was acting the spendthrift at St. Andrews University.

Moving to the new schoolhouse in Kingsmuir broadened our view of life. In Forfar, our horizon had been the churchyard; here it extended farther. The smell of new wood always takes me back to that house; to us it was heaven, and for many years, the center of my world. Clunie died in the wee bedroom where I had slept for years—Clunie, the playmate I loved so much; for my two elder brothers left me out of things and I was forced to make her my chum. The strange thing is that I can look at that schoolhouse now without any emotion. I cannot sentimentalize what has gone, and perhaps that is a good thing, for hankering after the past often denotes a disappointing present. If we go backward to find our emotions, something is far wrong; equally wrong is the forward look, toward bliss in the next world.

Father's school was on one side of the road; our dwelling, the schoolhouse, on the opposite side. The house had a parlor, dining room, kitchen, and five bedrooms. Our loo was an earth closet far up the garden. I cannot remember if we appreciated the fact that instead of a two-mile uphill walk to school each morning, we simply had to cross the road. I may have, but my brothers soon had to go to Forfar Academy and walk two miles again, morning and evening.

The penny-farthing bicycle was then in use, though we never knew it by that name and simply called it a "high" bicycle. The "safety," growing in popularity, had solid rubber tires, rather like those of a baby carriage, and was displaced by the "cushion," a bicycle with thicker solid tires. I cannot remember when the "pneumatic" came in, but have a vague recollection of seeing the great racer Killacky riding a cycle with inflated tires about as big as the modern low pressure automobile tire. But bicycles were unknown to the poor in those days, and my brothers had to walk.

Forfar Academy was the stepping stone to a university education. To my father, advancement in life meant advancement in learning. We were to be scholars, and Willie led the way. In the Academy, he topped his class in most subjects, and won the gold medal—or, rather, tied for it with a boy called Craik, son of an important jute manufacturer in town. My mother strongly believed that Craik was in the tie only because of his bigwig father, a natural opinion for her to have. But Willie was the hope of the house. His brilliance as a scholar seemed remarkable. Without visibly doing any work, he managed to go to university at sixteen and win further medals there. His method was to sit up for three nights before the exam with a wet towel around his head, and his memory was prodigious.

Willie's brilliance had unhappy effects on all the members of the family. Neil, who came between Willie and me, also went to the Academy. He was no great scholar and he

did not worry much when the teachers made nasty comparisons between his work and Willie's.

When it came my turn to go to the Academy, I was not sent. I was the only one of the family who never went to the Academy. The sad truth is that it would have been useless and hopeless to send me there, for I could not learn. My father still did not care much for me, and little wonder; I was obviously the inferior article, the misfit in a tradition of academic success, and automatically I accepted an inferior status. If there was a particularly hard and unappetizing heel to a loaf, my father would cut it off with a flourish; with another flourish, he would toss it over the table in my direction, saying: "It'll do for Allie."

Chime used to wax indignant at the way I was treated, but she never had the courage to attack my father on the subject. I recall her vigorous protest against my having to wear Willie's cast-off clothes; but adoring Willie so much at that time, I may have given her a clump on the ear for interfering. In all fairness, I still do not know why all the others were sent to the Academy, Clunie was clever but no prizewinner, and the other sisters did nothing important academically.

I was the only one who began and completed his schooling in the village. This was unfortunate, for it kept me tied to the old folks too long and prevented my measuring myself against the more sophisticated boys in the town. Not that Forfar Academy would have helped me at all educationally; there I surely would have been near the bottom of every class.

## Early Schooldays

Kingsmuir School was a two-roomed building divided into the "big" and "little" rooms. In the big room, my father had Standards IV to ex-VI, ex-VI being composed of the few boys who remained in school after age fourteen. The '"Missy" kept the younger children in the little room.

If Father was to give Class V a lesson in geography, he told a boy to hang the map on the blackboard. While this was being done, test cards in arithmetic were given out to Standard III. Standard IV might be ordered to learn its spelling, while Standard VI read. Heaven only knows what the ex-VI's were doing. My father would stand at the map, and I can still hear the geography class shouting in unison; "Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Wakefield." After a few minutes, he would leave this class to its own devices and take the reading of the VI's. Naturally, it was a noisy room. We spent much of our time talking, also drawing on our dirty slates, which we cleaned by spitting on them and then rubbing them with the palm of the hand. We never seemed to tire of tilting our slates so that the spittle would make slimy designs.

It was in the main a happy school. Sometimes my father used the strap a lot, especially when exasperated by the dunces, for his salary depended on the number of Standard V students he passed. For some obscure reason, Standard V came to be the parking place of dunces; as Inspection Day approached, and my father got more and more irritable, the blows of the strap grew many and hard. Lest he be accused of favoritism, he punished his family as severely as the others, and I came in for more than my fair share when the

strappings were given for noise or mischief: as a Neill, I ought to have kept away from the bad boys.

I feared my father much at that time. He had a nasty habit of taking me by the cheek and pinching me hard between thumb and forefinger. Often he pinched my arm painfully. There must have been something very unlikable about me then, for the other members of the family received fairer treatment. I was clumsy, preoccupied with scraps of iron in my pockets, and my unprepossessing appearance did not help. My stuck-out ears earned me the nickname Saucers, and my feet grew suddenly to the size they are now. I was much ashamed of the enormous boots I wore. Because my toes turned in, I clattered along the road with those great boots hitting each other, sometimes tripping me up. I was certainly not the kind of son desired by a father who sought high academic distinction for his family. This aim was apparent in our evening homework. The rural scholars, destined to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, had none. But we were different. Every night at a certain hour, our games with the village lads were sadly and roughly interrupted by a dog whistle my father blew at the back door.

"Time for the dogs to ging hame," cried our chums, and the dogs went home with their tails between their legs— Neilie and Clunie and me. Willie, a law unto himself, required neither driving nor coaching. The rest of us trooped into the nursery and attempted to turn our thoughts from "smuggle the gig" to Alien's *Latin Grammar.*

How I hated that book! Tags from it still linger in memory: *A dative put with show and give, tell, envy, spare, permit, believe: to these add succour, pardon, please.* .Neilie and Clunie had no great difficulty in learning such things, but I never could; and often I had to sit poring over the stuff when they had been allowed to go back to the village lads and their play.

On Sundays my mother took command, and we had to stay in until we had learned set verses of a psalm or paraphrase. Again I was left behind, tearfully muttering to myself the meaningless lines. Sometimes dear old Granny Sinclair would surreptitiously slip me one of her peppermints to show that she was on my side. My failure to learn Latin angered my father, but my inability to learn even two lines of a psalm gave my mother more sorrow than anger. What did anger her was my forgetting "messages" when sent to town. As the only child who didn't go to the Academy, my job of a morning was to walk to Forfar with the Academy lot and fetch household supplies.

"Now are you sure you can remember the list?" my mother would ask. "Pound of flank and a marrow bone, two pounds of sugar, mustard, bottle of vinegar, and"—here my mother whispered—"a bottle of aqua." In those days, aqua—our word for whiskey—was 2/10d. a bottle, Melvin's best; but when Grandfather was coming, or when Donald Macintosh, the School Board Clerk, was expected, we had to have it in the house. It was always a luxury.

So off I'd trudge to town in my big boots. When I got to the East Port, however, I had completely forgotten the items. Sometimes I made wild guesses, but the result of bringing home sugar when I had been told to get salt was too painful, and I took to telling feeble lies about Lindsay and Lows' being out of sugar at the moment. Then I was given a written list, though sometimes I lost even that.

Coming back from town with my awkward parcels was an unpleasant experience. No one ever thought of inventing a rucksack, and although I could have taken a basket, it seemed an effeminate thing to do. So I trudged up the braes with my heavy parcels, pausing every few steps to see if Will Clunie's milk cart was coming, for Will was always kind to the children and never passed without giving me a lift.

Often empty gigs would pass, but my plea for a hitch: "Hi, mannie, see a lift fae ye," was met by indifference. They were a dour, unfriendly crowd, the Angus farmers. Most of them wouldn't allow even a "hing ahent," when you gripped the backboard and ran behind.

Those farmers, most of them long since dead, affect me to this day. When motoring, I seldom pass a child or an old person on the road without offering a lift. On long journeys, like going to Scotland, I often give lifts to tramps, partly for company but mainly because I suffered so much as a child from selfish drivers.

I got into the way of lingering on the road until Will Clunie came along to pick me up. He left town rather late, however, and Father got exasperated because I was too long in bringing him his *Scotsman.* Then I was forbidden to wait for milk cart lifts.

This "going messages" to Forfar was not only tiring but alarming. Every boy who did not live in one's own village was regarded as an enemy; and if a Letham boy walked through Kingsmuir, we did our duty; that is, we chased him with stones. In Forfar, of course, we Kingsmuir "skites" were the strangers, and therefore regarded as enemies.

The way into town was through a street called the Ha'en, a queer name in an inland town. The Ha'en had its squad— gang, nowadays—and every morning there were dangers to face. I cannot recall being severely beaten up, possibly because I ran like hell when I saw them. But there are also vague memories of sometimes being friendly with the Ha'en squad, and I can only guess that immunity was won by flattery and humility.

This hatred of strangers was very strong when I was a boy, A few sons of well-to-do farmers had ponies on which they rode to the Academy. We continually attacked them with sticks and stones. I don't know why, for they were harmless fellows who gave no offense.

Kingsmuir and Lunanhead were both called Landward schools, the only two in the Forfar area. They had a common school board, and this board stupidly arranged a joint picnic for the two schools during the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee in 1897. Students of each school marched to the picnic grounds, and there we stood staring sullenly at each other. The Lunanhead lads were bigger and beefier than ours, so when one of them, seeing me, asked what I was laughing at and did I want "my face ca'd up amongst my hair," I looked away hurriedly. Unfortunately, our bruiser Jake Hanton had left school a few weeks before. When competitions began, and the rival schools began to express their enmity by charging and kicking, we looked at Lunanhead's shock brigade as we whispered to each other: "Oh, if only Jake Hanton was here!"

Suddenly, a small boy came running to us, and told us that not only had Jake Hanton come down after his day's work but also that Dave Wyllie, another pugilist, was with him. Then, 1 fear, we smaller, weaker ones behaved in a low-down fashion. We began to make insulting remarks to the Lunanhead louts; whereupon they took off their coats, turned up their sleeves, and told us they would "knock us into jelly." We smiled and

signaled to our champions. The Lunanhead lads lost the battle, and as they sidled away, pretended not to hear Jake's sporting offer to "fecht any five o' them with one hand."

Jake Hanton was a dunce, with one talent—fighting, and he fought like a bulldog. His name alone could quell any boy in the neighborhood. He liked me and became my protector, and for some months my life was made soft and easy by the magic phrase: "If you touch me, I'll tell Jake Hanton."

"We seem to have fought a tremendous lot, though seldom in anger. For example; I would have a quarrel with Jock Broon about anything at all, maybe a marble or a piece of skiley—a slate pencil. I'd threaten to sock him In the nose; and Jock, who of course was younger than I, would reply: "Ye wudna say that to Dave Wyllie."

Now Wyllie was a hefty lad, a good fighter who could beat me to a standstill in a few seconds; but when Jock insinuated the truth, that I was afraid of Wyllie, honor compelled me to say that I had no fear of Wyllie. So Jock would tell Wyllie, who would look over the schoolroom at me, put his fist to his nose, and say: "Wait till fower o'clock." And so at four o'clock I would be facing the champion Wyllie up the Back Dykes, scared stiff and hopeless, beaten before the fight began. The shattering effect of that "wait till fower o'clock" is with me still.

Like my father and grandfather, I was a coward, but a coward with a difference. Like my father, I feared the dark, but unlike him, I did not avoid the dark. A dread of the dark-haunted me in those early days, especially when I had to walk home from Forfar after dark, a distance of two long miles with only one house. This house was kept by two old women, but to me it seemed a sort of halfway sanctuary from the dangers of the road. I never doubted that the two old women could protect me when "the man wearing the cheese cutter bonnet" came after me with a knife. He had sprung out on Jeem Craik, a grown man. He had held up plowmen with the demand: "Your money or your life!" His favorite spot was the stile at the bottom of Welton Brae. Needless to say I never saw him, for he existed only in the imagination of Eck Smith.

My fear was proportionate to the lateness of the hour. Winter nights seemed safe until six o'clock, for the factory girls were on the road then. Seven wasn't so bad because one of the girls might have stayed behind to do some shopping, and sometimes lovers wandered slowly out the Kingsmuir Road. One night a couple, annoyed because I walked close behind them, accused me of trying to listen to their conversation. I hadn't the courage to tell them the truth, that I was afraid to be alone.

Leaving the town was the worst of it. I trailed slowly up Easter Bank Brae, fearful to leave the light of the gas lamps. At the last lamp I would stop and stare into the black night ahead of me, glancing back in the hope that a gig would be coming along behind. There was small hope of getting a lift, but if I hurried into the dark road, I'd get as far as the High Dykes before the gig passed me. Then, when the pony had to walk up Welton Brae, I could overtake the gig by running. Once up the brae, I was within sight of the first twinkling lamps of Kingsmuir. In .any event, the man with the cheese cutter bonnet had not been known to operate above the brae.

Although the major terror was the road from Forfar, there were minor fears attached to shorter journeys. I had to go to Granny Hutchison's every night for the milk. Her place was just round the corner, and I never had any fear going there; but when I turned to

come back, it seemed that all the murderers in the world were after me. I had a similar emotion about going to the water closet, or rather the *closet,* for it was a dry one at the top of the garden. Going up there in the dark made me uneasy, for who knew who might be sitting on the seat? But coming back was something like the speed of the wind. Taking a lantern was doubtful help. It certainly gave a kind of protective companionship; on the other hand, it told the man with the cheese cutter bonnet where you were.

Somewhere back in this period, I discovered that on a lonely dark road it was advantageous to stop and urinate; for I had only to begin when someone's footsteps would be heard. Of course, I had to move on hastily. Nevertheless, it proved an infallible way to attract company.

I must have relied mainly on my legs to escape the terror, but I can recall arming myself. Willie brought home a real skull cracker that could slip easily into an overcoat pocket. I also had a Gamage water pistol filled with cayenne-peppered water, and must have been somewhat disappointed that I never got the opportunity to test its efficiency on some bad man's eyes. Later, our Skye Terrier completed my armament, although he was a poor bodyguard. Boulot kept at my heels all the way to town, when I didn't need him, but went off on his own when we entered the town, and straggled home hours later, wet, bedraggled, and very, very guilty.

Still, Boulot gave me ideas. When passing the worst danger—the stile at the foot of Weiton Brae—I kept whistling for an imaginary dog, calling "Wolf" or some such name that would let the man with the cheese cutter bonnet know that my dog was a huge man-eater. Another technique was to shout back to an imaginary companion: "Come on, Jock," when I thought that danger was near.

I never knew if the other children had similar fears. We did not mention such things, because we knew that to be a coward was the greatest of all social sins. Like the sin against the Holy Ghost, it was unforgivable. I do not know how we acquired this standard. It may have had something to do with our literature, which was of the penny-dreadful variety. (We called the booklets *penny horribles,* or *bloods.')*

Our school readers always contained a few stories of heroes, inclined to moral courage. One was the tale of a British officer in a far-out Empire post, sick with fever, speared in the leg by the natives—gangrene had set in—and facing a tribal uprising with no other weapon that his belief in God and Queen Victoria. I cannot recall how he triumphed, but he did; and with his dying breath he thanked God that he had done his duty. I'm afraid we preferred the godless heroism of the penny horribles.

It cannot be easy for younger generations to imagine village life at the end of the last century. Every village boy of today is within reach of a cinema; he has, or he can hear, a radio; he watches television, and he sees the world go by in automobiles, trucks, and buses.

In my childhood, life went by slowly, in gigs and on bicycles. The only entertainment was a very occasional concert in the schoolroom, or a visit from an itinerant juggler. There was, other times, old Professor Thomson, unwashed and smelling of drink. He usually arrived in the morning. My father told us to bring our price of admission (a ha'penny) in the afternoon. We were thrilled, of course, to see the professor draw ribbons from his mouth by the yard, and find eggs in Jock Broon's pocket. When the magician

breathed forth fire after swallowing balls of colored paper, I was at once excited and alarmed. To this day, I have the same attitude toward conjuring: I simply stare like a rustic, vainly wondering how it is all done.

Once a year, we had a school picnic. That was a swell affair. We went in farmers' carts, and the plowmen spent nights polishing their harnesses and grooming their horses. Of all the days in the year, that one was nearest heaven; the day following was the deepest hell. On the day after the school picnic, I invariably plumbed the depths of bitter despair, weeping in sheer misery. The glory had departed and would never come again. I tried to perpetuate the emotion of the picnic by attaching some of it to the people who had been there. Because a man called Jake Kenny had driven the cart I rode in, Jake became my hero for weeks. I had a vague feeling that Jake and I were bound together for eternity as two souls having shared a great spiritual experience.

On the other 364 days of the year nothing happened in Kingsmuir. This monotony of life was broken only by an occasional wedding or funeral. We welcomed both but preferred marriages. They were often forced ceremonies, the couple having "cut the wedding cake before the marriage," as the saying went. Sometimes a boy was present at his parents' wedding. Kingsmuir had no false modesty about such marriages.

The part of the ceremony that interested us was the departure of the bridal pair. Not that we had any special interest in them, but their departure was the proper time for the best man to "scatter." He had a bag of sweets, and sometimes he included a few coppers. These he scattered on the road as the carnage drove away, and we all scrambled for the goodies in the mud or dust. We had no fine feelings about eating the sweets: any of us would lift one from a pile of horse dung and shove it into our mouth. I compromised by spitting out the first suck, but one lad considered it a sentimental waste to spit out anything.

It was the chance of picking up coppers that drew us to the marriages. Money was almost unknown to us, for we had no pocket money as most children do nowadays. The possession of a ha'penny marked a red-letter day. Then we went to Nanzy Tarn's wee shop window and glued our little noses to the panes. The window was not a good window as shop windows go: all it contained was a row of sweetie bottles, a few laces or sticks of sugarella and jaw-sticker, and one or two lucky bags. These last were my favorite purchase. I never got anything lucky in them, but never lost hope of finding a new golden ha'penny wrapped up in tissue paper. Later, lucky something-or-others appeared with red bits of toffee in thin paper. They had ha'pennies inside. I once got a lucky one— and then lost the golden ha'penny.

Games had their special periods: marbles when the March dust was blowing, tops later in the spring. We all had marbles and tops, and iron hoops which we called girds, but I never knew how we got them. Marbles in the shops were expensive—ten a penny at one time—yet when the season began, poor ragged boys would appear suddenly with their "pooches full of bools." Some at least were stolen from Nanzy Tarn's shoppie, and more than once I helped raid the coal shed where she kept empty lemonade bottles. We took the bottles to a dark corner and broke their necks to get out any glass marbles inside. We made poor catapults from the rubber rings. It never occurred to us that poor Nanzy would have to pay for the empties. Possibly the marbles originated from small sons of the more well-to-do farmers.

I cannot recall many other attempts on our part to steal from shops. We'd ask Nanzy for something we knew she kept in the kitchen, and while she was away we'd pinch chewing gum or chocolate, but that was petty crime. A milk-delivery boy, who freely supplied me with penny horribles and *Chips* and *Comic Cuts,* had some elaborate system of robbing a newsagent's shop. Exactly how he managed this I was not curious enough to inquire, no doubt because knowledge would have made me a guilty accomplice. We were an honest crowd, mainly because there wasn't anything to steal. We did the usual raiding of orchards; our moral standard made stealing money a heinous offense, whereas orchards were pure sport.

Money was a very necessary adult concern on two Saturdays of the year—the May and November "Terms." Those were the days on which the plowmen were engaged or fee'd. (I was brought up among words or phrases that no Englishman or American ever knows: *fee, public roup, ashet, ground to feu, avizandum,* for example.) Twice a year, on Market Day, masters and men met in town to bargain. Plowmen were engaged from term to term, but why they changed masters so often I cannot understand, for the wages were standard (very low) and the perquisites of meal and milk seem to have obtained on all farms. For us children, *any* Market Day meant entertainment. Each Friday we peeped excitedly at booths and tents going up in the High Street—at hobby horses and swing boats. The anticipation made us sleep badly every Friday night.

The sons of the farmers had a lot of money to spend at the Market, the Adams family as much as half a crown each. We poor Neills never had more than sixpence apiece; it was all our parents could afford. Sometimes I augmented mine by looking soulfully up into Mrs. Adams's eyes and asking if her rheumatism were better. She was always kind to us bairns. On Market Day, I displayed quite a lot of anxiety about the health of farmers and their wives, and could turn my sixpence into eight pence, or sometimes even nine pence. The spending was a ticklish business. Hobby horses cost a penny, so did the swinging boats. The boxing saloon, from the front of which Jimmy Lavin bellowed an offer of five pounds to any man who would knock out his boxer, was too dear; and I had to take the easier road of sneaking under the tent canvas when Jimmy Lavin was concentrating his attention on the boxing. No one ever won the five pounds. The plowmen went in with their arms swinging like flails, and the scientific boxer knocked them down easily with straight lefts.

I was conservative in my spending on Market Days. My procedure was always the same: I went straight to Laing's shop and bought a tupenny pencil with blue lead at one end and red at the other, then a penny ice cream; and walked up the street to the hobby horses. I trembled as I mounted the steps, and when the horses started and the organ blared, I felt that the end had come. The sickly smell of hot oil did not tend to make me happier. I had a terrible phobia that the machinery would break down and the horses carry me round for ever and ever. My terror and delight were so great that I sat on and had another pennyworth—a pennyworth I could ill afford. I never had the nerve to try the swing boats, but got some vicarious thrill out of watching drunken plowmen try to swing themselves over the top. I always turned away disappointed in the end, as I did after every thunderstorm, because no one was killed.

What a great day! Even after all one's money vanished, Market Day was still exciting. I soon got a sharp nose for potential trouble, and when a fight started, with bloody noses and black eyes, I often managed to squirm into the front rank of lookers-on.

At the Cross, a public square, there were always one or two cheapjacks selling eighteen-carat gold watches for "any price you like, gentlemen." Their technique was always the same; "I didn't come here to make money. I came here to do you a favor. Will any gentleman give me a penny for this half crown?" Now the half crown was always genuine, yet these slow-wits stood and gazed at him with open mouths. In the end, he practically had to force someone to buy the coin for a penny. The next stage of building confidence was to sell a set of genuine gold studs for two shillings—"But don't go away, sir; each and every man will have his reward"—and sure enough, the buyer got his studs and his money back. 1 spent a long time each Market Day studying the technique. The difficulty was to know the exact point at which the real business of fleecing the yokels began. The first few got their money back; the next lot got the gold watch, plus a beautiful set of gold dress studs; and for the rest of the day, the buyers merely got dud watches in exchange for their pound notes.

One Market Day, I had half a crown saved up. Brushing aside the temptation to invest in my usual red-and-blue pencil, I went straight to the Cross. This time the man was selling purses, not watches, and held one up when I approached. "Half a crown for this beautiful purse. No offers? Good, then watch me make it more valuable." And he proceeded to drop shillings into the purse. "Still half a crown," he cried; "Who will have it?" I went nearly mad with excitement and had my half crown in a very sweaty hand, but my pluck failed me; I simply couldn't risk it. A plowman bought the purse while I watched with mad chagrin as he counted out the coins in it. There were about ten shillings in all. But already the cheapjack was dropping silver into another purse, and I pushed forward and held out my sticky half crown. He gave me the purse but admonished me not to look at it until he told me to. Gripping the bulging purse tightly, I made for the outskirts of the crowd, where I finally opened it. There were three pence in coppers! Only then did I absorb that the man was not ever trying to be kind to the people of Forfar. Presently Clunie found me in tears and gave me half of the money she had left, while unkindly reminding me of her warning about these men the night before. Though I swore Clunie to secrecy, she gave me away, and I had to undergo a second humiliation, the mocking laughter of my brothers.

About the age of thirteen, I decided that my genius lay in invention. By this time, I had a secondhand cycle with cushion tires, which 1 spent much time taking to pieces, carefully putting the balls in a saucer that my dog Boulot always managed to upset. At one period, I was riding with only four balls in the front axle. My dismantling mania had a grim purpose; I was studying the cycle to see how it could be improved. For many years, I believed that I had invented the rim brake, but I think now that that was sheer fantasy. What I did create was a rim brake with caliper action. When I described it to a patent agent, he wrote back that it was a fine invention, and if I would forward him my check for fourteen pounds ... I had to consider other ways and means.

My brother Willie, just returned from summer teaching in a prep school at Bexley Heath, happened to mention one of the boys called Bowden. I pricked up my ears. "The Bowden Brake man?" I asked.

Yes, Willie was sure that the boy's father was the Bowden Brake man. I said nothing but sat down and wrote to Mr. Bowden of Bexley Heath, enclosing a sketch of my invention. After a week, a reply came. I could scarcely open the envelope for the trembling of my hands. It was a nice letter— so nice, I failed to grasp at first that it was not the kind of letter I had hoped for. He had only replied because he was curious to know how I had got his address. Moreover, he was not the "Bowden Brake" Bowden at all, but a distant relative, and knew nothing about mechanics. About a year later, I found a caliper brake in a cycle catalogue.

Cast down I was, but not beaten. I next turned my inventive skills toward power as applied to cycles. I had read about levers and concluded that if the pedal cranks were about three feet long, the power of driving would be enormous. The difficulty of getting two long cranks to revolve without touching the ground would be overcome by a mechanism that made them fold up telescopically as they reached the bottom of their strokes. After an engineer had laughed heartily at this idea and had explained its impossibility, I gave it up.

But power still held my imagination. When a semi-relative, versed in mechanics, hinted that the cycle of the future would be driven by compressed air, the idea set me going. I saw the whole thing in a flash. I would invent a cycle whose tubes formed an air chamber. On the back wheel would be an air pump, and when going down hill, this pump would nil the air chamber. Then, as the cycle climbed the next hill, a lever would open the air port, and the compressed air would work a small motor to drive the machine bravely up the brae. But again a tiresome and interfering practical engineer blew my invention sky-high by demonstrating that you can't get more out of a machine than you put in; as for pumping air into a cylinder going down hill, the pumping would bring the damn machine to a standstill. I think that was the last invention I attempted.

What I was going to miss in giving up invention, were the bulky catalogues that came by post, especially a thumping one like Carnage's. I began to read advertisements, favoring those with coupons for free samples. I wrote to all sorts of firms for prospectuses, especially those that offered to train you by correspondence for thousand-pounds-a-year jobs. There was nothing of the plodder about me: my motto was simple: GET RICH QUICK.

About this time, Neilie had a spell of body-building. Every morning he did strenuous exercises with Sandow's dumbbells and developer, and his muscles grew big and strong. I wrote a friendly letter to Sandow saying that I could not afford to take his advertised course at six guineas, but if he would let me have the course for nothing, I should be eternally grateful. The body-builder did not reply—much to ray surprise, for in spite of swindling cheapjacks, I still retained my belief that men were good, loving, and always willing to help the poor and deserving.

I still have fleeting fantasies that a millionaire will step in and build me a new school after I have written him a nice, friendly letter. The fact that I don't write the letter, and never will write it, only proves the sad truth that age robs one of anticipations. Think of the interest with which I should look for the post if I were expecting a reply from a millionaire!

The letter to Sandow made me uneasy, however, after a boy told me how Sandow, when attacked by two toughs in America, had thrown them over a wall and broken their

backs. I wondered dimly if there was any probability of his coming five hundred miles north to chuck me over a wall for my impertinence.

About this time, I also had considerable anxiety over a firm who offered to teach you How To Write Advertisements. I had sent for its prospectus, only to learn the usual grim fact that the fee was about as much as two months of my father's salary. The firm kept sending me stiff letters, demanding to know why I was not replying. I saw myself in a law court being mulcted for untold damages. When I told Willie, he took the matter in hand and wrote them a snorting letter.. That was the end of my attempts to get rich quick.

Looking back on the boy that I was, I can fully appreciate my father's irritation. What could Latin verbs matter to a boy whose name was going to be known the world over as the inventor of a new cycle or a new trouser button? "Mary," Father said again and again, "the boy will come to nothing," and my mother seemed to agree. Yet on one occasion I became a scholar. Kingsmuir school had a special annual prize for arithmetic—the Angus Club—which I made up my mind to win, although my chum, Frank Craik, was better at sums than I. It was a long, grim fight, but in the end I won. I still have the prize, a gilt-edged volume entitled *Ferdinand and Isabella,* but have never succeeded in getting past the first chapter.

When a boy, I seldom read a book. I can't remember Neilie reading much then either. To this day I read but little and would rather potter about in my workshop. Any book I did read as a boy was one recommended by Willie or Clunie. Willie read everything he could find, and at an early age had a fine taste in books. Clunie also was an omnivorous reader, and although a year younger than I, read Dickens and Thackeray and *Jane Eyre* when my level was the penny horrible. It was through them that I discovered H. G. Wells, W. W. Jacobs, Anthony Hope—the *Prisoner of Zenda* delighted me —and Rider Haggard. After reading *She,* I knew that my future lay in Central Africa. I also read Mane Corelli. Clunie and I agreed that she was the greatest writer who ever lived; and together, we wrote her a letter to this effect. If she would only send us her signature, we should cherish it until death. She never replied, and soon we grew critical of her work.

Today, when I get letters telling me that I am easily the greatest man alive, I always answer them, hypocritically disclaiming the compliment but wishing the senders all luck in their own futures. Marie Corelli lost two earnest admirers by not answering them; I have so few that I dare not lose any. If any youth thinks that I am greater than Shakespeare and Shaw rolled into one, it would be brutally unkind for me to contradict him. The heroes of my youth often let me down, but perhaps my tactics were all wrong. Had I written: "Dear Miss Corelli, you can't write for nuts, and your characters are dead sticks, and your philosophy is tripe," I am sure I should have had an answer. I always answer critical letters by the next post, while fan mail lies around for weeks, sometimes getting lost.

I indulged much in hero worship as a boy. Willie was my demigod for many years, and my identification with him had much to do with the line my life took. At school I always had a protective hero—usually a stupid lad. I helped him with his sums, and he repaid me by beating up any boy who attacked me. All the best fighters seemed to be dunces. They hadn't the brains to argue, and the easiest reply for them was "a scone on the lug"—what we'd call today, a cuff on the ear.

My heroes were the waggish plowmen who used to congregate evenings at the bridge. Indeed, I used to imitate their typical rolling walk; and, to me, it was always a matter of infinite regret that when my mother made my breeches, she would never sew on the front pockets all the plowmen had. To my mother, such pockets were "common" and slightly vulgar. I remember her once saying that she considered the flies on male trousers indecent, and that her father had always worn trousers whose flies were hidden by a flap. We called flies *spavers*.

At that time, Killacky was a national wonder, winning most of the prizes in cycle racing; and when a rider passed the bridge, these local wits would shout after him: "Go on, Killac," or "Yer wheel's gaein' roond! ' 1 never seemed to tire of the latter remark, nor its companion to a pedestrian: "Hi, loon, ye've missed a step!" But it was an ordeal for me to pass the bridge when the plowmen sat on the dyke. Perhaps I dreaded a witty line about my enormous feet or my hen toes.

I was feeble at games and, at football, always had the dishonor of being the last chosen when sides were tossed for. Yet I cannot recall ever making an athlete my hero. It must have been about the age of fourteen that I began to seek importance as a wag, and I have a faint recollection of making my schoolmates laugh easily. Their standard was not high; in geography, the River Po—*po* was toilet slang to us—kept them sniggling guiltily for the whole lesson.

Like most children, we did not appear to be conscious of the changing seasons. My haziest memories are of the winters, when there seemed more snow than now, and we made slides on the roads, skating clumsily as frogs. Sometimes when the frost was good, we tried to skate on a local pond, but never efficiently. Our skates were partly to blame, being so blunted by cart tracks that they would not grip the ice. We hated the old men and women who put salt on our slides overnight.

To us—first of all—spring meant dust, blowing with the March winds, and then the joy of bird-nesting. We all had egg collections, but harried every nest we came across, no matter how many specimens we already possessed. This search for nests was exciting, because it led us into forbidden areas where gamekeepers were savage and terrifying in voice. I still can feel the agony—as I prepared to climb a tree—of hearing a voice cry: "What the hell are you doing there?" We had all heard tales of gamekeepers beating boys up, but these tales must have been legends, for these men never touched us. As a timid lad, I often had to stand guard for the others; that was far worse than actually taking part in a raid.

In late summer, we also came up against the gamekeepers when we went gathering raspberries. Here we were slightly fortified by the knowledge that we were poaching with parental approval. It was an economic necessity for my mother to make as many pots of raspberry jam as possible, and there were berries in the woods for the taking. The local squires did not prohibit the gathering of berries out of arrogance; their defense was that pickers disturbed the pheasants and partridges.

These raspberry expeditions were pleasant. To hold the fruit, we took milk flagons and baskets lined with cabbage leaves. I never ate the berries, and used to despise Eck Fraser for nibbling at his on the way home. Often when he had an almost empty flagon to show his indignant mother, he told her that the gamekeeper had emptied it out.

My mother slaved during the berry season. The jam pot was seldom off the fire, and we loved the delicious smell of the skimmings. She was really a wonderful housekeeper; how she managed to make just the right amount of jam to supply us for the whole year makes me marvel, even now. She was proud of all her jam-making, especially that she was the only woman in the village who could get her strawberry jam firm. Equally satisfying to her was her washing and ironing. She slaved at the washtub and ironing board, using a charcoal iron, and I fear her criterion of whiteness in linen has made me consider most steam laundries inferior ever since.

During the years when I was a boy, she suffered extreme pain—often agony—from gallstones, but she never made her illness an excuse for shirking her housework. I think her proudest moments were on Sunday mornings when she stood at the garden gate and watched us troop off to the kirk: my father in his chimney hat and starched shirt; the boys in their well-brushed clothes and stiff collars, with their snow-white hankies showing from their pockets; the girls with their well-ironed dresses. She had become stout, and seldom made the long walk to town herself, only on special occasions like the Sacrament Days.

## Boyhood

Not long after we had moved out to Kingsmuir, the Auld Kirk was completely renovated. An old Forfarian had presented a marvelous four-manual organ, and the whole interior of the kirk had been changed. With a pew in the front seat of the gallery, going to church seemed more pleasant for us children than it had been in the days of the woman with the internal gurgles. Ours was easily the best vantage point in the kirk, and it was fun to look down and watch folks during the sermon; how they nodded, or couldn't find the place when the reading was from Arnos or Daniel, or dropped their pennies for the collection. On Sacrament Day, we watched eagerly to see if anyone would drop the communion chalice and we knew who took just a sip or who emptied nearly half the cup. The loud blare of the organ fascinated us. I got into the way of sitting until the final voluntary was ended in the empty church, and whatever musical taste I have dates from that time. The organist became my Sunday hero; my ambition was to sing in the choir.

I shall have much to say about religion in my youth, but somehow it is not connected with going to the kirk. That was a social function, associated with showing off clothes and making contact with people. The sermons meant nothing to me: Dr. Caie read all his prayers, but without much conviction.

To me, his prayers were words, stereotyped phrases about the pitcher broken at the fountain, or the silver cord being unloosed. Looking back, I wonder if anyone felt any religious emotion in that kirk. In my teens, it certainly became a place of worship, for the girl in the front seat of the opposite gallery was my goddess—cold, lovely, unattainable. My chief impressions of the kirk were sex and death. My most outstanding color memories are the pretty faces and hats of the girls in the choir, and the black weeds of bereaved families when they were "kirket" after funerals. The whole family sat in a black row, the widow wearing a heavy veil.

Our chief desire was to see how they reacted when the minister made his remarks at the end of his sermon: "I cannot conclude today without alluding to the tragic loss we

have sustained through the death of one of our best-known townsmen. John Brown was . . .” With emotions that had no connection with grief, we children watched the hankies coming out. The younger members of the bereaved family generally seemed to enjoy the publicity, but to the elders it must have been painful. After church, the family wended their way to the cemetery. Some families never seemed to get out of mourning blacks, especially those like the Craiks, who had all their uncles and cousins living—or, it seemed, dying—in the town. Sundays were rather dull, for we were not allowed to play games, and the only permissible recreation was a staid walk in kirk clothes and tight boots that blistered my toes. But, negatively, Sunday was desirable for its respite from Alien’s *Latin Grammar.* We enjoyed another respite on Wednesday nights, when my father, an elder of the kirk, had to attend a meeting. He usually assigned us some pages of Alien or Caesar to do, but no sooner had he gone down the road a hundred yards than we were out with the boys. My mother often threatened to report us, yet she never did. I cannot remember what my father said or did when he found that we hadn’t prepared our homework. Clunie stood up to him, at this period, and my second sister, May, positively bossed him. We believed that she was his favorite because she was named after his mother. May knew what she wanted and usually got it. Mother, who constantly was having trouble with her—”the strong-willed hussy”—tried to “break her will” when she was quite small. I cannot exactly recollect how, but I have a faint memory of May sitting very red and defiant in the parlor, while my irate mother yelled: “You *will* do it!” and May screaming back: “I tell you I won’t.” And she didn’t.

Willie and May prospered, simply because they went their own ways, whereas we timid ones, fearful of discipline, did what we were told. I was obedience personified, although in the long run, my passive obedience backfired. Obedience made me stare at Alien’s *Grammar,* but something inside me negatived my passive response by refusing to allow me to learn anything, I am trying consciously to be objective about my parents, trying to look back at them without sentimentality. As a boy I loved my mother deeply—loved her too much—but at that age, I could not love my father. He was too stern, too far away from me. As a model for us children, he used to hold up a frail little chap with glasses, who never played a game in his life but was an earnest student, actually weeping if he weren’t at the top of the class. We hated that lad; he became a railway porter.

Many years later, I came to love the old man. His ambitions for us had long since gone, and he accepted us as we were. But in the times of which I speak, he held himself aloof from us boys and would never talk about his childhood. It was only before his death at the age of eighty-four (a fortnight from eighty-five) that he told me of his first great tragedy, his mother’s death of cholera when he was a boy. “I grat [grieved] for weeks,” he said, as the tears came to his eyes and my own.

I do not know why he was so strained and unhappy when we were young. True enough, he was trying to do all he could “ for his family with very inadequate means. I am convinced, however, that economic circumstances never go deep enough to affect individuals fundamentally. I am sure, for instance, that no man ever killed himself because of loss of fortune, the reason given so often in the newspapers. For many, money comes too late in life to have any deep significance. My father’s youngest brother, who never had a bean, was always cheerful. Father’s pessimism must have sprang from an abnormal fear of life, and a sense of its disappointment. But how his fear arose cannot be known. Certainly his ambitions for us must have been a transfer of his own.

He was the soul of honesty, and I do not think he could tell a lie easily. Absolutely conscientious in his work, he must have felt keenly that he did not get his due recompense. His salary depended on inspection reports, and Her Majesty's Inspector at that time was a sour, unfriendly man who begrudged ray father any praise for his work. This man would give glowing reports of the neighboring school of Inverarity—a school in which my father had his first appointment as assistant— but Elder of Inverarity was no better a teacher than Father.

Inspection Day was an agony for my father. I see him yet, his white strained face looking out of the window to watch the H.M.I, and his assistant come down from the station in the morning. Father's obvious fear infected us, and we also trembled before the mighty authorities. The inspector was a bad examiner, who attempted to find out what we did not know, rather than draw out from us what we did know. He kept writing notes in a pocket diary, and all of us, including my father, believed them to be notes of damnation.

Afterward, the stern inspector softened a little when he came over for lunch at the schoolhouse. Mother was a good cook, and on Inspection Day she always gave the guest his favorite pudding. We children were never at table. To this day I cannot meet an H.M.I, easily, although I realize that the modern ones are different from the old, and much less powerful.

Inspectors had special arithmetical test cards on pink cardboard, and the only piece of dishonesty I can ever remember in my father occurred when test cards were once purloined from Dominie Deas's inspection the week before ours. Father worked out the tests on our blackboard, but dishonesty had its own reward, for the inspector brought a new edition when he came to us. I conjecture that he missed a few cards when he left the Dominie's school and was taking no risks.

Later on, Hunter Craig came on the scene as a new assistant inspector. He had been an elementary-school teacher himself, and not, like the usual senior inspector, an Oxford graduate who had never taught in his life. Craig was a genial fellow who inspired neither fear nor respect. You could argue with him as an equal, and we all liked him.

I never knew how much my father suffered from his school-board governors. They were mostly farmers, and I recall the chairman coming to sign the register and writing at the bottom "Number present, 98." An odd custom called "The Examination" always followed the H.M.I, inspection. This was the last day before summer holidays, when prizes were given out. The farmers' wives brought bunches of flowers, and school-board members sat in state behind the book-laden table. My father saw to it that every child got a prize. He used to scratch his head when he came to Jake Hanton, and finally would give him a small book with the inscription: "John Hanton, for Reading."

The board chairman began in a businesslike fashion: "James Young, First Prize for geography—that's fine, Jeemy, I'm glad to see you stick to your learning." But after a few books had been given out, the chairman gave up trying to make helpful comments, and simply called out the winner's name when handing out the prize. Examination Day was one of the brightest of the year to us. It meant the' prelude to weeks of freedom when we could catch minnows all day long in the Back Ditch, or go farther afield to the Vinney where we tried to "guddle", to catch trout with our hands—but never got any. We never attempted to use a line and hook, no doubt because they were too expensive.

Many years later when cycling Vinney way as a student, I looked over the bridge and saw my youngest brother Percy with rod and line. I asked him how long he had been standing there. “Two hours,” he said, “and not even a nibble.”

“I’ll show you how to fish,” 1 said, with all the superiority of an elder brother, while casting the line. A trout jumped at it, and I whisked it out.

“That’s how to catch fish,” 1 said, and left him. It was the only fish I ever caught in my life, but to this day I arn sure Percy considered me an expert angler.

We were continually catching minnows with the kitchen drainer. We shoved them into jam jars, and by the time we got home most of them were dead. We knew that the fun was in the catching, so I don’t know why we didn’t throw them back in the water. To see a large stickleback (or red gabbie) struggle in the drainer, would still give me a thrill, only nowadays I’d throw it back.

In our summer excursions, we always took the shortest way. When crossing fields, we fearfully watched the cattle to see if there was a bull among them. None of us had any illusions about bulls; we knew them as dangerous brutes, not to be trusted even when quiet. Farm dogs, too, gave dangerous spice to our adventures, and we grew accustomed to the friendly farmer’s wife who stood at her garden gate and cried: “He winna touch you!” when an evil collie was showing us all his teeth. I learned early in life that a dog never forgets. When

Fraser’s collie was a puppy; I hit it playfully with a half-brick. The collie never forgot, and years later I could not go up to Fraser’s door.

When we first moved to Kingsmuir we had a Newfoundland bitch called Myrtle; that is, my father bought her as a Newfoundland, only to find she was a mongrel. When she was in heat, we had great sport collecting piles of stones and gleefully pelting the suitors who came from neighboring farms— some as far as two miles. We threw lots of stones as boys, but I cannot recollect our ever hitting anything.

We must have displayed more than a little cruelty, yet we never went so far as one or two pathological specimens, who cut off the heads of young birds and blew up toads by sticking straws up their anus. Nor did we ever kick hedgehogs to death as other boys did. Our limit was chasing Bell Hggie’s cat with the Skye Terrier Boulot. We also followed the cattle drovers’ custom of hitting stots (castrated bulls) with sticks. Cattle had a poor time then: at the Forfar mart, the drovers used to twist their tails cruelly, a practice later stopped by law.

We were very unconscious of the reasons for things. Though we saw cattle around us all the time, we never connected them with moneymaking. They were good for round-ing up with a collie dog; a stick sounded lustily against their dung-caked haunches. To us, in fact, they seemed like toys, playthings. Pigs were different. We all knew that Martha Ramsay kept a pig for the bacon and hams, and we were there at first frost when the animal was led out to its death.

The tub of boiling water steamed in the morning frost. The ladder to which the carcass would be strung was against the wall. Ay, and Geordie Marshall stood there with the knife in his hand. Then the screeching began when many hands dragged the beast from its sty. If it was a large pig, some time and energy were needed to get the animal tumbled on its back, ready for the knife at its throat. The holders sprang away at the first spurt o£

blood, and the brute struggled to its feet, taking a few grunting steps- After the gore rushed out in a strong stream, the pig collapsed and all was over, so far as we were concerned. Seeing Marshall rip open the carcass was a secondary excitement. We must have been a morbid lot.

Seeing a hen's neck wrung was almost a daily occurrence. When I was about fourteen, my mother asked me to kill a hen. I had just seen experts kill thousands after the Forfar Christmas sale, and it all seemed too easy. They simply took the fowl by the head, gave it a slight twist, and threw the fluttering thing down. But when I caught the hen, took it by the head, and gave a slight twist—at least so intended—the body went flying over the cabbage patch. 1 stared at a bloody head left in my hand, and suddenly felt rather sick.

Most country people can kill an animal without any feeling; I never acquired the indifference necessary to do the thing well and cleanly. When Boulot the Skye was old and half blind, my mother asked me to kill him with chloroform. I got a bottle from the chemist's, put the dog in an old trunk, and shoved a soaked hankie beside it. I heard the poor brute struggle against the fumes, and in ray excitement upset the bottle on the floor. I knew that 1 could not kill the dog by chloroform. Luckily there had been enough on the hankie to send him to sleep, so I held his head in a pail of water till the bubbles stopped gurgling up. It was a ghastly experience. I buried him "darkly at dead of night" with the wind and rain driving down, and finally crept into the house, feeling more like a murderer than I have ever felt in my life. It was the utter •helplessness of animals about to be killed that shattered me.

Recently, I had to kill a kitten because it was obviously in great pain with some internal inflammation. I used the gas oven as the only painless method I had within reach, but although I knew that death was necessary and a kindness, I had that uncanny sense of guilt that comes from knowing that you have complete power over something weaker than yourself.

We really do attribute humanity to our own animals. They seem different from ordinary beasts, because they have our personalities. When my sister Hilda's pet lamb grew up and had to go away with a flock to the slaughterhouse, I felt—as the whole family did—that it would feel the knife much more than the other sheep. This I truly believed, even though I hated the spoiled brute. Of all animals, a pet lamb seems most objectionable. Within its native stupidity is a queer, demanding sort of arrogance beyond description. Big animals should never be made pets. I have known pet horses; they are always self-willed and unreliable. Pet bulls can be highly dangerous when they grow up. I have never seen a pet pig so don't know what its evil characteristics are.

We had the usual pets as boys, generally rabbits. Like all children, we fed them for a few days and then neglected them. That was to be expected, for a rabbit is the dullest of all pets. Only their sex life really interested us. Now and again we had guinea pigs, and later, homing pigeons. Neilie specialized in "homers," and he and I got much joy from flying them. We learned, however, that their homing instinct is exaggerated. A homer has to be trained, and the usual method is to send it in one direction by rail, beginning with a near station and generally increasing the distances. One can easily train a homer to fly from Carlisle to Land's End, but the chances are that if you send the bird north instead of south, it will not be able to find its way back to Carlisle from Edinburgh. Perhaps sight helps them more than instinct—a guess only, for I am no authority.

Dove-keeping afforded some excitement in raiding other dovecotes. Occasionally, in the wall-dovecote of Findlay the joiner, we would see among all the mongrels a lovely dove with a ring on its leg. Then we would go to Findlay, tell him that one of our doves had got in among his, and could we catch it?

Because he had no interest in doves and no idea of the number he kept, he would give us permission. Later, at dead of night, we would climb up and steal the bird. It was usually a stray, lost in a race, and therefore worthless, but to us it was a thoroughbred. Would a mongrel have a silver ring on its leg? So we'd carry the dove home triumphantly; but the first time we let it out, back to Findlay's dovecote it would fly. Findlay must have got rather tired of our nightly retrievings.

Some of the happiest days of our childhood were spent at the seaside. We were taken by train to Arbroath and then on to Easthaven. We never knew where Easthaven was when we were young; to us it was heaven, to be accepted without thought of criticism. We had rooms in the row of fishermen's cottages, very cheap and very primitive with their old boxed-in beds. To this day I always visit "The Ha'en" when I go north. It is a small bay, and in those days there were many fishing boats on the sand.

This was an ideal spot for children, one of those beaches where low tide shows long stretches of rock pools, whelks and shells, and farther out, lobsters in holes. We bathed—my mother with us in a long gown. She loved the water but never learned to swim. Because her own father had been drowned accidentally, she kept warning us not to go out too far, and in this way gave us a complex about water. None of us learned to swim till much later in life; and although I can swim, I never have that feeling of confidence that the good swimmer has. My fears were attached to my mother. I used to stand on the beach, a miserable little lad of seven or eight, and scream: "Come back, Ma, you'll be drowned!" My father never bathed; he disliked the water and seldom even waded. Willie also disliked bathing, but the rest of us enjoyed it.

Easthaven must have been dull for Father. His one recreation was searching for agate-type pebbles as the tide went out, and many a beauty he found. Later on, after the rock-pool stage, I also took to pebble-finding, and went a step farther than father in grinding and polishing the best ones.

Clunie and I had ambitions. Our first hope was to find a human body in the pools, preferably one that had been long enough in the sea to be half eaten away by sharks. We were indeed a morbid couple. The body did not materialize, and we fell back on a second-best wish: to find a treasure trove washed ashore from some noble galleon. We selected our exact burial spot in the sand where we were to keep our booty a secret from the others until we could dispose of it with great profit. Our imaginations did not go to the length of spending the money.

Searching for buried treasure played a big part in my young life. I remember reading a story in *Chatterbox* about a boy hero who happened to find a secret panel in a room. With his sister, he went down a flight of stairs to find skeletons and treasure in plenty. Clunie and I were not fools enough to imagine there could be any secret passages in our newly built schoolhouse, though we knew of old castles not far away and one day we might . . . But we were never quite sure what we would do or find. The changing sea at Easthaven was never final; tomorrow a high tide might wash in the treasure or, better still, the drowned corpse. We tried to get the fishermen to tell us thrilling tales of wrecks and

sharks, but they were a dull crowd and had no adventures to relate. One old man told us a few tall tales about wrecks and pirates, and then we learned that he had never been to sea in his life.

Time did not exist in Easthaven. There, a week or fortnight was a million years. Time hardly existed anywhere when we were young, and a year seemed a long, long time because we lived every moment of it. Our life was drawn in blacks and whites; there were no grays. We were either up or down, joying or sorrowing.

My mother's constant illness gave me many black days. I was much attached to her, and when she was ill I could not play. Her bilious attacks were generally heralded by severe vomiting. Her face turned a jaundiced yellow, and pain showed in her weary eyes. Only when she got very bad did we tall in the doctor. To poor people, this was the last resort, and my mother nursed us all through the usual epidemics without having the doctor to see us. This time, however, it was often my sad task to go to Forfar for Dr. Wedderburn, a stately old man who drove out with a groom in his spanking gig. He had ushered us all into the world, and apparently at each birth told my mother that her baby was the finest he had ever seen. Mother adored him.

My fear was that my mother would die. Her dreadful stories about stepmothers made me believe a stepmother was a fiend incarnate. Which of the most hateful women in the village, I wondered, would my father marry if he became a widower? It never struck me that he might choose one of the nice ones; and if he did, I knew that even the best of women leather their stepsons. So when I sat by Mother's bed and held her clammy hand, wetting it with my tears, I was vaguely aware that my grief was not wholly disinterested. I kept torturing the poor sufferer with my despairing cry: "Will you die, Ma?"

Sometimes I dried my eyes and stared into the thought of death. One day I said to her: "Won't it be awful for Pa and you when you are both in heaven and we are all in hell?"

"No," she said simply, "for God will change our hearts so that we won't care."

This answer disturbed me greatly, but it did not alter in any way my firm conviction that we children were booked for hell with a single ticket. I never had any doubt about the destination of my parents, although I had grave doubts about the salvation of other adults. When Jake Wilson died, Clunie and I discussed his chances in hushed whispers. Said Clunie:

"I'm sure he's gone to heaven, 'cause he always went to the Sacrament and sometimes to the kirk services."

"But Clunie," I cried, "he swore!"

She considered this for a bit. "Yes, I know he swore, but he didn't mean it."

That comforted me; I was sure that Jake had gone to heaven. But then Clunie frightened me again by bringing forth her accustomed argument that there wasn't a heaven anyway, and maybe no God. I always edged away from her in horror when she began to utter such blasphemies.

## Sex and Hell fire

The Scots religion of my boyhood was a modified Calvinism. I cannot remember ever being taught that the doctrine of predestination separated us forever as sheep and goats, without our having any say in the matter at all. No, we had free will. We could choose heaven or hell, but might reach heaven only after praying to God or Jesus and getting sanction. The road to hell was easy enough. You had only to be a sinner to go there.

I got my emotional religion from the home, not from the kirk. Dr. Caie did not preach heaven and hell. True, he read the lessons, and in the kirk I heard about the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, but old Caie never drew any moral from that. His Christianity was basically a department of social status. Caie was a gentleman who looked it, and his religion was gentlemanly: conventional, skimming the surface, avoiding the grim realities of sin and damnation.

It was Granny, I think now, who kept my parents up to the mark in religion. To her, everything was so simple. Since God's word was inspired—true from first to last—you had only to "believe" and you were safe for heaven. My mother and father stuck to this religion until mellowed by age. Then they lapsed for many years, finding their salvation at last in spiritualism.

We were not specifically taught religion; it was in the air, an atmosphere of negation of life. My father said grace before each meal, but only when my mother was there. It was she who paused after she had served us all with soup. "Now, George," she would say, and he would thank the Lord for His mercies. I can still hear her voice change when she said: "Now, George." It makes me think of the BBC announcer who, after cheerfully telling us about floods in China, suddenly hushes his voice to report; "It is with great regret that we announce the death of . . ."

On Sunday nights, just before bedtime, we had family worship. We all sat around on chairs while my father read a chapter from Scripture. Then, after singing a psalm or a paraphrase, we went down on our knees as he thanked God for sparing and taking care of us, asking him to bless us in all our doings. It was always difficult to restrain our laughter then. Neilie would pinch me, or I would pinch Clunie, and we rammed our mouths hard against the seats to keep from spluttering aloud.

Sunday was a holy day; only necessary work could be done. Our reading was censored, and we had to read our penny bloods within the protective pages of a "good" book. Granny, with her sharp nose for deception, sometimes caught us. All games were taboo; our walks were not much joy. Village boys played football with tin cans on the road, but even these heathens did not play an organized game with a real ball.

Without being told, we knew precisely the milestones on the broad road "that leadeth to destruction." They were sex, stealing, lying, swearing, and profaning God's day. (The last-named included nearly everything that was enjoyable.) I cannot remember that such virtues as obedience and respect were milestones on the other way—the straight and narrow path that "leadeth unto life." At any rate, disobedience did not come into our line of vision; we were too well trained to attempt it.

When I was thirteen, two itinerant preachers came to Kingsmuir, pilgrims from the Faith Mission. They were breezy, hand-slapping optimists, always bright and merry. Indeed, you almost forgot that these were *fared* men until they interjected a "save the Lord" into their ordinary conversation. The pilgrims became unpaying lodgers in our

home, and we must have resented their presence, for when Boulot took a chunk out of the leg of the more cheerful one, we were decidedly pleased.

The whole family trooped to their meetings in the school. The Mission's gospel was simplicity itself: We were born in sin and doomed to eternal torment. *But*—there was a way to escape it—the only way. All we had to do was stand up in the meeting and say fervently: "Lord, I believe," and we would be washed automatically in the blood of the lamb. My father stood up, then my mother, and the pilgrims praised the Lord. Clunie was also saved, but I couldn't bring myself to stand up, though I tried hard. Lying in bed after the meeting, I would say over and over again with fearsome passion: "Oh Lord, help me to believe."

Someone had told me that the human heart was like a fiddle with millions of strings, many as thin as a spider's web, and if one string were to break, death would be instantaneous. When I felt I could not believe, 1 suddenly thought of this, and terror seized me in its icy grip: I may die before morning, before I can stand up and give my testimony that I am saved. Yet even in subsequent meetings, I could never do so. Clunie very soon lapsed from salvation and was highly sarcastic about the whole affair. She and I tittered when village reprobates stood up and told how they had been washed in the blood. Within a week of the pilgrims' departure, the whole village had reverted to its sinful ways, and old Dave went on singing his drunken way home every Saturday night.

But Father was a changed man. He bought up all the old books of sermons he could find in the penny trays at the secondhand bookshops, and announced that he would carry on the salvation meetings at the school every Sunday. We had to attend, but we realized that he had not the fire and the quick repartee of the original pilgrims. He did not give up his eldership of the old kirk, although he shook his head sadly over the deadness of what passed for religion there. This phase lasted perhaps a year, then the meetings stopped, and apparently my father was no longer saved. His father's death may have had something to do with it.

Old William MacNeill was no religious man—I knew that because he once had honed his razor on a Sunday—and when he died, I was a little perturbed about his future. I timidly mentioned this to my father as we walked to evening service.

"Will grandpa go to heaven?" I asked. "He was a good man but he wasn't saved, was he?"

"Maybe—" answered my father in an embarrassed sort of way, "maybe there are lots of things we don't know. Your grandfather was an upright, sober man, a man who never spoke an ill word against anyone." It was clear to me then that he had begun to doubt the efficacy of being saved.

Death cast a dark shadow over our lives. In a small village of many funerals, each was an event, a form of grim entertainment. The plumed hearse, with carriages behind it, drew up before the bereaved home. The minister read a short, tear-compelling service in the parlor while the coffin was being carried out to the hearse. In small cottages, a window had to be taken out, for it was impossible to get a coffin through the door. The women of the family did not go to the burial, but stood at the gate wiping their eyes until the last carriage had disappeared over Bunker Brae. Every blind in the village was drawn, and

women stood at their doors and sighed, saying, “Ay, but he was a guid body.” They said that even when the most hated person in the village was buried.

The first funeral I recall attending was that of my younger brother George. His illness had been diagnosed as water on the brain. I cannot recollect having any special emotion about George, but wept in sympathy with others I saw weeping at his funeral. When the first spadeful of earth sounded hollowly on the little coffin, I shuddered. Granny Sinclair’s burial at Rose-bank Cemetery in Leith was a more pleasant affair, for it meant a trip by train to Edinburgh. My Uncle Neil, her grief -stricken youngest son, was a teetotaler, so could not join the subsequent pub crawl, in which some of the mourners got exceeding merry. Although allowed only lemonade as a boy, I became infected with their gaiety. As mentioned earlier, a relieved feeling resembling pleasure always came over me after family funerals. It began as we left the graveyard, and was intensified when I returned to the room where the coffin had stood on two dining chairs.

Death, to us, was more than the ugliness of the grave. It meant the great judgment, a kind of grand “school inspection” which I, for one, expected to fail, for my copybook was all blots. Knowing that I would roast in the burning fire for eternity, I tried to figure how long eternity might be. It was appalling to think that I would go on burning for millions of years.

In my early teens, I began to have a phobia about disease. I pored over medical books and, like Jerome K. Jerome, the playwright and humorist, had every disease in the books. A pimple on my face spelled smallpox. A student we knew had just died of inflammation of the bowels—appendicitis, it must have been, but that disease was not known then. At once, I felt a pain in my belly, and was certain that God would deal me a similar death.

Feverishly seeking some of Granny’s religious books for salvation, I had the dire misfortune to come across the story of a bad man who suffered paroxysms on his deathbed.

“It will soon be over,” he said, groaning.

“Nay,” said the stern minister who stood at his deathbed, “the agony is just beginning.”

I have often wondered why each of us was affected in a different way by the unholy beast we knew as religion. It did not seem to have any effect on Willie. He entered the church later, not because he was ever religious—but because it offered a job. He had no fears of death and hell that I ever saw. My next brother, Neilie, seemed also to escape religion’s dire influence, and Clunie, as already mentioned, was frankly skeptical. I alone appeared to have taken as my burden the sins of the whole family.

Mingled with ray fear of death was a strange, contradictory element of taking risks. We boys had competitions to see who could run over the Black Box, a viaduct spanning the deep ravine of the railway. A fall would have meant death or serious injury; yet, with the others, I went over again and again, running or attempting to run on the edge of a two-inch plank. We took risks on the railway itself, bragging about how long we could stay on the ties when the train was approaching. We put pins on the tracks and barely sprang to safety. We climbed trees without any fear, but fear became associated with trees when Eck Hutcheon broke his neck raiding Findlay’s gean (wild cherry) tree. Frank Craik and I debated solemnly about Eck’s destination; Frank thought he had gone to

heaven because he was a nice loon, but I was not so sure. A fearful thunderstorm came on as his funeral procession went down the road, and Frank told me I had been right after all, for the thunderstorm was cleat proof that God was sending Eck to the burning fire.

Thunderstorms terrified me as a boy. Granny told me very early in my youth that thunder was God's voice in wrath, and knowing well that it was me he was angry with, I fled from thunderstorms like a frightened rabbit. My parents must have been afraid also, for during a storm there was always a hushed atmosphere in the house and my father had a violent headache. I was always scared, yet disappointed after the storm that no one had been killed. Clunie shared this morbid desire with me, and we sometimes made a list of the people we'd like to be struck down by lightning.

Old Nanzy Tarn, the sweetshop wifie, told us she had once seen a baby killed by lightning that had come down the chimney. "It was like wadding [cotton wool!, soft like butter: ye could put yer finger on its belly and it went in just like that," and she demonstrated on a cushion. We liked that story, and wondered how far we could press our finger into the belly of the fattest woman in the village if she were killed by a flash. We feared dearh but we jested at it.

One of my worries was the danger of sudden death, the most frightful of all, because there would be no time to repent. Consumption seemed an ideal death, with months to repent in, but poor Eck Hutcheon had had to go to his Maker without one second to cry: "Oh, God, forgive me my sins."

Softening our fear of death was a half-formed scheme to play with the devil until the last moment, and then, by a rapid repentance, slink through the Golden Gate before God could change his mind about pardon. In this respect, the thief on the Cross was an example to us. But the insinuating thought of sudden death could not be got rid of, and our playing with the devil was never a soul-free enjoyment. The devil was sex.

My earliest memory of sex is a nursery incident when I was six and Clunie only five. We had stripped and were examining each other with great interest and considerable sexual excitement. The door opened, and Mother caught us. She gave us both a severe beating, then made us kneel down to ask God's forgiveness. Later, when Father came home, he took up the cudgels and spanked us again. I was then locked in the big dark dining room. So I learned that of all sins, sex was the most heinous.

This incident affected my life for many years, not only forcing me to associate sex with sin but also giving me a fixation on Clunie, who was connected with the forbidden fruit. There were later sexual adventures with Clunie, but she always had a bad conscience afterward and told Mother, and I got thrashed every time. Only once did I escape a thrashing after Clunie's tale-telling, when Willie was in on it, too—indeed, had suggested our wrongdoing. As the oldest, Willie got all the blame. Being the favorite, however, he was never punished for anything.

A few years later, I went through a period of having hidden adventures with girls behind school doors. We were never discovered, though most of the other boys knew; in fact, they were jealous, because the girls said that I tickled them best. Another memory is my unsuccessful attempt at intercourse with a very sexy girl when I was about eleven.

Naturally, we never had any sexual instruction at home. My mother went on having babies, and we took it for granted that the doctor was bringing them, for Mother could not

tell us lies. Other boys told us the truth, or rather, many half-truths; and by keeping rabbits and seeing farm animals, we knew that the young came out of their mothers. But we never applied this knowledge to Mother. I must have been about eight when I saw Father go into the water closet one day. At first, I stared at him iti surprise; I knew he couldn't do dirty things; and finally concluded that he must be going to clean it out. So when we heard the man's part in making a baby, I simply did not believe that, either. My parents were pure and holy; they could never, never do a thing like that.

Willie went off to school in Edinburgh, and when he came home for holidays he regaled us with dirty stories of all kinds. We thought ourselves very sophisticated but still dared not face the application of sex to our own parents. They were overmodest always; nakedness was awful. Except for Clunie, I never saw my sisters naked; and if anyone came into my bedroom when I was dressing, I hastily covered my body with anything I could seize. Later, as a twenty-five-year-old student in Edinburgh, I got into the habit of having a cold bath each morning. On holidays, I got my mother to throw a bucket of cold water over me while I sat in a tub, because our home had no bathroom. Mother did this cheerfully but Clunie told me that my father strongly disapproved.

For any sexual offense in school, my father always gave a savage punishment. I remember his giving Jock Ross six with the cane, on his hand held down on the desk, for pretending to drop his slate pencil while taking the occasion to put his hand up a girl's petticoats.

I cannot recollect our ever mentioning masturbation, or for that matter, practicing it. There are a few score slang terms for masturbation, but we did not know one of them. I know enough about psychology to realize that there may be some sort of repressive forgetting here, but to the best of my memory we did not masturbate either singly or mutually.

We did have a habit that we called "looking" each other. We would lay a smaller boy on his back and open his fly, but that was always a collective practical joke. From the age of seven and a half, I slept in a bed with Willie and Neilie, who resented my presence strongly. This arrangement came about after my ejection from the bed I shared with Clunie, by an irate mother who again had discovered us doing things we shouldn't have. My brothers never let me forget my unwelcome intrusion or the circumstances which led to it.

Masturbation must have been known to me all the same, for I was chided one day by my father for making the dog Boulot jump on my arm. I also have a vague memory of Neilie and me being in a locked room, and Uncle Neil demanding entrance. When we let him in, he looked at us in a leering way and said: "Aha, showing birdies!" We were most indignant, a circumstance that to any self-respecting psychoanalyst would have denoted our guilt.

Castration of sheep and cattle and horses was, of course, known to us all in a farming environment. The farmers called this "libbing," and a threat to "lib" us was a favorite joke of some of the plowmen. To us, the laugh behind the threat possibly made it a pleasurable thrill, though I remember that Jeemie Barclay, the village softie, used to go into extreme panic at the threat of libbing.

I don't think that my schoolfellows suffered much from sexual repressions. Some came from homes where the parental language was obscene. The illegitimate ones did not seem to mind, for the bastard was no inferior in Kingsmuir. Fornication was common between plowmen and servant lassies, and getting in the family way seemed just as common. But the most moral, condemning women in the village were always those who had had bastards themselves.

We all knew juicy verses of that delightfully obscene ballad *The Ball* o' *Kirriemuir,* which told of an occasion when-some wag doped the liquor with an aphrodisiac. It was a strong ballad, Elizabethan in its honest bawdiness, redolent of the sex that springs from the soil. Obscene it may have been, but its ribaldry was of much higher essence than that of the sophisticated commercial-traveler story.

My position was a most difficult one. When I spoke dialect outside the house, I shared the villagers' open view of sex; when I spoke English and became respectable upon crossing the threshold of the schoolhouse, I had to put away all openness of mind concerning sex language and practice. At one and the same time, I strove to serve the God of the home and the Devil of the village. It simply could not be done. I fled from raw sex into the realm of idealistic sex.

## Earning a Living

When I was fourteen, my father decided to send Neilie and me out to work, Neilie was doing no good at the Academy, and I had been learning nothing at Kingsmuir School. When Father asked us what we wanted to be in life, Neilie replied, "A sheep farmer," and I, "an engine driver." "Ugh," said my father in disgust, "you'll both go into offices."

Father was what my mother called a "flee about." He had changing enthusiasms about jobs, and his advice was nearly always bad. When Pat Craik came home on holiday from London, he was doing well in wholesale drapery. "Trade is the thing," said my father, and planned to make us drapers. But a week later, Willie Adam came home on holiday, and he was flourishing in the Civil Service. Thereupon, Father forgot about the merits of trade and ordered us to prepare for the Boy Clerks' entrance examination. We always hated Willie Adam's visits, for they meant weeks of dull work, doing sums, reading unreadable manuscripts, and cramming geography. The Civil Service exams were competitive, and Father knew in his heart that Neilie and I could never get in. So he returned to the idea of our becoming trade clerks.

At that time, we did not know who or what lay behind Father's eagerness to get us out working. It was Willie throwing away money at St. Andrews University—Willie dancing in hard-boiled shirts, going to special dinners, carousing with the other divinity students. Ever and again came wires saying simply: "Send more tin—Willie," and as more tin vanished, my parents got grumpier and grumpier, working out their ill tempers on us.

I recall a Saturday when they took a cheap trip to St. Andrews. Not expecting anyone, and with many things under foot, Willie spoke to them only a minute before rushing off. They came home in a tearing rage, and my mother gave Clunie a hiding for something of no importance. Since we understood the reason for the bad atmosphere, we hated Willie. Clunie, especially, was bitter about his extravagance: she saw things more incisively than the rest of us.

It now became evident that Neilie and I had to go away and earn a living. Neilie got a job as a clerk in a Leith flour mill; three months later, I received a reply to one of my many letters replying to advertisements in *The Scotsman.* My handwriting was good at that time, and I had penned my applications in a slow hand that attempted to be copperplate. To this day I can write beautifully when I try to—an accomplishment that is sneered at by more recent generations.

Copperplate has often been condemned on the ground that it does not show character, but why should it? I have in my possession a postcard from Bernard Shaw and two letters from Barrie; if handwriting betrays character, then Shaw was a cross between a hidebound schoolmaster and a stupid boy of ten, while Barrie was a congenital idiot. Good handwriting is something handsome to look at, and much of the criticism leveled against it comes from a realization that it is too difficult an art for the critic to attempt.

The letter in answer to my application informed me that I had been appointed a very junior clerk in the office of W. & B, Cowan, Ltd., gas-meter manufacturers in Edinburgh. My feelings were mixed. I was now to be freed forever from studying Latin grammar, but against that weighed the knowledge that I also was to be freed from play and bird-nesting and catching minnows. However, I set off boldly enough. I was to lodge with Neilie in Leith. Neilie earned fifteen shillings a week, and I was to earn six. The landlady's son, a young man with a pessimistic view of life, shared our bedroom.

Cowan's works were two miles away—mostly uphill—in Buccleuch Street, on the other side of Edinburgh. I had to start off early in the morning, and was always late, so frequently had to take the tram. In those days, the trams were all drawn by horses. My difficulty was financial. I could afford three pence for lunch, but if I took the tram, that left me with only a penny for food. For a time, I solved the question by-strategy. When the car left Pilrig, I noticed that the conductor went on top. If I jumped on while he was up there, I almost always got halfway up Leith Walk before the sight of his boots on the stair signaled me to leave the car. When I was too slow, I asked for a ticket to Leith. "Wrong direction," he would say, and I would give a surprised: "Oh," hurriedly jump off, and wait for the next car with a conductor on top. Unfortunately, the conductors got to know me, and I had to give up this easy mode of travel.

Cowan's was one long misery to me. I did not labor in the central office, but in a dark evil-smelling hole of an office in the middle of the works. There I lived in a stink of solder and paint and gas. My happiest moments were those in which I was sent to find someone in the works. I loitered with the workmen, and then got sworn at when I returned to the office. The only redeeming feature about it all was status: I was addressed as mister. The clerks always addressed each other as Mr. So-and-So, and they all wore bowler hats. I wore a cap but it was disapproved of.

For the first time in my life, I experienced homesickness. I kept writing miserable letters to the family until finally my mother came to see me for two days. I clung to her in bitter tears and implored her to take me home with her. She told me that that was impossible, and when she left, my homesickness was almost unbearable; I addressed business envelopes and wet them with my tears. My senior clerk, a man called Wilson, was very sympathetic and kind to me, and on that occasion, took over the addressing chore for me.

Neilie lost his job. It proved too difficult for a boy of sixteen, and he went home, leaving me alone. After being in Edinburgh three months, I was allowed to go home at New Year's for four days. I could not enjoy a minute, however, because my thoughts kept turning to the misery that would lie before me when I got back to Edinburgh. After seven months, I was allowed to return home permanently. I still remember the embarrassment of that homecoming, a shame at not having been able to stick it out. When one farmer remarked in company that "thae Neills canna bide at nithing," Neilie and I blushed.

Why was I taken back? I do not know. No doubt my parents had tired of my despairing letters, though there might have been another reason, too. I had written to my father, telling him that the chances of promotion were very poor in Cowan's, and that my future would be much brighter if I came home and studied hard for the Civil Service. From the hell that was Edinburgh, sitting in Kingsmuir schoolhouse all day long seemed like paradise. And 1 think I truly believed that once home, I should study all the time.

Neilie and I were set down again to study for the Civil Service—Men Clerks this time. But history repeated itself: we could not concentrate. One night in despair, my father threw our textbooks at us and said he gave up. "They're just fit for nothing, Mary."

But Johnston the chemist needed an apprentice, and my father fixed things up that I should begin work there on the following Monday. During the week, however, another local firm advertised for an apprentice—Anderson and Sturrock, drapers—and my father's plans rapidly altered: Neilie would be the chemist, and I the draper. So early on the Monday morning we walked to Forfar to our new jobs.

My duty each morning was to get the shop key at the proprietor's house, and be down in time to open up at eight. Then, with another apprentice, I had to sweep the shop. We sprinkled it with a watering can to keep down the dust, and I learned that a broom sweeps cleanest if the bristles are reversed. Most of my work was delivering parcels. One day, I had to walk a mile with a penny packet of pins that one of the upper-class ladies of the town would not carry. I learned never to expect a tip from the rich, but the poor always gave me a penny or tuppence for delivering their parcels. One of my jobs, to stand in the windows and clean them with whiting, touched the Snobbish aspect of my upbringing. I really was ashamed of being in retail trade, and used to hide behind the whitened part of the windowpane if any of the better people were passing.

Snobbery also had its way in my idealization of women, which commenced at this period. I did not idealize common girls; I aimed higher. The girl I loved was always quite unattainable, always in a rank of society far above mine. Forfar, like every other town in the world, had its social structure, with very definite lines of demarcation between classes. If a girl went to Miss Smith's private school she was a superior being, and naturally, at my stage of lowly occupation, I found my objects of worship among the Miss Smith clientele. I say *objects,* for the admired one was never a constant. Today it might be Cis Craik; tomorrow, Jean Gray.

There was nothing consciously sexual about this. Even in imagination, I never thought of kissing them. I was satisfied to have seen them pass in the street; and if the adored one happened to glance in my direction, my joy was complete. Sometimes I made detours round by the Lour Road when delivering my parcels, hoping to get one glance at Jean

Gray. One day when I met her, she looked absolutely beautiful in a Urge sun hat, with her little tilted nose and her bright eyes. My face must have paled with excitement.

Of course, this idealization was the result of the beatings I had received for what might be called sex in the raw; but even at this period, I was having quite earthly adventures with village girls whose feet did not turn the daisies into roses. The two interests never met; they existed in separate compartments, or rather, they were parallel lines that never met.

I hated the drapery business. I was on my feet from seven-thirty in the morning to eight in the evening, and then had the two-mile walk home. Since I wore heavy boots, my big-toe joints got inflamed and gradually stiffened—their condition to this day. My toes got so bad in fact that I had to give up the job. This I did gladly, vowing to my father that now I had acquired sense, I would slave at the Civil-Service exam. Poor Neilie had no excuse for giving up his chemist's apprenticeship; and for four long years he went back and forth, hating it all the time.

The old problem had arisen again. My concentration was no better than it had ever been, and for the third time my father despaired of me. This time he really gave me up, he said, and I stared gloomily into the future, seeing myself as a good-for-nothing tramp, wondering whether I would fail as an ordinary plowman. My one ambition was to be a minister like Willie. I pictured myself in the pulpit delivering wonderful sermons in a kirk that was crowded to the doors, but preaching to only one: to Jean Gray of the great sun hat, which shaded the eyes fixed in holy admiration upon the handsome young minister. Violet Jacob's *Tarn i' the Kirk* is a pure joy to me, because it so passionately sums up the Scots religion-sex constellation. The dream was there and the reality did not disturb it—the reality that the ministry could only be reached through long, hard study.

"The boy's just hopeless," said my father gloomily.

"He might be a teacher," ventured my mother.

"It's about all he's fit for," said my father grimly, and without a smile.

Now that Father had given me up, Mother stepped in. She pointed out that no other teacher had as many classes as he had, and "Really, George, you need a pupil teacher." I knew that my father wasn't keen about it, but somehow she got him to broach the subject to the school-board clerk, and in due time I was appointed P. T., a student teacher, in Kingsmuir School. There I served an apprenticeship of four years. Though it is hard to recall my days in the school, I must have taken classes to relieve my father, for *I* do remember teaching small boys and girls to read by the look-and-say method. I found that the best way to learn anything is to teach it, and soon I could string off nearly every town, cape and river in the whole world, as well as the exports of Peru or the imports of China. I think I learned my profession well, for I copied my father, and he was a good teacher—good in the sense that he could draw out rather than stuff in. Father still disliked me apparently, and was inclined to treat me more like a pupil than a student teacher. Though he never ticked me off in front of my pupils, I was still afraid of him.

After his second year, according to student-teacher rules, the apprentice sat for his first examination—a small affair set by the school inspector. Then, at the end of his fourth year, came the King's Scholarship, or normal exam, that decided whether he would become a normal student or not. Passing with a First Class automatically made him a

normal student, to be trained for two years in Glasgow or Edinburgh. If there were enough vacancies, a Second Class might get a student in; a Third completely disqualified him.

My exam by the inspector at the end of my second year was not encouraging, "This candidate," said the report, "is warned that his work all round is weak." My father seemed more ashamed than angry with me.

When I took the normal exam at the end of my apprenticeship, I came out Third Class, nearly bottom of the list. I was about nineteen then, and recall sitting in our conspicuous pew the next Sunday wondering if the congregation knew what a dunce I was. My father rather thoughtlessly nudged me and remarked that Nora Stewart was in the choir; Nora had taken the same exam and passed First Class.

In all my adversities Clunie comforted me, and on this occasion, gave me a list of great men who had failed in examinations. She herself, clever in learning as she was, failed the normal exam a year later. When anyone failed to get into the Normal Training College, he became an "ex-Pupil Teacher," but by passing two other exams, could get a teacher's certificate —again a class affair, First, Second, or Third. Then one became an authorized teacher but untrained, and therefore much inferior to a teacher who had gone through the Normal College. A man who managed to procure only a Third Class in the certificate exam ranked as the lowest worm in the educational garden; he had no chance of getting promotion, and was likely to remain an underpaid assistant all his days.

My student-teacher days are mostly a blank to me now, though photographs of school groups show me standing stiffly with a very high choker collar. I look back on my position as a difficult one, for I had to be on the side of authority before my own desire to play had been lived out. It was the role of a boy pretending to be a man.

## Pursuing Society and Culture

When I was about seventeen, my social ambitions began to seek a tangible outlet. As children of a teacher, our social status was very poor, and the best families in Forfar did not "know" us. Furthermore, we had no money and could not entertain or attend social functions. We realized we were outsiders. Willie and Neilie did not care, for they weren't snobs, and besides, Willie had his own society at the university. I aimed high. Neilie and I joined a small group calling itself the Graphic Arts Club, which suited Neilie, because he was a real artist, and me, as a possible door to society, I drew a little, mostly copies of Charles Dana Gibson women, but was never an artist, then or later. We drew in charcoal on brown paper, using models who generally came from the poorhouse. One club lady took an interest in me, and she and her sisters were very kind, inviting me to their house for croquet or supper. I was very ignorant of social behavior, and had some difficult moments with, what seemed to me, an abnormal number of knives and forks. I hastily bought a book on etiquette, which hardly helped, for it concentrated too much on how to address bishops and princes. For many years after, an elaborate dinner table made me nervous. My first acquaintance with a finger bowl was touch and go, but luckily I did not drink the water. A separate crescent plate for the salad proved another stumbling block. I thought it was for my bread and treated it accordingly; then discovered its true function, and sat very, very red throughout dinner.

Drawing-room behavior meant nothing to me. I was unaware that one stood up when a lady entered or left a room; had no idea that during afternoon tea, you held your tiny bit of cake in your saucer and not on your knee. I learned my lessons well, however, and in a short time murmured a conventional thank-you after a lady had played a Chopin waltz on the piano.

Behind this social maneuvering of mine there was a subtle plan: one day I might meet a girl I worshiped. Her name varied from time to time, but her class did not. Tennyson's *Maud,* which I read and reread at this time, became a symbol embracing the several ideals of beauty in the upper circles of the town. Unfortunately, the Mauds were not interested in books and music, and I did not meet them. But I did get myself introduced to the lovely Jean Gray. That was a sad happening, because our proximity deprived her of her golden glory, and I had to seek another, really unattainable object.

I must have been a most objectionable prig and humbug during this period of my life. Still, something was gained from it. I heard good music for the first time in that prerecord, pre-radio era. In the beginning, I listened to Chopin and Schumann because it was the correct thing to do, but the time carne when I listened because the music itself brought me joy. I cannot recall learning much of other cultural matters. When books were touched upon in conversation, I sat silent lest I should betray my ignorance. One day when someone asked me who my favorite author was, I answered "Durnas," pronouncing the final "s." "You mean 'Dumah,' "said a superior man present, and I reddened and inwardly kicked myself because I had never read a word of Dumas anyway. Even so, I was slowly developing a certain literary taste at home. Willie brought us books of poetry—*modem* poetry, as we called it then. He introduced me to the majestic beauty of "The Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson, and the queer, haunting rhythm of Meredith's "Love in the Valley."

Willie himself was a lad of varied talents, and had a great influence on my development. His style in drawing was original if somewhat stiff, and for years the St. Andrews University magazine used his design with his pseudonym "Nil" on its cover. He wrote neat triplets and sonnets, and his prose was good. But while he read voluminously, he never seemed to assimilate ideas. He showed no interest in politics or science, and avoided discussion and argument. I cannot remember his having a sense of humor. Yet I imitated Willie for years. If he was a minister, I would become a minister. If he edited his university magazine at St. Andrews, I would edit mine in Edinburgh. If he drew with pen and ink, I drew with pen and ink. Willie's only interest I didn't copy was writing poetry, for I never wrote a line of verse in my life.

My efforts to become a pianist reached their peak at the age of seventeen. All the other children had been sent to study music—Willie, the fiddle; the rest, piano. Neilie took piano lessons for about four years, and when they were ended, forsook the piano forever. Why I alone received no music teaching, I do not know. Every now and again, however, I would decide to learn by myself. For a few days, with the aid of something called *Hemy's Tutor,* which I bought or borrowed, my fingers would laboriously pick out the scale with one finger— "Every Good Boy Deserves Favor," By seventeen, I had beaten all my previous records; it took a whole week to convince me that anything more was hopeless. I have often wished halfheartedly that I had been taught to play, knowing that if music had

been strong in me, I would have learned in spite of all difficulties; but knowing, too, that I could never have been anything more than a mediocre musician.

During my student-teaching days, I met a man who made mathematics live for me. He was Ben Thomson, the maths master at the Academy, and later its rector. When I went to him for private tuition, he gave me a genuine love for the subject, which explains why I belong to that rare breed of people able to while away a railway journey doing algebraic and geometrical problems. Ben was a staunch friend. He gave me most of the lessons free of charge, and years later would help me by post when I had difficulties with the subject. I regret that he never wrote a textbook, for his way of presenting maths was unique. I kept telling him he should do this, and my last request reached him shortly before his sudden death. Forfar Academy in his time turned out many brilliant mathematicians.

I have said that I was not a reader. Nevertheless, I must have read quite a lot in the practice-teaching period, and recall borrowing many books from the Meffan Library, mostly fiction. I reveled in the whimsical sentimentality of Bacrie's novels, identifying myself with his Sentimental Tommy. Again and again I cycled to his Thrums (Kirriemuir, seven miles away), and sitting in the den, tried, not very successfully, to people it with his characters. Kirriemuir was on the way to Memus where the Craig family lived in the Free Kirk Manse. The Craig girls were an original, unconventional lot, gaily flirting but always keeping just out of reach. They kept sentiment at arm's length with a laugh, and were good companions rather than love objects. The oldest became a household word: every British housewife knows Elizabeth Craig as an authority on cooking. I haven't met her since those days.

Willie had taught us that there were two kinds of girls; the kind you had to be introduced to, and the kind you picked up. According to Willie, the latter were easily the more interesting. During the summer season, they could be seen in pairs, parading the beach at Carnoustie or the streets of Kirriemuir.

Much experience was needed to know which pairs were pick-upable and which were not. If our "Good Evening," met no response except a haughty, withering glance, we concluded there was nothing doing; although we recognized a type who used the withering tactics to increase our effort. Almost invariably, one girl was pretty and the other plain. Whichever elder brother I was with, he naturally took it for granted that I should go off with the plain one, an assumption that did not appeal to me. Sometimes I would get in first, make off with the beauty, and then spend the cycling way home having bitter arguments about sportsmanship.

These flirtations were mostly superficial affairs, sitting on a bench in the dusk hugging and kissing. The truth is that we had very little success with our pick-ups, either because we looked poor and country bumpkinish, or, more likely, because the really attractive girls had plenty of followers and did not need to go looking for strays. Living two miles out of town and not being recognized by the town's social sets, we knew no girls, and our picking-up was as much the result of needing female companionship as it was of starving for sex.

About this time, I read an upsetting little book by Richard Le Gallienne—*The Quest of the Golden Girl*—whose heroine was a prostitute. The girls I picked up were never golden; they were not even base metal. They simply played at love, and most of them feared that things would go too far. The average pick-up led one on for a certain length,

then hastily said it was time she went home, and ran away. I suppose she was looking for a Golden Boy and was as disappointed with the reality as we were. We took our failures lightly, and rode home late at night feeling healthy and happy. Tomorrow was a new day. Tomorrow we'd try Montrose or Arbroath for a new romance. I was talking to Neilie about these days years later, and we agreed that the happiest memory of that period was the long ride up the hill to the Jubilee Arms at Cortachy, with the thirsty vision of the bottle of Bass we were to have at the top. We did not smoke in those days. Where we got the money to buy even a bottle of beer, I cannot remember, though it was cheap in those days—three pence, I think. Whiskey cost three shillings a bottle; and Gold Flake cigarettes, sixpence for twenty.

My ambitions seem to have been latent at this time. The future did not exist for me, possibly because 1 dared not contemplate a future as an unsuccessful teacher with no hope of promotion. What I daydreamed about is long forgotten. By this time, religion had become an empty, outside thing, and ray churchgoing had only one object: to see the girls. I sang in the choir, but although I had a good ear and could sing anything in tune, my voice lacked strength, and I never became a permanent member. I enjoyed choir practice once a week and sang lustily the bass of the anthems, but always timidly, a tenth of a tone behind the leader: one of my phobias was to be singing an anthem to a full congregation and coming in at the wrong time. Excellent orchestral performers have told me that this is a frequent nightmare.

## A Young Dominie

When my apprenticeship ended, I applied for jobs, and finally got one in Bonnyrigg near Edinburgh at fifty pounds a year. The school was run by an old lady called Miss Mac-Kinley, who looked like an eagle and was a very stern disciplinarian. After the laxity of my father's school, it was a great shock to find myself suddenly in a school where the children were not allowed to talk in class. I was ordered to thrash any child who even whispered, and did so because I was really scared of the old woman. I stood it for two months and then got a better job at sixty pounds a year in Kingskettle in Fife.

If anything, the discipline of Kettle school was worse than that of Bonnyrigg. For three years, I had to be the sternest of taskmasters. The room used by Caldei, the headmaster, was separated from mine by a glass partition, and his sharp eye could see everything that went on. For three years, I did my work with fear in my heart. Calder never relaxed: he kept me at arm's length, and all my attempts to approach the human side of him were frozen by his stony stare. Yet, in a queer sort of way, I felt that he liked me; and also in a queer sort of way, I liked him in spite of my fear. Calder's teaching methods were surprising to me. When he gave his class a test in arithmetic, he slowly worked out every problem on the blackboard first; then the children worked out the same problems in their books. Only the very stupid ones got the answers wrong under such a system, and God help them when they did, for the headmaster wielded a fierce strap and laid on heavily. The H.M.I, gave Calder excellent reports—because he kept excellent whiskey, the cynics said.

Kingskettle remained a horror to me. There must have been times during those three years when I was happy, but the main memory is one of fear; fear of being late in the mornings, fear of having my class examined by Calder, fear o£ him when he leathered

the poor ones who could not learn. I realized that if I had been his pupil, I would have been strapped every day. My father had never been that strict. True, he had strapped often and sometimes hard, but there was in his school a certain freedom, freedom to laugh and chat and carve your name on the desk. We never had to match in or out like soldiers.

Kettle school was like a new world to me. There was no laughter in the school save when Calder made one of his oft-repeated jokes at the expense of a pupil- All pupils moved in military style; and everyone, including myself, was insincere, inhuman, fearful. Calder was my first contact with a real army disciplinarian. 1 had heard of the type—a few notorious ones existed in Forfar—and they all had a common characteristic: they were all men of small stature. One interesting point about Calder was his habit of always writing very slowly in copperplate. Even if he made a pencil note, it was beautifully written. Practically every pupil in the school could write well, too.

Once I took Calder's senior drawing class in his room, while he stood doing his registers at the desk. The lesson was given in dead silence, but when he went over to his house, hell broke loose, and I could hardly keep even the pretense of discipline. But I never reported the ringleaders to Calder when he returned. I tried to teach designing, with flowers and leaves as bases, and some pupils brought forth rather good, balanced patterns of the wallpaper type. These designs were the only original work ever allowed in school, for even an essay was first written on the blackboard by Calder and then copied by the class.

Calder was unhealthy, kept having painful boils on the back of his neck, and was quite unable to carry on his work for weeks at a time. During such periods, I was in complete charge of the school. I enjoyed these times, even though it was not an easy matter to keep order; not that I tried very much, knowing well that the moment Calder came back, his army discipline would grip the pupils automatically.

My farm lodging cost me fourteen shillings a week, and the wife of the farmer, Mrs. Tod, gave me more than my money's worth. The food was excellent—I can still remember the cream, so thick that it had to be raked out with a teaspoon. I was treated like a member of the family, which included a daughter and two sons. Will, the elder, had been to sea; at that time, indeed, was an unemployed ship's engineer. I called him Sir Oracle, for he laid down the law about everything and everybody. He believed that no conversation was of any value unless it contained a sequence of what he called "smart things," and I thought him a witty lad. Will made me feel like a very unsophisticated person when he talked about what he had seen on his voyages, and what sins he had committed in foreign ports. Looking back now, I am inclined to think he exaggerated more than a little.

He had a lovely bass voice, and 1 liked to hear him sing "Out on the Deep" while his sister Aggie, who also had a fine voice, accompanied him on the piano. But he always broke down with coughing after the first verse, for he had been thrown down by an express train when a schoolboy and his heart had been affected. He did not live long, nor did his younger brother Walter, who was a simpler soul than man-of-the-world Will. I liked Wattie. He tried to sing in a small croaky voice, but always broke off and laughed at himself. He was a dear laddie, and when he died not long after I left Kettle, I suffered genuine grief.

Wattie belonged to the volunteers and persuaded me to join. That was good fun. Once a week we put on our khaki uniforms and were driven in a wagonette to headquarters some miles away, or to the rifle range up on the Falkland Hills. Our usual driver, Geordie Henderson, was landlord of the local hotel and a real character. We laughed at his efforts to talk like an educated man. When Kettle Farm caught fire and Geordie had to take charge as captain of the fire brigade, he wanted volunteers to come and man the pump. "Come away. Gentlemen," he cried, "come away and call the pimp."

My first visit to the rifle range was thrilling. When I lay down at a hundred yards, never having fired a rifle in my life, and I had four bull's-eyes in succession, the officer in charge got much excited. "At last," he cried, "I've got a marksman in my company. Come back to the five-hundred-yards and have a shot there." Proud as Punch, I went to the five-hundred-yards' stance—or was it *butt'?*—and took a long and steady aim. I missed the target completely, and went on missing ft completely, till the disappointed captain gruffly told me not to waste any more good ammunition.

Volunteering was a picnic until we went to camp for a fortnight in August. Then they put us through the paces with a will, and at night we turned into our tents dead beat. Camp was a social kind of life for us, a jolly lot who did not take our military duties too seriously. Some of the more independent Fifers in our battalion refused to salute officers, and once I saw our colonel, Sir Ralph Anstruther, stop a miner, demanding to know why he did not salute. "Can't you see I'm an officer?" he said sharply. The miner shrugged his shoulders and spat. "I doan't give a dawm what ye are," he said. "I never saluted anybody in my life." So speaking, he walked leisurely away while the impotent colonel stood and fumed. The officer got his own back, however, by ordering a special saluting drill after supper, and we had to march up and down saluting a lamppost when we should have been swaggering along the streets of Carnoustie with the girls.

Eager to be a soldier, I got the infantry training manual—a new edition had been issued after the Boer War—and studied it well. But I never won my sergeant's stripes, though passing the exam with flying colors, because of my departure from Kettle and resignation from the corps. While with the volunteers, I won a prize—for shooting, *mirabile dictu.* When asked what I wanted, I chose books: one of them *The Right Line and Circle,* and the other a trigonometry text. The captain's sister made me very proud when she raised her eyebrows in presenting them, and said: "Ah, a student!" God knows my reasons for selecting these books; I certainly never used them.

Another great memory of that period is King Edward VII's review of forty thousand volunteers in the Queen's Park in Edinburgh. What a day! We left Kettle at two in the morning, marched to the park, and stood about for hours. As we marched by the king, he was heard to say: "And a damn fine regiment, too." We were proud of this until learning that the remark had been meant for the regiment that had passed before ours. All I recollect about the king was his yellowish face and how unhappy he looked.

It was during my stay in Kettle that I became ambitious, again, to enter the ministry. The man who encouraged this desire was the local minister, Reverend Aeneas Gunn Gordon. He was a Canadian, tall, straight, distinguished, with a strong beard and a nose like an eagle's beak. He took me under his wing, and I told him of my wish. "You need Greek," he said. "Come down to the manse every morning at eight and I'll teach you."

He knew his Homer, almost by heart, and taught me so well that I could read the first two books of the *Odyssey* and a part of Herodotus. (Today I cannot read a word of Greek.) Gordon had one failing—which never affected my admiration; sometimes he drank too much, and I recall seeing him of a morning holding Homer upside down, while quoting it correctly. He was a man who read everything but appeared to absorb little and gave out less. Though liberal in the way of charity and human kindness, he delivered dull sermons, and his conversation seemed commonplace. Yet he gave me a certain interest in literature. He used to read aloud from *Paradise Lost,* and I learned to appreciate "the organ music of Milton." On his advice I read Dante and Tasso, and then the essays of Macaulay. The latter gripped me, making me conscious of literary style for the first time in my life; I was then in love with a girl in Glasgow, and used our correspondence to improve my own style. How far beyond her those purple passages and that noble diction must have been. My present attitude toward style, with few exceptions, can be stated simply: the important thing is *what* is said, not *how.*

When Gordon got married, I was his best man. It had been arranged that I should wear my father's frock coat and striped trousers, which fitted me well. But getting ready for the morning train—my holiday had been spent at Kingsmuir— I could not find my black shoes. I searched in vain, keeping one eye on the clock; Sister Ada had taken them to be repaired. My only other boots were yellow as a dandelion. There was no way out: I set off in my frock coat and tall hat and those dreadful boots. In Dundee, as I crossed from station to station, I met all the Newport folks coming off their train; their amused stares still haunt me. In the southbound train, I tried to hide my feet under the seat.

My functions as best man worried me. I knew that my chief job would be to scatter sweets and pennies to the children around the kirk, but all I had in my pocket was nine pence. After the wedding, when I had to send an announcement of the ceremony to *The Scotsman,* I was obliged to do so without payment, and of course it did not appear next morning. The bride was furious with me, scorning my explanation. She never liked me after that, which made me resentful, because I really felt responsible for the match. Certainly I had been the go-between during the courting days. Looking back now, I think she disliked me because Gordon liked me so much. Thirteen years later, she gave me quite a cool reception when I dropped in to see them on my motorcycle. After the wedding, I believe, Gordon never touched drink again.

It was in Kettle that I began, briefly, to shoot rabbits and crows with Tod's gun. One Saturday morning, I killed a few crows. Walking through the field the following night, I heard a faint squawk and saw on the ground a poor bird with half its guts blown away. Almost sick, I killed it with my heel, and from that day in 1903 to this, have never shot another bird or beast.

I never got to know the people of Kingskettle. East Fife people have a difficult reserve that will not break down: they never allow anyone to enter their private lives. The people of East Suffolk, where I now live, seem very similar. The people of Glasgow are much friendlier than those farther east in Edinburgh. But why there should be this difference between east and west, I cannot say. The breeziness of the west may be only superficial and meaningless, but it is easier to live with. In Kettle, I always remained an outsider. It was a village with much musical talent; as a singer, I might have been more welcome, but my only accomplishment was reciting, and they did not care much for that.

My elocution days were a painful, ludicrous interlude. I must have been about eighteen when they started. It was usual then for people to contribute something to the common entertainment when invited out; some sang, some played piano, one man did card tricks. My line casually became known as reciting. I began with an American fragment called *Oh, My!* but soon progressed to more ambitious stuff. Books on public speaking always gave extracts for recitation, and a common one was *Rubinstein's Playing* as described by a backwoodsman or cowboy. Once memorized, this was a gem for the amateur who fancied his histrionic powers. I can still look back with shame to an evening when I "did" Rubinstein, tearing my hair and letting my fingers run up and down an imaginary piano. The audience was rural, had never heard of Rubinstein, and had seldom, if ever, heard a piano played; naturally they wondered what this was all about. Resolving to stick to the obviously comic, I had some success with a *Strand Magazine* story called *The Presentation to Lamb,* in which I was supposed to make up a speech for the bashful Lamb when his club gave him a wedding present. Lamb got drunk and muddled my speech in glorious fashion.

My first political efforts occurred in Kingskettle. My landlord Mr. Tod, a Tory, was thick in the fight against Asquith, whose constituency included East Fife. Tod used to read me A. J. Balfour's speeches from *The Scotsman,* and I was full of zeal for the Tory Party. When Asquith came round, arrogant and rather bored, I joined in the hooting against him. On Election Day, I sailed about with a blue ribbon on my lapel, which delighted Gordon, another Tory sympathizer.

At this time, too, I recall going to the theater. I had seen my first play, *A Night of Pleasure,* at the age of twelve in Edinburgh's Theatre Royal. For me it certainly was a night of bliss, for I had never seen such visions of radiant loveliness in my life. I had never imagined any woman could be so beautiful as the heroine. What the story was about I do not remember, save that the lovely damsel was wronged in some way. But it all came right in the end.

My next visit to the theater occurred during Neilie's medical studies in Edinburgh. We waited for two hours in the gallery queue before the doors opened, then scrambled for a front seat and got one. After another half-hour's wait—at nineteen I fidgeted like a small boy—we saw the great Sir Henry Irving in *The Bells* and *Waterloo.* I sat through these performances in open-mouthed ecstasy. But now, after all these years, I see Irving as an actor in the worst sense of the word. He strutted, made wild gestures, and overplayed both the false passion of Matthias in *The Bells* and the sentimentality of dotage in *Waterloo.* Of course, I may be blaming the actor for the faults of the dramatists. In either event, I had no criticism in my soul during the first years of the century: life had not tarnished my boyish wonder.

Having reached by stages a teaching salary of seventy-five pounds a year, I applied for a job in Newport at a hundred pounds. About four o'clock one day, two strange men called at the Kettle school to take me to tea. One of them was H. M. Willsher, the Newport headmaster. They offered me the job, and I packed my little trunk. Willsher could not have been more unlike Calder. His discipline was easygoing—he did not care how much the children talked—and from the first day I loved the school. My two years in that southern suburb of Dundee were perhaps the happiest of my life thus far.

Newport can be reached via the Tay Bridge or the Tay Ferries. It was residential, and the only proletariat consisted of people who did the necessary work in the suburb—tradesmen, street cleaners, etc. So the pupils were socially mixed. The highest class sent their boys to the public schools and their daughters to other private schools. Our school got the lower-middle and working classes.

For me, Newport was an opportunity to realize my more snobbish dreams. In Forfar and elsewhere, my class status had been fixed; but here in Newport, I saw that Willsher and the other teachers were hail-fellow-well-met with the goodly citizen's and. even as an ex-student teacher without a university degree, I also might be in good society. Actually, I had passed my final exam and was now the possessor of an Acting Teacher's Certificate. That, of course, explains why \ now earned a hundred pounds a year.

Anyway, I was determined to go to the university by hook or by crook. During my time in Kettle, I had worked hard, and one morning cycled over to St. Andrews for the first part of my preliminary exams—two subjects, English and Maths. 1 made a bad mess of the first maths paper: it was far too difficult for me, even though Ben Thomson had been coaching me by post. I came out in despair, half thinking that I should give the whole thing up without attempting the second paper in the afternoon. At lunch 1 ran into a lecturer, an old pal of Willie's, and told him of my failure. He patted me on the back cheerfully. "What you want is a brandy and soda," he said, and led me to the Cross Keys. I had never tasted brandy before but liked the taste and had another double. If not singing as I entered the exam hall, no doubt I felt like it. My memory of the paper is nil, but I did pass in both subjects. Thus, when I went to Newport, I was already a semi-matriculated student. Now I studied Latin and Physics for the second portion of the exam.

The first thing that happened to me in Newport was romantic; I fell violently in love with a pupil. Margaret was about sixteen; I, twenty-four. Her voice struck me as the essence of sweetness. To me, she was all that was lovely. Her long lashes almost hid her beautiful eyes, and I found that 1 could not look at her when she looked at me. She personified the whole school for me: if she happened to be absent, the day was dark, long, and dreary; when she was present, the day was always far too short. Years later, when I told her how much she had meant to me, she seemed much surprised. Wiser now in human motive and behavior, however, I think she- must have known, and no doubt used her dangerous eyes to torment the bashful, half-baked youth who trembled at her glance. Her beauty was not real to me, but something on which to build fantasies. So, of course, I made no advances. Wooing her did not seem to be so important as worshiping her.

The remarkable thing about Margaret was her persistence in my mind. While other girls faded from memory, she continued to haunt my dreams for years. I have found other grown men whose dream-Margarets ever and again came back into their lives as dream-pictures, and I have known women who had their dream-men. This puzzles me still. I have had long periods of psychoanalysis with different specialists, but the Margaret image baffled them all. They guessed she was my mother as I first knew her, young and desirable; then they said she must be a substitute for Clunie. Neither explanation gave me any emotional response. I do have a strong feeling that her indifference was her chief attraction. She obviously did not admire me; yet, on the evening before I left the school,

she suddenly threw her arms round my neck and said: “Mr. Neill, you are a dear.” Damn the girl. That should have broken the spell. But it only made her more desirable than ever.

For years I heard nothing more of Margaret. Then, when she was a widow past seventy, I wrote her and later went to see her. The beautiful eyes were dim, the long eyelashes had gone. I often wrote and phoned her thereafter; she was lonely living by herself, also lame and in pain. She had had a slight stroke and dreaded another. All her life, the lass had remained lower-middle-class, outside the mainstream of new ideas. I laughed at her shock when I used a four-letter word. As time went on, however, the aging Margaret began to change. “You have opened up a new world for me,” she would say. And she was a sweet old woman, though too set in her ways to accept modern ideas. One Sunday night, when I phoned her, there was no reply. Neighbors found her in a coma.

Poor Margaret, We agreed that marriage between us would have been a mistake, and I doubt it” she ever could have overcome her conventional life in a Scottish suburb. But what is the use of guessing anyway? She was a youthful dream. A young man’s fantasy assumes that if a girl is pretty, she has a pretty nature as well. And Margaret was doubly blessed. She had true manners, being considerate of others and hating to offend.

Adoration of Margaret did not prevent my having decided interests in other girls, and I gradually achieved a socially satisfying life through the Leng family. Sir John Leng had founded the big newspaper industry in Dundee. Mrs. Leng was a kind old lady, and I became tutor to one of the young Leng boys. I was invited to a dance they gave. Thus, at last, I had reached my long-wished-for ambition—to move in the best society.

Alas, I had never learned dancing and had no evening clothes. With only a hundred pounds a year, I could not afford to go to a good tailor. So I went to the Kingsmuir tailor and asked him if he could make me an evening suit. He scratched his head doubtfully, but thought he might have a try if he could find an illustration in *The Tailor*. I got my suit by post, and stupidly enough did not try it on. When entering the ballroom for my first dance, I found the trousers had been cut about two inches too long.

The cloth my tailor suggested was far too heavy; and for years I sweated much more than I should have done at dances, which were mostly waltzes then. Stoutish men had to take three collars with them. I would guess that the eight some reel accounted for turning one collar into a soaking rag, and the waltzes and lancers accounted for the other two.

But even before the problem of costume was solved, I had to learn to dance. A young teacher in Dundee gave me three lessons in waltzing—one, two, three—turn—four, five, six—and I picked up the step easily. Quickly, too, I learned the intricacies of the eight some reel and lancers, soon being able to take my position at the head of a lancer set.

In the fashion of that era, the girls stood with programs in hand, while the men moved among them like farmers buying cattle at the mart. One youth would pretend not to see Mary because she had almost broken his arm in the waltz, and looked the other way when he saw Jean, who had no rhythm at all. This tactic could backfire, however; frequently all the best girls had booked up their programs in advance. One entire evening, disgusted by the whole custom, I danced only with plain wallflowers. At the time it seemed the most heroic thing I had ever done; now I am inclined to question my motive.

Socially, I was fairly well pleased with my life. But culturally I had progressed, too. Harry Willsher, the school's headmaster, became my musical mentor. Apart from his personal talents, he was music critic for the Dundee paper. One evening, hearing me remark that I liked Elgar's "Salut d'Amour," he sat down and played it. Then, without a word, he repeated the composition. "Shall I play it again?" he asked, but I said no. He smiled. "The lesson is this, Neill. Good music you can hear again and again: inferior music bores you stiff if you get it more than once." I was much impressed; yet today, if I had to listen ten times in succession, to something I really like—the trio from *Der Rosenkavalier* for instance— I should feel like drawing a gun on the singers.

For the first time in my life, 1 was within distance of drama and opera. It wasn't first-class opera, but good enough for someone who was not a first-class appraiser of music. I heard *Faust, "[annk'duser. Lohengrin. Carman.* Because of someone's organizing genius, I also heard Saturday concerts for a shilling, thus coming to know the artistry of Pachmann, Paderewski, Siloti, Elman, and our own Scottish Lamond. I was more impressed by their names than by their music, and feel certain today that if someone put three famous pianists behind a screen and had each play a Chopin polonaise I could not tell which one was playing. That may be an overstatement: I can tell when a waltz is played by Pachmann, but that is only because he had so individual a style. Of orchestral music I was equally ignorant, and still question whether anyone lacking a musical education senses the real difference between one conductor and another; though a nonmusical person may be able to distinguish between a good and a bad rendering of a favorite piece. I like the polonaise from *Eugene Qnegin,* for instance, but have heard it played well only once or twice; loving it, I can detect a bad performance.

In those days, Dundee had a theater. Touring companies came every week, and I had the joy of becoming a regular theatergoer. Musical-comedy successes came from London, and we saw Martin Harvey, a popular actor of the period, in *The Only Way, The Breed of the Treshams,* even *Hamlet.* His *Ham-lei* played one week; that of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson the next. To me, both were surpassing fine. My cultural standards those days may be better understood, too, if I say that *The Only Way* seemed a much better play than *Hamlet.*

During this period, I discovered my dislike of seeing or hearing anything alone. The same desire to share with others comes over me today when I listen by myself to a good concert or opera on the radio. Sometimes, in Dundee, I took Clunie to my favorite plays. She was just as ignorant of the theater as I, but my slight advancement made me laugh in a very superior way when the curtain fell on the first act of *The Only Way,* and she, with memories of local shows in the village school, remarked: "Martin Harvey will be helping to shift the furniture, won't he?"

Newport was well off then, but Dundee was mostly a dirty slum. Yet I remained incredibly unaware of social disparities, with no feelings at all about riches and poverty. Indeed, there were no signs of my being a potential rebel. When Winston Churchill came to contest Dundee as a Liberal, I rejoiced at a Tory handbill: "What is the Use of a W. C. without a seat?" and threw things at young Winston when he spoke at an open-air meeting, mainly because a girl called Ella Robertson dared me to.

My brother Neilie, about to qualify as a doctor, did his obstetrical cases in Dundee. He would be called out at dead of night, and I sometimes gave him company through the

long streets. We entered houses that were hovels, where women labored in beds swarming with lice. Sometimes a woman would be having a baby in a room full of sleeping children. Such sights should have made me conscious of social evils, but apparently they didn't. I must have been emotionally and intellectually asleep.

Newport is one of the few places I still return to with strong feelings. It gave me peace, and helped me to carry on my teaching work without fear. I shall always have a tender spot in my heart for Harry Willsher, who was a companion rather than a master.

In Newport, as mentioned earlier, I carne into contact with a higher class of society. There I learned how to behave like a gentleman, picking up all the futile little tricks comprising the term *good manners.* My frock coat and tall hat saw me through evening affairs; on Sundays, I went to church all dressed up, with white slip showing bravely under my waistcoat to indicate a nonexistent one beneath, But here an eccentricity began to edge its way in. I recall finding a highly colored waistcoat that had belonged to my maternal grandfather, and wearing it with my frock coat. I have always had a definite complex about dress, and wore open-necked colored shirts long before they became fashionable. Unusual dress is one means of drawing attention to oneself, and in the beginning no doubt that was the reason for my perversity in dress. But now, when I have other ways of being an exhibitionist— lecturing, for example—I still dress unconventionally. There is a protest in the habit, a sort of "why the hell should I be limited because everyone else wears this or that?" Fashion has always made me resentful; uniformity pains me. I associate-proper dress with social usage, and never wear collar and tie to go to London except when 1 have to meet diehard prospective Summerhill parents.

But in Newport days, my dress reform was timid and hardly perceptible. I was too much afraid of alienating the little circle I had entered, for status was the one thing that mattered to me then. I was interested in society only as an external thing, rather than as a means toward gaining artistic or intellectual culture. I enjoyed hearing Willsher and his friends talk about books or music, but I did not expect men and women in society to do so. They talked of tennis and dances, as healthy young people ought to. Possibly, in my superior way, I tried to educate some of them. I remember lending H. G. Wells's *Marriage* to a girl of sixteen. Her father read it, wrote me a note calling me a dangerous seducer of innocence, and said I should never darken his door again. That, no doubt, put a stop to my attempts to uplift.

Meanwhile I had gone to St. Andrews and passed the second half of my entrance exam, feeling very much pleased with myself. The door to the university was now open, and I said a sad farewell to Newport in the summer of 1908. Since the university did not open until October, I went back to Kingsmuir. I had saved enough to carry me over a year, or maybe two—heaven knows how. My main difficulty was choosing a profession. I had long given up any wish to enter the church, and had no definite ambition to enter anything else.

The return of an old pupil to see my father settled the matter. He had worked toward a B.Sc. in Agriculture and spoke of big jobs in the colonies. "The very career for you," said my father with enthusiasm, and I accepted the suggestion.

It was because of this degree, ostensibly, that I went to Edinburgh instead of St. Andrews. My dreams of a university had always attached themselves to St. Andrews. In visits to Willie, I had been enraptured by the romance of the "gray city" with the scarlet

gowns of the students and the happy atmosphere of Willie's tales. The social life there appealed to me strongly. It had a happy, family air about it; almost dangerous in a way, because St. Andrews men had a backward longing for their Alma Mater resembling the maudlin drunkard's rhapsodical desire to weep on the village pump. I chose Edinburgh because it was easier to get a degree in agriculture there, really because it seemed likely I should get a more cosmopolitan education. In St. Andrews, I knew I should meet men from Perth and Stirling, whereas in Edinburgh, I might meet men from all over the world. My acceptance of the plan to study agriculture shows how much of a drifter I was. I had no interest in agriculture, and knew that I never could have. For me, accepting it as a career meant as much as accepting an invitation to play tennis because I had no wish to do anything else at the moment.

## University Life

Neilie was in his final year of medical study, and I went to lodge with him. It was a cheap place off Clerk Street. The better-off students all lived over Marchmont way. Mrs. Sutherland, our landlady, was a gem; a dear, kind woman who looked after me for four years. I was now really hard up and had to look twice at every penny spent, for there was no means of earning more. Luckily, I came under the Carnegie Trust and had my university fees paid by that grant, although matriculation and exam payments were not included, Neilie and I could only allow ourselves three pence a day for lunch. The Students' Union had a restaurant; also a lunch counter, where every day we each had a glass of milk and two penny buns. Other students had the same but they dined well at night. We could only afford high tea in our lodgings, and our only good meal of the week was the Sunday midday dinner. We always quarreled about the division of it until we evolved a sound plan: Neilie divided the main dish between two plates, and then I chose one.

Though my approach to higher education may have been casual, I took seriously my first-year classes in chemistry and natural philosophy—at least in the beginning. Every morning we had a lecture by Sir James Walker, the chemistry professor, and I took voluminous notes. I thought it a waste of talent, however, for Walker to spend his precious time teaching raw students the elements of this subject; and in 1936, when I dined with the principal of Johannesburg University, I made such a remark at table. The professors present were up in arms at once. They defended the lecture system by saying that this very contact with a man like Walker was the best education a student could have. I still don't believe it. Any assistant could teach a class what happens if you put sulphuric acid on zinc, and why should a good chemist like Walker not spend all his time doing research at the expense of the university or state? I liked chemistry with its practical lab work and passed it easily. But my work must have cost the university something, for I used up all the chloroform cleaning my pipes.

Natural philosophy was double Dutch to me. Professor MacGregor was the worst lecturer I ever encountered, mumbling into his beard as he wrote mysterious formulae on the blackboard, while we passed the time cat-calling and tramping tunes with our feet. MacGregor never seemed to mind: I wonder if he ever heard us. Our greatest day occurred when the lab assistant, Lindsay, had to turn the handle of an instrument to show the workings of sound waves. Then we all threw pennies at him; but like his master, he

stood there quite unperturbed. He had had many years of this, and possibly his only interest was the amount of the collection he would sweep up when class was over.

Lab work in Nat. Phil, was a farce to me, I remember being given some apparatus concerning an inclined plane, and repeatedly timing something, so I could write down each result. After getting about fifty of these results, I added them up and took the average. I disliked the dullness of this work and hated my inability to do it quickly. Another man would finish his experiment in about half an hour, and looked to be the class medalist. One day 1 asked him how he managed to get through his experiments so quickly. "Take three readings and fake the rest," he said shortly. After that, my experiments took about twenty minutes each.

I can honestly say that I hardly understood anything about sound, light, and heat—not to mention electricity. When the final exam carne round, I stared at a paper that was far beyond my comprehension, and went home for the summer vacation feeling depressed. I passed. Still wondering how and why, I can only conclude that old MacGregor was as absentminded in correcting papers as he was in the lecture hall, and muddled my paper with someone else's. For all I know, he mixed up mine with that of his medalist, whom he may have flunked.

By the end of the first year, I had discovered that science was not my line, and made up my mind to take a degree in Honors English. Probably one of my father's old pupils had come home and was doing well as an M.A, in Hon. Eng. Honors English meant that, with the exception of history, I could spend all of my time taking English classes. I duly entered for history and first-year English.

We had Sir Richard Lodge for English History, and I enjoyed his lectures thoroughly. There was no cat-calling in *his* room; one look from him and we all became diligent little boys and girls who were seen and not heard. One youth tried cat-calling one day. He sat behind me, and I looked round in annoyance. Suddenly I heard Lodge shout: "You, sir!" He was looking, I thought, at the bad man behind me. "You, you, you, sir," came the persistent, hard voice of the professor, and he pointed at me. I rose from my seat and silently asked a vital question by indicating myself with my forefinger. "Yes, you," thundered Lodge. "Get out of this classroom, sir."

Very white, I marched from the room with my head up. After class, I knocked at the door of his private room. "I thought you would come to apologize," he said. "I didn't, sir. I came to tell you I had nothing to do with the noise."

He eyed me with some suspicion. "Of course, if you say so . . ." He shrugged his shoulders as if to show he didn't believe me.

Then suddenly I lost all my fear of authority and my temper as well. "Look here, sir," I said. "I had to work for years to save up enough money to come to the university. I am years older than the average student. Do you think, in these circumstances, I came to Edinburgh to behave like a raw schoolboy?"

His eyebrows went up in surprise. Then he smiled, held out his hand, and apologized. My honor was satisfied, but I could have sunk through the floor next day when Lodge began his lecture by offering a public apology, for it wasn't so much an apology as a panegyric. His word-portrait made me not only a scholar but a super-gentleman—and a prig.

My English professor was George Saintsbury, the renowned English author and critic. I sat under him for three years, but he did not know my name or know me by sight except on one occasion. His lectures were soliloquies; he spoke them like a parrot, and did not seem to care whether we listened or not. That suited us all right, for we did not listen. At least I personally did not, knowing that I could find it all in his voluminous writings a week before the exam. He had a high, squeaky voice, and amused us by his gentlemanly attitude toward his contemporaries: "Er—I do not quite agree with my friend—er—(then quickly) Mr. Bridges when he says—but I must be just and take into consideration what Professor Raleigh, who by the way in his attitude toward Dryden . . ." We had great sport trying to stick to the main road through all his parentheses.

Our course of study was not a creative one. We were supposed to "know" literature from Beowulf to Pater. We had to learn Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. We used set books and studied set periods—my final exam covered Elizabethan drama. In effect, we read books about books. For an exam, it was necessary to know what Coleridge and Hazlitt had said about Shakespeare; in any question on style, we were supposed to know exactly what Longinus had said about the subject. By that time I had discovered Ibsen and was full of enthusiasm for his plays. When my class work demanded from me an essay on *Much Ado,* I quite foolishly wrote a damning criticism of the play, comparing its theater with the contemporary theater of Ibsen. That is, I criticized Shakespeare for not writing a realistic play—a stupid thing to do, but putting forward the point of view I held then. Saintsbury was very angry with me— the one time he must have recognized my name.

I held then, and do now, that it is better to write a bad limerick than be able to recite *Paradise Lost.* That is a fundamental thing in education. But the university never asked us to compose even a limerick; it did not ask from us any original opinions about Shakespeare or about anyone else. In those years, I read Spenser, Chaucer, Pope, Dryden, most of Shakespeare and much of his contemporaries; practically all of the Restoration Drama, Coleridge, Tennyson, Dr. Johnson, Keats. . . . But why go on ? I was compelled to concentrate on whether a blank-verse line had elision or not, or whether one could trace the rhythm of "Christabel" in "The Lotus Eaters." It was all piddling stuff, like taking Milan Cathedral to pieces stone by stone to discover where the beauty lay. I had to read so glorious a thing as *The Tempest* with annotations, painfully looking up the etymological meaning of some phrase that did not matter a scrap.

Saintsbury gave me a feeling for prose style, and that's about all. He knew the beauty of literature, but he could not get it across to us. I spent three years with him in dreary swamps of prose rhythm and poetic diction, seeing the trees but never the woods beyond. He held that his work had to deal with manner and not matter; else, he said, English Literature would bring in every study under the sun. I can see that, but it simply isn't possible to treat Macaulay's *Essay on Clive* as a piece of literature without giving—or having any opinion on—the historical and political aspects of Clive's life. Saintsbury found it so easy to separate subject from style that he praised Blake as a great technical poet, and Nietzsche as one of the greatest German prose writers, while dismissing the subject matter of both with the words: "They were, of course mad."

Whatever I actually gained from Saintsbury, it was certainly not an appreciation of literature. To this day I cannot read poetry for pleasure, cannot touch the classics. One

year I went over to Norway—an M.A. in Honors English—and my literature for reading on the voyage was a bundle of *Black Mask* magazines—American crook yarns. True they were shoved into my hand by a friend as I left, but if I'd had Keats and Shelley in my bag, I still would have read the *Black Masks.* I hasten to add that it would be grossly unfair to blame Edinburgh University for any bad taste acquired: 1 am merely suggesting that if my years there had been spent in studying matter instead of manner, I might have had a better taste in literature today. I know that anything I could say today about Chaucer and Keats would be unimportant and uninformed.

When Professor Chrystal, the celebrated mathematician, died, I went to see Saintsbury about giving me an obituary on the Professor for our university magazine, *The Student.*

"I am just going into my Honors Class," he said. "If you are quick at taking notes, I shall allow you to come in, for I mean to say something about my old friend."

"But, sir, I have been in your Honors Class for three years."

He looked up quickly and asked my name. When I replied, he said, "Good heavens, how you have grown."

I had been six feet years before I entered the university, and there weren't a dozen of us in that class. Saintsbury recognized books but not students. Lecturing to a bunch of raw undergraduates must have been hell for him.

On the whole, social life at Edinburgh was pleasant. Being a member of the Union, I always had a meeting place and an armchair of an evening. The difficulty was the shortage of cash. Most of my friends were well off. They wore the same sort of golfing jacket and flannel bags as I did, but they had money to spend; and when drinks went round it was awkward, because I never had more than a few coppers in my pockets.

I could not afford to play any games or even go to see matches. I had to pretend I hated music halls in order to avoid joining parties going to the Kings or the Empire. Nowadays I should tell them the truth, that I was poor. Mainly from my mother, who feared that we might revert to her working-class mother's status, I had got the Shavian idea that poverty was a crime, a thing to be ashamed of, to hide as skillfully as one could. I must have played my part well, for years afterward a fellow-student, who had been a pal, remarked: "Yes, it was all very well for you, Neill. You had money and I hadn't."

During my second year I had a stroke of fortune. My landlady gave me her paper to read one Sunday, and I idly tried a competition therein. A week later, seeing a placard on Nicolson Street: EDINBURGH MAN WINS FORTY POUNDS. I did not make a connection. Only later, back at my digs, did I learn of my luck from the excited landlady. "You've won first prize!"

A pal of mine at that time received a similar amount from an uncle; and though just as hard up, he gave a champagne supper, blowing his money in one night. I put mine in the bank and lived on it for a very long time, drawing it sparingly for necessities only. I mention the other man, not because I considered him a damned fool then, but because humanity is roughly divided into two classes, represented by him and by me. In my own family, Willie would have squandered his forty pounds at once; Neilie would have kept it as I did. I never saw the pleasure in eating all your cake at one bite, because temperamentally I am not entirely forgetful of the morrow. Or to put it in the fashionable way, I like to lay up treasure in heaven. But apart from that, I still think the other man

was a fool. We argued the point later, when he was lunching on four pence hut kept persisting that the fun he got out of his champagne splash had been worth a year of four-penny lunches. It would not have been so for me.

This diversity of character makes me think of the prodigal son story. Ask yourself: What side am I on—the son who went away and had a good time, or the dull brother who stayed at home? Most men say they are with the Prodigal Son. I never do, and I know why: I think of Willie getting all the jam when he went away, while the brothers who stayed at home got the dry bread. And I never admired the Prodigal Son for having his champagne supper and then in cowardly manner coming back to beg for forgiveness and a meal.

The whole question of my attitude toward money is important. Because of the poverty suffered in my young years, I have a queer meanness about money. I grudge paying out small sums, yet can sign a check for a large amount without a moment's hesitation. Many other men regard checks in a similar way: to us, a check isn't real money. It is fantasy money, and therefore of no emotional value. When motoring, I pay for petrol without quibbling; but if I have to take a taxi, I sit and watch the meter painfully whenever there is a traffic snarl in the street. If I suddenly became a millionaire, I should still travel third-class and buy a secondhand car. I dislike borrowing money and dislike more lending it. Only once was a lent fiver paid back to me—by a Scot, of course. In still another way, money was a problem on occasion. My editorship of *The Student* gave me free dress-circle tickets to all the city theaters on Monday nights, and luckily, evening dress was not obligatory. But there was a whole week of opera once—*Die Meistersinger, Orpheus, Elektra, some* others—and I went every night to these more formal events. Toward the end of the week, I had to doctor my one dress shirt meticulously with white chalk to make it look decent.

Of all the week's opera, *Die Meistersinger* knocked me over. I had never heard such music. To me, it was the purest of gold; but instead of inspiring me to noble thoughts and deeds, it made me a swindler. Another performance was scheduled during the week, and of course there were no more press tickets. Determined to hear the opera again, however, I dressed myself in my chalked boiled shirt and went down to the theater just before the end of the first act. During the interval I sneaked in, pretending I had lost my pass-out check, and with good luck found a fine, empty seat.

As editor of *The Student,* I also had the privilege of being invited *ex officio* to an inter-university conference in St. Andrews. It was a great affair. Champagne flowed like water, and most of us got canned, gloriously canned. We all thought Walter Elliott, one of the delegates from Glasgow, the most brilliant speaker of the conference. But why so good and likable a man ever became a Conservative, and cabinet minister in such a government, is a riddle to me.

I was allowed a small grant from the S.R.C. (Students' Representative Council) toward my expenses at the Conference. It was not enough, and I drew about a pound more. But Walker, the secretary, stood me on the mat and gave me a thorough dressing down. "No other editor ever used more than the allotted amount," he said, and I stood silent, ashamed of my poverty, hating the man. He was comfortably off, and looked at me as if 1 were something the cat had dragged into the house. My predecessors in the

editorial chair had been gentlemen; that seemed to be what he was trying to tell me. I felt both angry and guilty.

As an editor without money, I had to spend more than I could afford. I was invited to all university dinners, and although these cost me nothing, the small outlays on cloakroom tips, dress-shirt laundry, etc., were beyond me. Matters became easier when an ex-editor told me I should sell the books sent in for review. I did so, getting half the published price; but there again there were difficulties, because my medical student friends kept asking for the privilege of reviewing costly books. Often I put them off and wrote the reviews myself; by studying the indexes, I managed to write passable reviews, though knowing nothing of medicine. When a book came out that I wanted, I wrote to the publishers, telling them tall stories about the circulation and influence of *The Student,* and in nine cases out of ten they sent the book.

I cannot recall exactly when I began to write, but it must have been some time before becoming editor. I began by submitting drawings and cartoons—awful things that make me blush to remember; my drawing, then as now, was atrocious. At that time, a student advised me to try a comic literary sketch for the *Glasgow Herald.* I sent one in, and a few mornings later found it in the paper. Possibly that was one of the most ecstatic moments of my life, the first time in print. It seemed incredible, wonderful, and glorious; I trod on air all that day. Later, I sent in other sketches and received fourteen shillings for each one that was published.

About then, I became friendly with a girl in my English class. It was a platonic friendship that lasted a long time. During long walks, May and I talked mainly about ourselves; in vacations, we wrote long letters to each other—again, I fear, mostly on the same subjects. She was a clever lassie, who encouraged me to write prose and helped me to gain a self-confidence that was lacking. I see now that I abused her friendship, using it to flatter my own ego, for her belief in me supplied much that I needed. I look back on that friendship now with a feeling of tenderness.

We were both snobs, but strangely enough, it was our snobbery that ultimately parted us. She had friends among the aristocracy and used to stay at their country houses. To me she brought some of the glamour of the best people; yet at the same time, I found my resentment against them growing. May had strong opinions about what was “done” and what wasn’t; and I rebelled when she expected me to have manners like her rich friends. Fundamentally, she was what we might call fascist today, while I was fundamentally socialist. She remained a positive snob, while I became a negative one. She was critical of individuals but accepted society without question: I was critical of society and apt to accept individuals for what they were. I liked her humor, and we laughed at the same things (manners excluded). We made no pretense about the fact that she was my Lady Bountiful, patronizing a very raw youth who, with some encouragement, might do something in life. I was slightly afraid of her, I remember, but she was a good scout and someone I could meet again with real pleasure.

It might be interesting here to contrast my growth with Willie’s. since he had been so strong an influence on my early life. Later he veered to the right, while I gradually assumed a more leftist attitude toward politics and other matters. There was one great difference between us as boys. He developed very young, reading the Bible at three, and entered the university when sixteen. My own advancement seemed incredibly slow.

Though I was twenty-eight when editing *The Student* my editorials might have been written by a boy of fourteen. Their puerility is lamentable and their arrogance—*comical* is perhaps the best term. As editor, I suffered badly from being the sole authority. There was no need to ask anyone's opinion, and I published my own geese, believing they were swans. Some of my friends called certain articles tripe; alas, that happened after their publication. But editing the magazine was a liberal education in its way. I got to know about spacing, proofreading, and technical production matters. My position gave me a certain standing among students, and I met interesting men at public functions. After one big dinner, I half-carried home one of Edinburgh's best surgeons. On his doorstep, he drew himself up and said thickly, "Young man, I'm tight, absolutely bunged up, but if someone came now and told me I had to go to the operating theater, I'd cut out an appendix with a hand as steady as a rock." I never had any doubt that he spoke the truth.

During one of the summer vacations, I fell in love with Beatrice. We went through heaven and then hell, and I know now that the hell was on account of Clunie. Unconsciously, I compared every girl with Clunie; unconsciously, she hated every girl I loved. While praising them, she subtly made me see their shortcomings; I lost Beatrice, warm and dear as she was, because—without knowing it—I was looking for the ideal that my mother's sinful notion of sex had compelled me to form. There was, of course, more to it than that. Half of me wanted to marry Beatrice on the spot; the other half cried: "Wait, don't tie yourself zip before you have made your career." There was a definite pull—women versus ambition— that may have come from hearing my mother say: "Marriage hinders a man, because it forces him to think of bread and butter." While I thought and hesitated, the practical Beatrice went off and married someone else.

I cannot honestly say that my four years in Edinburgh were very happy. I always return to the city unwillingly and without any interest. It is beautiful—more beautiful perhaps than any other city I have seen—but for me; Edinburgh remains a dead city, parochial and pompous. Its university life had little or no group spirit. We all lived in digs. The only meeting place was the Union, and thousands were not even members of that. A man could take a degree in Edinburgh without speaking to a single student during the time he was there. And some students seemed to do just that, too.

Union life itself was narrow. Many students were medicals from the Colonies, bringing with them their beastly colonial attitude toward the "nigger." Many colored students studied at Edinburgh; and because of the colonial men, they were all classified thus. One day when I lunched with an Egyptian—supposed to be a prince—two South Africans hastily moved away from the table. When the exploited native populations finally rise to smash their chains, not a few of their leaders will have received their impetus from the abominable treatment of the "nigger" in the English and Scottish universities.

My finals were at hand. During my last year, I had given up my time and interest to editing *The Student,* and anticipated a very poor degree—in fact, the poorest possible, a Third-Class pass. But in the finals I did not do as badly as expected; indeed, at the end of the week, I almost dared hope for a First in spite of my frankly bad Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. I got a Second and was quite pleased. In due course, I was capped M.A.; but by then, sad to recall, I did not feel unduly proud or pleased. Everything in life comes too late, we hear. Whether that is so or not, it was certainly true of my degree. As Robert

Louis Stevenson said, "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." The degree, once a glittering peak, had become a minor hill, from the top of which I could look far out and see distant peaks, high and perhaps inaccessible—work, fame, perhaps death. More bluntly stated: I had got my degree and didn't know how to use it. All I knew was that 7 *didn't want to leach:* to think of going on all my life as English master in some provincial secondary school or academy, made me shiver. No, teaching would be the last resort, if every other line failed.

## London

Journalism was my future, and I studied the ads in the papers. I applied for a few jobs but got no answers. Then R. Scott Stevenson, later an ear, nose and throat man in the West End, said he could get me some work at T.C, & E.G. Jacks, the Edinburgh publishers. The job was subediting a one-volume encyclopedia planned to contain something more perhaps than the Britannica. Its chief editor was H. C. O'Neill. It turned out to be a lousy job. Half the contributions came from clergymen with unreadable penmanship. When the copy *was* readable, it ran too long. We often had to throw the stuff into the waste-paper basket and rewrite it ourselves. I recall writing up the Panama Canal in this way, cribbing of course from other encyclopedias. The work was extremely useful in one way: it gave me a dread of superfluous words.

I had been about a year at this work when O'Neill persuaded the firm to transfer its editorial office to London. Having reached the age of twenty-nine without crossing the border, I found the idea of going to London both wonderful and inevitable; had not Barrie and lesser Scots writers gone south to find wealth and a name? I counted the days before I should set off, but as so often occurs in life, something happened to dampen my enthusiasm and hopes at the last moment; my mother became very ill. Now having a small but regular income, I arranged for her to go to a nursing home and have the offending gallstones removed. My hopes went south; my fears stayed behind in that nursing home. I stayed just long enough to see her after the operation—she was down but not out—and then set off with definite relief.

I don't recall how I looked, arriving in King's Cross station on a Sunday morning late in 1912, but I felt much as Keats's baffled Cortez: "Silent, upon a peak in Darien." Here was London, the center of life and everything valuable to life. I made for The Strand and Fleet Street. With a thrill I looked round, trying hard to keep from reading a slight disappointment. They were meaner streets than I had pictured, less picturesque than the Strand that appeared so colorfully on the jacket of *Strand Magazine,* Still, these were but names; wait till I saw the great men who ran the British press. During the next few weeks, I would wander at lunch time from Long Acre to Fleet Street to look at the great men. But never did 1 see anyone who looked more important than a messenger boy, and this made me wonder.

Dorothy, an actress friend I had met in Edinburgh, lived in Hammersmith, where I went to find lodgings. Dorothy was the only soul 1 knew in London, but even she left in a week's time, to go on tour again, so living in Hammersmith did not help me much, although her mother was good to me. For the first time in my life, I learned the truth of the platitude that a man can be loneliest in a crowd. When my work was over, I had no one to speak to. Weekends were the worst. Visiting places like Harrow and Windsor, I

saw cheerful groups playing tennis on inviting lawns, and heard pianos played in the evenings within suburban houses, while I stood on the road feeling lonely. Sometimes I had the mad impulse to walk up to a group on a lawn and say: "Let me sit and watch you play. I'm as lonely as hell," but was inhibited by Scots caution. I got into the habit of hiring a skiff at Richmond and rowing upstream. Never having handled an oar in my life, I learned painfully, blushing at the insults hurled at me by occupants of nicely varnished boats I scratched. Many a time on a gray and windy day, mine was the only skiff on the river. But 1 wasn't afraid, though unable to swim—except for one occasion, when Neilie, visiting in town, came with me and did the rowing. While nervous sometimes when sitting beside certain drivers—what motorist isn't!—I had never been afraid while driving a car myself. Fear, converted into action, ceases to be fear. On sunny days up the river, I hated myself for coming; the sight of merry boatloads of parties, of punts with pretty girls lying under parasols while young men poled them along, these made my loneliness almost unbearable. Sometimes I went for long walks, hoping for something to happen—a miracle of some kind—but always returned to my lodgings disappointed. God, they were dull, too!

One Sunday night in Uxbridge, while feeling especially miserable, I saw an attractive-looking girl sitting on a bench reading a novel. Quite nervously I sat down beside her, knowing that I would speak to her and dreading a rebuff. For some time, I remained there, glancing sideways at her. She seemed to bury herself more deeply in her book. "Let's talk," I said suddenly. "I'm damn lonely."

She gave me a cold glance of fear, murmured something about not knowing me, and buried herself still more deeply in the novel. Suddenly, I felt a wave of anger come over me. "Christ, woman," I shouted, "you sit here reading a foolish story and when a chance for real romance comes along, you escape it with a look that says, 'We haven't been introduced!' "She stared at me for a moment or two and then began to cry.

"It's the way I was brought up," she answered wretchedly. I didn't know what to say next, for I saw then that the poor kid must have been just as lonely as I. We talked a little in an awkward way, but she hadn't much to say and was, I thought, not well-educated. Our "romance" lasted about five minutes, and then she said she had to go.

There were pleasant interludes, however, in this lonely time. When Dorothy came home from her tour, her boyfriend took us out in his car—oh, wasn't he proud of its being able to touch forty on the Windsor road! Sometimes we boated up river, and they always wanted me around, as the welcome third gooseberry. We made a jolly party. I can still hear Dorothy's silvery laugh when I overbalanced with the pole and nearly fell in. Sometimes she would bring one of her musical-comedy friends. I learned that a touring company consisted mainly of very conventional, ambitious middle-class girls, many of whom sent money home to help the family. They were easy folk to get on with, but so narrow in their interests— "the show," and what Bert said, and how wild the stage manager was. Dorothy, in her waggish way, kept telling her friends that I was a very clever fellow—an M.A. I don't know what lay behind her joke; possibly delight in seeing them stare at me as if I were inhuman. The magic letters did seem to scare them, however. They began to apologize to me for their lack of education.

During the working day, I divided my time between Long Acre and the British Museum. The encyclopedia having been finished and published, I had been asked to

write the English Language-and-Literature portion of a Popular-Educator reference work that Jacks were then preparing. After completing it, and fearful of losing my job, I took on the Mathematics section. Then I did Drawing, with my illustrations that fortunately never saw the light of a bookseller's shop, for O'Neill wisely decided to cut out that subject. At last, nothing remained for me to write, and I found myself unemployed. I was worried. The one thing I did not want to do was to return to Scotland and—the only possible job there —teaching.

By this time, Neilie had come to town, and we set up house with J. B. Salmond, later editor of *Scots Magazine.* He worked in Fleetway House then, and our studio flat was always full of carefree lads from the Northcliffe Press. They kept telling me that if I could write a washerwoman's weekly serial, they could guarantee me five hundred pounds a year. Unfortunately, all my attempts to write such a serial ended in obscene laughter when Salmond read the results aloud.

When our lease of the studio ended, Neilie and I tried several lodgings and hated them all. Meanwhile, my health had gone bad and I was far from fit. Poor feeding at the university, followed by bad feeding in London digs with ill-nourishing lunches outside, and, finally, the sardine and tinned-salmon lazy table of our studio flat—all these affected me, and lack of exercise didn't help. Also, I was very much worried over the threat of being summoned as correspondent in a divorce case. This I escaped, possibly because the irate husband, a well known musician, knew that I hadn't got a bean.

One night, I woke up with a sharp pain in my leg. Neilie, being a doctor, diagnosed it as phlebitis—inflammation of a vein. I was alarmed because I knew that such inflammation caused a clot, and if even a tiny fragment of this clot broke away, there was a chance of very sudden death. Neilie exaggerated this danger, I fancy, in order to keep me from going out to work next day. I went to King Edward Hospital in Windsor, where an old university pal of mine named D. G. Watson was house surgeon. I had been out there often and knew the staff well. The surgeon ligatured my vein, so that the clot could not move, and I lay in bed for about a fortnight, having the time of my life.

After my recovery I returned to town and answered various ads. One ran; "Art Editor wanted for new magazine in Elect Street," and gave a box number for reply. Obviously, this was no job for me, but having nothing to lose, I sat down and wrote an application letter, frivolous in tone. My surprise a few mornings later, when I got a reply asking me to come and see the editor of *Piccadilly Magazine,* 40 Fleet Street, was mixed with trepidation; I knew nothing about art. I went, however, and was interviewed.

Vincent, the editor, took up two letters. "That one," he said, "is from a man who has been on ——— Magazine for ten years as art editor. This one is from the art editor of ——— Magazine where he has been for twelve years."

I swallowed hard.

"I am going to offer you the job," he went on.

I gasped and said, "In God's name, why?"

"Because," he said, "your letter was the only one that amused me. When can you start?"

I accepted his offer of a hundred fifty pounds a year.

I really liked working on that newly formed magazine, even though, because of my leg, I spent my weekly salary on taxis. My job was to read short stories and hand on my choices to Vincent. If he approved, I had to find the right illustrator for the story; Balliol Salmond, if it was a yarn about a girl in a boat; someone else for a story with shooting; Harry Rountree for animals. When returning a serial to H. G. Wells's agent as unsuitable, I felt myself grow inches higher.

As part of my duties, I also interviewed people. Once, when we were running an article on the human behavior of horses, I went to the great jockey, Steve Donaghue, to get his opinions. He gave them in a friendly way, and as I was going, offered me a tip for the next big race. When I got back to No. 40, the whole staff was on the doorstep. "Did he give you a tip?" somebody asked. I thought for a moment, and passed along the horse's name—whatever it was. They all rushed out to bet their shirts on it. This amused me, for I knew nothing about betting or horses. The horse came in either last or second to last.

My interview with a fighter known as Bombardier Wells was difficult. For the magazine's first issue, a symposium had been planned on the question: *Should the knockout be abolished?* I set out cheerfully enough to ask Billy Wells what he thought about it, but suddenly, on the street, I realized that Billy himself had been knocked out the previous night. Finally, when a man in a dirty sweater led me into his presence, I never felt so small in my life—literally. Billy towered above me, and his hand crushed mine so tightly that I almost squeaked. Asking the embarrassing question made me tremble, but he took it quite well and we had an interesting chat.

## World War I

The *Piccadilly Magazine's* first issue had been scheduled for the end of August, 1914. One of the articles, well illustrated with photographs, was entitled "The Real German Danger—The Crown Prince." But the shot at Sarajevo killed, among other things, the budding *Piccadilly Magazine.* It never appeared.

I was staying with Watson, my doctor friend in Windsor, when war was declared, and still remembers how the two of us—both Socialists—sat up talking about it while the Life Guards nearby cheered all night long. He said tensely: "Oh, the fools, the bloody damn fools. Can't they see it means their death and the death of most things we love?"

During that period, I had joined the Westminster Labour Party, which met in a small room somewhere in St. James's, to talk and plan a new world. Among the speakers who stood on a soapbox in the Park, along with me, were two men I had known at the university. One later became a metropolitan police surgeon, and the other a Harley Street doctor—both probably lifelong Tories.

There are moments in every man's life which he looks back on with sudden embarrassment, saying to himself: "What a bloody fool I was then!" Today I feel like that about my soapbox orator)'. My ignorance of politics and economics was profound, so I can only conjecture that my self-confidence was robust. On one occasion, I foolishly mentioned the General Post Office as an example of socialism. A postman knocked me down, propped me up again, and then beat me into political impotence and death—his battering ram a thorough, shattering knowledge of the inner workings of the post office.

Neither Watson nor I had any grasp of the realities behind the war. In our previous meetings, we had sometimes talked about the chances of war being stopped at the start by the refusal of international labor to load a ship or move a shell. Like most other people, we were quite vague about the whole question, and the only thing we strongly agreed upon was that Germany had asked for it and was going to get it, too. We talked about what we should do. He would volunteer at once as a doctor, and I said, unenthusiastically, that with my university degree I could easily get a commission. "No go," said Watson. "They wouldn't have you with your leg as it is at present. You need six months' rest, old man, and of course the war will be over by then."

Watson went to a base hospital in France but got tired of the monotony, volunteered to serve with a regiment, and died of wounds. He was one of the nicest fellows I have ever known—bright, keen, with a jolly sense of humor. We had been friends for a long time before discovering that our fathers had taught in the same school as apprentice teachers.

I went home to Kingsmuir perturbed in mind. I felt that I really should join up, preferring the artillery because of my bad feet. On the other hand, supporting my cowardice was the statement of Watson and another doctor that I wasn't fit. After a few weeks, I applied for and got the job of temporary headmaster at Gretna Green school. When I arrived there, I found that the permanent head, a hefty he-man, was serving with the K.O.S.B. (King's Own Scottish Borderers), but I did not feel too bad about the situation. My bad leg was swollen and numb, rather than painful, and I think now that the condition must have been, in modern parlance, psychological— my protection against joining the army.

The story of my stay in Gretna Green was told more or less truly in my first book *A Dominie's Log.* But its sequel, *A Dominie Dismissed,* was pure fiction, written during my army service later.

Coming from Fleet Street to a slow village required some adaptation. I had lodgings in a small cottage, and when my landlady brought in the paraffin lamp of an evening and drew the blind of the small window, I felt that I was separated from the whole world. It was characteristic of this gulf separating Gretna from London that she frowned on the use of typewriters on Sundays. I think I began to write books to keep myself from going balmy.

It seems ludicrous that a man who is known as an educational heretic should have taken to this profession merely because journalism and his military courage failed him. Yet I began to think about education for the first time in Gretna. My predecessor had been a disciplinarian, and I arrived to find a silent, obedient school; but I knew that the bigger lads were watching me carefully to see how far they could go. I put on my severest look and glared at them; and on the second day, when the biggest of them tried me out with a semi-insolent answer, I gave him a leathering with the strap. I was still governed by the old dictum of the teaching profession: show you are master at once.

To say I could have gone on as a disciplinarian if I had tried would be a silly thing to say, for I couldn't will myself to do that. Gradually, the children discovered that my discipline was a bluff, that I really didn't care if they learned or not. The silent school became a beer garden, full of noise and laughter. But we carried on the usual lessons, and I suppose they learned as much as they would have if afraid of me.

Either way, it seemed to me such futile waste to teach the geography of India to children who were going out to the farms.

The school board did not care very much what I was doing. Some of its members, as individuals, became friends of mine; Stafford the minister, Dick MacDougall the board clerk, and their wives, were kind to me. According to general opinion among the villagers, I was quite a nice chap but, of course, half-daft. To my horror, I found myself fast becoming countrified—narrow, interested in local gossip, craning my neck to see where the doctor was going. I tried to keep in touch with larger affairs by having the *Nation* and *The New Age* sent weekly by post.

One sunny May morning, a terrible troop-train disaster took place a field's breadth from my lodgings. When my landlady woke me and told me there had been a smash, I jumped on my cycle and went off. The scene resembled a silent film. The only sounds were the hissing of engines and the pops of cartridges as fire crept along the wreckage. Men were lying dead or dying; one soldier with both legs torn off asked me for a cigarette, and he grinned as I lit it for him. "May as weel lose them here as in France," he said lightly. He died before the cigarette was half smoked.

To me, the whole affair seemed unreal, like a dream. I joined a party that was trying to free a man from under an engine. As we worked,, another-man said to me: "They expect the engine to explode any second." But after an uneasy glance at the hissing steam, I thought no more about it. The quietness of that morning was unbelievable. Hardly a man groaned, and when the dying men called aloud, it was always for their mothers. Women and children were among the injured, but no cries or sobbing seemed to come from them. It was said that the officers shot some of the men who were hopelessly pinned under the blazing wreckage, I never knew if the story was true, but hoped it was.

What impressed me so strongly that morning was my lack of any emotion at all, even pity. To be fair to myself, of course, I was busy all the time doing things for the wounded. I felt uncomfortable about this, however, and late at night, sitting in the manse, I said to the minister: "I must be the greatest egoist God ever made: nothing to give anyone, selfish to the core. This morning in that field I had not the tiniest suspicion of any feeling. I was just a stone of indifference."

Stafford stared at me with open eyes. "I was just about to say the same thing to you. I thought I was a monster because I felt nothing." We apparently had assumed the attitude that doctors and nurses have. Just as a person's fear changes into positive energy when rowing a boat in a bad swell, so he can absorb terror and pity while assisting others in pain. And one cannot feel deeply for complete strangers.

Contrariwise, I recall how one of my pupils—a boy— was killed that morning, run down by a motorcycle on his way to the disaster. His mother asked me to go and see his body that night, and I felt a real grief. I also felt keenly the plight of the signalman whose mistake had caused the accident: I had his sons in school and liked them, as well as their father. To me, imprisoning him was only one of the many signs of barbarity in our legal code.

I went off one Saturday to Dumfries to join the army. I know that I had no real wish to be a soldier, but something must have influenced me; either a bad conscience after a friend had been killed or, just as likely, an order that all men should be examined under

the Derby Scheme. I was rejected because of my leg, and given a certificate stating that I was permanently unfit for service. Just as I left the building, however, a sergeant asked me if I had joined the Derby Scheme. I told him that 1 did not need to, because I had been rejected. "But," he said, "you get half a crown if you join." When I asked him how, he took me to an officer, before whom I swore that I would serve "my King and Country" when called upon to do so. The sergeant got a half crown from me for his pains. Later, when all rejected men were ordered to be re-examined and I was passed as fit, I should have had the disgrace of being drafted, if that sergeant hadn't had a thirst on him and an eye to the main chance.

It is difficult to return even in fantasy to my Gretna days. I have motored through the village at least once a year but have stopped there only once—and regretted it. Going back is nearly always a mistake; old threads refuse to be taken up. Dimly I recall pleasant tea parties with my assistants, May and Christine and Bell; the bustle and chaos of the building of the great munitions works, and the transformation of a dull hamlet into a township with cinema and shops. There was also a love story—wrecked again on the Clunie fixation.

Later, in the army, I made a good friend, and we were always together. A year after the war, we ran into each other in the Strand, delighted to see each other. We made a date to have dinner, and for half an hour we talked about old times: "Remember Tubby? That morning when he hadn't shaved and the sergeant…." We laughed a bit. Then the conversation ceased, and we both realized that we had nothing more to say to each other. Army life had drawn us together because we had to concentrate on military things; in civilian life we hadn't an interest in common. It was a sad dinner party, and although we tried to make an artificial cheerfulness, and promised to meet again, we both knew in our hearts that we never could. I know now that if someone long dead—someone I loved (say Clunie) came back to me, we could not pick up where we left off.

In the early spring of 1917, all medically rejected men were ordered to report for re-examination. I was passed A-l by a doctor I had known at the university. This was in Dumfries, and the recruits were sent off the same night to Berwick upon Tweed. There we were asked what regiment we wanted to go into. Thinking of my feet, I said the artillery. The sergeant gave me a look.

"Artillery"—he laughed nastily—"hi, youse blokes, here's a guy as wants to join the artillery!" Then, to me, he snapped: "You have two choices, King's Own Scottish Borderers or the Royal Scots Fusiliers."

I asked where the training camps were situated.

"K.O.S.B., Catterick; R.S.F., Greenock."

I chose the R.S.F. simply because Glasgow was nearer to the people I knew. I was given a pass and set off for Ayr, the R.S.F. recruiting base. One other recruit had chosen the R.S.F., and he advised me to take two days' French leave before I reported. I was afraid to, but when I got to the barracks in Ayr and found that no one expected me—the sergeant in fact was annoyed at my turning up on a Saturday night—I much regretted not having taken the man's advice. By this time, my heart was in my boots: I was a walking misery. The incivility and arrogance of the NCO's with whom I had come in contact, together with the prison appearance of the barracks, gave me a hate of the army that has

never left me. I was given a mattress, told to fill it with straw, and then, with other recruits, had to do some fatigue—carrying beds. Next day I got my uniform, along with my first instruction from an absent-minded corporal whose interests were apparently elsewhere. In a few days we left by train for the training camp at Fort Matilda, between Greenock and Gourock. After vaccination and inoculation—a sickening business to me—our training began in earnest.

My chief associations with the R.S.F. are two: feet and fear. My feet have always been tender, and even today, when I have my shoes specially made, my toes blister if I walk far on a hot day. For years I had worn only shoes, and after an hour's drill in army boots, my ankles were raw flesh, I reported sick again and again, and usually had some dressing put on, but the doctors never seemed to think rest was necessary. I had to go on parade again every time. One lance corporal said to me: "Hi you, big fellow, if you don't be careful you'll be up for swinging the lead (malingering). You've reported sick for three mornings and got M.D. each time." M.D. meant Medicine on Duty.

I cannot recollect any fear of going to France. I knew that we were supposed to have a few months' training and then go out automatically in drafts, to replace casualties. Strangely enough, that didn't worry me; my fear was attached to the lance corporal who made my life a hell for weeks. For some reason, he disliked me at sight; and after parades, when there was any fatigue to do, he always chose me, usually addressing me as "youse big bastard." He was a cab driver in civilian life, they said.

One day, while giving out our letters, he stopped and peered at an envelope. "Jesus Christ, who the hell's this?" he asked. "A- S. Neill, Esq., M.A., author of *A Dominie's Log.* What the hell . . .?" I modestly held up my hand. His mouth opened. "You an M.A. ?" He gasped. "My Christ!" The sequel was astonishing. He never gave me fatigue again, never bullied me. On the contrary, he treated me as if I were the colonel himself. Later, I was to find other NCO's who confessed to a great feeling of inferiority when I was in their squads: they were ashamed of their lack of grammar.

We slept twenty men and an NCO to an army hut. Many of the men, who came mostly from Glasgow, were Glesga-keelies, rough diamonds of the slums. They were fine, friendly lads, always kind to each other, usually cheerful. To them, the army food I found almost uneatable was the best food they had ever had; to them, army discipline seemed not much worse than the discipline of the factory. Their language was almost completely sexual, everything—food, parades, sergeants—described as "fucking." They discussed openly the most intimate details of the anatomies of their wives and sweethearts. They told very dirty stories, mostly without any point, and looked a little nervously at me while doing so. They knew I was a teacher and always addressed me as mister,

One night, when the stories were particularly lurid, every man had told one except myself.

"What aboot a story from you, Mester Neill?" said one.

I smiled.

"All right, boys. A sparrow was sitting on a treetop one morning. A horse went by and left some droppings. The sparrow flew down and made an excellent breakfast, and then it flew back to its treetop and opened its throat and sang to its maker in joy. A hawk came along. It seized that sparrow in its talons and bore it off."

“But here,” said one, “what’s the point o’ the story?”

“That,” I said, “is a story without a point. But it is a story with a moral, and the moral is: If you’ve eaten shit, don’t make a song about it.”

Dead silence followed, and I realized that I had told the wrong story. They were taking it as censure, feeling themselves to be reproved by teacher. Hastily I told them a dirty story that outclassed anything they had told, and their loud laughter showed me that they accepted me as one of themselves.

Life in the army seemed like one continuous rush: we never had time to do anything properly, even shaving. Worst of all was the duty of mess orderly for the day. One waited in a queue for meals to be carried to the huts. Then one had to wash up after the meal and be spotless for the next parade, with rifle clean, buttons and boots shining. Behind all this rush was the dread of being late for parade; that was a crime. But one could be “crimed” for many things—being unshaved, having dirty buttons, unpolished buckles, unwhitened braid.

To be crimed was to be given pack drill with full equipment, doubling up and down the square till exhausted.

I managed to avoid being crimed except once. My rifle, a modern one that I cared for as tenderly as a child, had been taken from me; and I was given an old-fashioned Lee Enfield instead. At rifle inspection, the officer crimed me for having a dirty rifle. I went to my sergeant and told him I had spent a hour trying to clean the thing, but the dirt was ingrained. He took me to see the sergeant in charge of musketry, who examined the rifle. “Nobody can ever clean the thing,” he pronounced. I don’t know what went on behind the scenes, but my name was taken off the crime list.

This incident was exceptional. Generally, one had no redress, and it was this feeling of absolute powerlessness that kept me in the depths. Any corporal could crime you, and you dared not say a word. Theoretically you could, but we all knew that any complaint about a superior officer made you a marked man, and you would get it in the neck ever after. Old soldiers always pleaded guilty without defense, whether justly charged or not.

Hated duties could not be evaded. As a system, the discipline was mistake-proof. You had to be somewhere. If you went sick, your name appeared on the sick list; if you were doing fatigues; your squad sergeant had a note of it. The only man I knew who dodged the system effectively for six weeks was a youth who had been transferred from one squad to another. When he joined his new squad, he found that his name wasn’t on the roll; they had forgotten to transfer it. He gave up going on parade. Every morning, he walked out of camp with belt and cane, a large envelope in his hand marked O.H.M.S. (On His Majesty’s Service), When he was finally found out, nothing happened to him, because the NCO’s who had left his name off the roll knew that they were “for it” if they reported him.

My feet were giving me hell. Every night I soaked them in cold water, and every morning I soaped my socks, but the blisters came as before. I was limping during square drill when a major came along. He told me to fall out and asked what was wrong. I told him. He said I should report sick, and I told him it was useless, for they would only send me on parade again. He then ordered me to take off my boots and show him my feet. “You go back to your hut and rest,” he said. “By the way, what are you in civil life?”

Two nights later, while I sat tending my feet in the hut as usual, the orderly sergeant came round.

"Neill here? Wanted at the Company bunk."

I trembled. Wanted at Company headquarters generally meant being put on the mat. J thought of all my crimes— dodging church parade every Sunday, overstaying my leave— there were enough of them—and reported in trepidation. The major who had ordered me to rest sat writing at a table. I saluted and waited at attention. By this time, I was certain that because of my bad feet he would offer me a job clerking in the office. Finally he looked up.

"Know anything about mathematics?" he barked.

"Yes, sir, I wrote a book on mathematics."

"Oh! You seem to be the very man we want." He lifted a document. "I have here a form from the War Office saying they need men of mathematical knowledge as officers in the artillery. I shall put your name forward."

I was then transferred to the Cadet Corps. All sixteen of us had special drill. We were supposed to show the regiment how the best soldiers perform, and our training was modeled on that of the Guards. When slapping our rifle butts in presenting arms, we almost made our hands bleed. We had lectures in huts and out on the hill, and my feet now got a chance to recover. My pet aversion was bayonet fighting. We were told to regard the sacks as Huns who had just raped our sisters, and were instructed to stab them with fitting fierceness. Unsuccessfully, I thought of ways and means to get out of a form of fighting that would be useless to me in the artillery. But fate again found a way. I had gone to visit Clunie and found that her landlord knew our gym sergeant major; they had been pals in the Scots Greys. The landlord told me to give him his regards when I got back.

The sergeant major looked forbidding, but I pulled myself together and went up to him. "Well?" he demanded. When I gingerly gave him the message from his old pal, he thawed at once, insisting on taking me into his hut for a drink. When he asked what I was doing, I told him of the artillery commission in the offing. Next morning, while I was stabbing clumsily at a Hun sack, he came up. "Here," he said, "this is to be no good to you. Buzz off. You don't need to come to bayonet fighting or, for that matter, early-morning P.T." (Physical training).

I was delighted. Luck had rid me not only of the hated bayonet drill but of the almost hated gymnastics besides. There was another danger, however, when I stopped going on first parade. At any moment, an officer might buttonhole me and ask why I wasn't there. And I knew that on no account must I ever give away the kind gym sergeant major. Also, if I were caught "dodging parades," I might lose my chance for the commission. I solved the question by joining the signalers. Signaling would be useful to me as an artillery officer, I thought, but what appealed to me more was the fact that signalers had little footwork to do. I learned to like reading Morse by telegraphy or light flashes, but never became proficient enough to read-the lamp messages that passed between vessels of the fleet in the Clyde every night.

By this time, I had become a good soldier—that is, I knew my way about, and knew how to get on with my immediate superiors. Bribery could be hazardous, but without it

weekend leave wasn't always easy to get. It could be highly dangerous to offer money to a sergeant major, yet there were ways and means. At one time, our sergeant major was most sparing with weekend passes, and for three weekends in succession, he refused to give me one. So I sat down and wrote to Walter Martin, the cigar merchant in Piccadilly (his wife had admired my *Dominie's Log.* and Martin had sent me cigarettes at times): "For God's sake, make me a present of a barrel of panatellas."

The cigars came. I sauntered out and saw the sergeant major tending his little garden. I lit a cigar, took up a position with my back to his garden fence, and waited as if expecting someone. I puffed hard, and with the tail of my eye, saw him sniff.

"Evening, sir," I said with deference.

"Evening. That cigar smells good," he said.

I took out the small case that went with the barrel. "Try one, sir,"

He invited me into his hut for a drink, and we had a few whiskeys. As I was going, I said, "Look here, sir, I'm in a difficulty."

"If I can help…."he began.

"It's like this, sir. A friend has sent me a box of cigars and really they are useless to me, for I don't like cigars (this was and is true). I thought of giving them to the lads in the hut, but . . ."

"Nonsense," he interrupted hastily, "that would be waste."

"I'll bring them round to you, sir," I said, and duly did so. Though weekend passes came easily after that, I felt rather mean and small; the other poor devils had no rich friends to help them.

Shortly afterward, however, I did a real Boy Scout deed. In the train compartment, while off to Glasgow on a weekend pass, I saw Pat, an Irishman graded C3, whose job was to clean out latrines. Sick of the army, he was running away.

"But, Pat," I said, "at Glasgow station the military police will look at all passes, and they'll pinch you for being without one." He was cast down at this, but I cheered him up by saying I thought I had a plan. When we got out at the Central Station, I saw two redcaps approaching us. I gave them one scared look and legged it down the platform as hard as I could, ignore their cries to stop. When they caught me at the barrier, I handed them my pass, trying to explain that my haste was to catch my train at Buchanan Street. I looked round and saw that Pat had got off safely. He must have returned to Ireland, for I never heard of his being captured.

One day, in company orders there arrived a command that 32703 Private Neill report to Trowbridge Cadet School, Wiltshire.

After Fort Matilda, Trowbridge seemed like heaven. Discipline was easy, and polished buttons did not seem to matter much. The whole section, including the officer in charge, burst into laughter when I marched with the Guards' swing-of-arm, up to the shoulder; and I was ordered to cut out that swank stuff. Then the section laughed at my cleaning my boots before afternoon parade. Tut, tut, I thought, a pleasant place, but, oh, what soldiers!

For the first time in my army career, the work was interesting to me. We studied map-reading, maths, laying out lines of fire, and had gun drill with six-inch howitzers. We did

much with an instrument called a No. 5 Director, and all of us used the prismatic compass. The other fellows were nearer my level than those of the R.S.F., many having been clerks and teachers, and we had some jolly times together.

Sometimes our study excursions would be made on army bicycles. For some queer reason, we were always about half a dozen cycles short, and six unfortunates had to go on foot, perhaps six miles. The lucky ones knew that the pedestrians would make sure of getting a cycle home, so they took out their tire valves and hid their saddles and pumps; one man took his front wheel off and carried it about all day. I was one of the outward walkers once, but sneaked off early to the cycle park and found, as I expected, an assortment of valve-less, saddle less, handlebar less bikes. All I had to do was to collect several items from several bikes and make a finished article—easily done, because they were all standard makes and their parts interchangeable.

One of these excursions was utilized as our exam in map-reading. We all received a map and a small table, and were placed at different points. I stood alone in the middle of a large field. While bending over my map, I heard a sniff, and thinking it was the inspecting officer, I tried to look as busy as I should. On hearing a second, louder sniff, I looked round into the face of an enormous bull with a ring through his nose. Edging round the table, I wondered if a jab of the map on his horns would blind the animal long enough for me to leg it to the distant fence. 1 spoke to the bull in a friendly way, hoping to convince him that I knew I had no right to be there in his field. After a time, he quietly began to eat grass. Probably because of the bull incident, I missed the carping criticism the other fellows had taken from the inspecting officer that day.

I had one degrading experience at Trowbridge, involving a major who lectured on bracketing, a most complicated study of range distances in firing practice. He was not a good lecturer, and his voice must have put me on the verge of sleep. Suddenly I started, for he was looking at me and, in an angry voice, was ordering me to the blackboard to explain what bracketing was. I had not the faintest idea but of course could not say so, proving my complete ignorance by standing there like an ass with a bit of chalk in my hand. By this time he was livid and red.

"Why brainless idiots like you get to cadet schools is more than I can understand. I don't blame you—you can't help your stupidity; I blame the system that sends you up here. Have you had no education?"

I hung my head.

"Answer me. Where were you educated?"

"Edinburgh University," I said humbly. A titter round the room was nipped off by the glare of the officer. He never spoke to me again.

Our term ended, we passed our exit exams, and in front of us was Lydd—the real thing, the nightmare lying ahead of a pleasant dream. Trowbridge had been like a university, easy and academic. But Lydd was officered by men just back from the front with no sympathy for the academic in anything. Our three weeks in Lydd were one continuous grind, and we discovered that everything we had learned at Trowbridge was of no value there. Laying out a line of fire no longer suggested a leisurely problem in maths; it was a thing to be done in ten seconds with a slide rule. The men at Lydd knew their jobs and put the wind up us all, for failure meant not only the disgrace of being

returned to Trowbridge for a month or two, but also being put into a section of new men. No, that probability we dared not face, so we slaved.

The major at Lydd who taught the bracketing was a fearful man, and we had been warned about him long before we came up. When we were using real shells for the first time, he took us one by one to the observation post. There we all watched the burst of a shell, and had to know at once which directions to telephone to the gunner for his next shot. The major kept firing questions at us, and when we made mistakes— as we did, mainly through fear of him—he called us everything he knew.

We all passed, however, and were duly notified that we had received commissions in the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

After our ten days' leave to collect uniforms and kits, I was posted to an officers' "pool" in Aldershot, saddened to find that most of my pals had been posted to Farnborough. Our pool consisted of about sixty officers waiting to be sent to France. The life was pleasant enough. I remember clearly the night I arrived and being saluted by the sergeant major. How hard to believe that I would never again fear an NCO! I had a bitter feeling when I thought of our good food and comforts, and compared them with the food and lack of privacy I had as a noncom. Officers and privates lived poles apart in every way; the old distinction was still there—Eton at one end, the slums at the other. The officer planned; the private had no need to think, only to clean with spit and polish.

I had a batman, an independent sort of fellow from Lancashire. He was an active socialist, he said, and to hell with it anyway—what was a bloody officer but the servant of capitalism? So my orderly lay on my bed, smoking my cigarettes, while I polished my leggings and boots for the morrow. He kept assuring me that he bore me no personal grudge because I was an officer. He seemed a nice chap but a born pessimist, who swore that every league football match was faked—sold to the highest bidder—and offered to bring me written evidence if I liked.

Aldershot was a lazy life. We had lectures and sometimes slow exercises, but we all felt that these were just to keep us from getting too discontented. Every few days, a list of officers for the next draft would go up, but my name never appeared among them. Instead, I was told to attach myself to a training battery where my duties included lectures on lines of fire.

One day, I saw a gunner obviously paying no attention as I laboriously, and badly, tried to explain the mathematics of laying out a line of fire. To me, he seemed a stupid sort of a fellow.

"Here you," I said, "you don't seem to be taking any interest in what I am teaching. What are you in civil life?"

"I am maths master at ——— Secondary School," he said.

Rising to the occasion, I held out my chalk. "For the Lord's sake then, show them how this damn thing is done."

And he showed them.

I kept hoping to be sent to France on a draft; not because I had miraculously acquired more courage, but simply because the other men were all out, or going out, and I felt left behind, like the lame boy in the Pied Piper story. Then an epidemic of influenza ran

through the camp, and I went down with it. Mine was a bad attack, ending in neurasthenia. At Gretna Green, I had once been off work for a month with the same trouble, but this became worse—a complete nervous breakdown, with insomnia, and nightmares when I did fall asleep. In short, I was a dud as a soldier or anything else. The M.O. worried about me—probably suspected me of being a mental case—and said he would send me up to a nerve specialist in town when I was fit to travel.

The specialist turned out to be Dr. William H. Rivers, the famous anthropologist. I did not know anything about him, nor did I know anything about psychology. I recall being mildly surprised when he asked me to tell him a dream, and being more and more surprised at his evident interest while I told it. It was a dream about a snake I had killed that kept coming to life again. I had never heard of Freud then, but apparently Rivers had. Finally, he said to me: "If you go to France, you will either win the V.C. or be shot for running away. We won't risk it. I'll recommend that you give up your commission on grounds of ill health."

So ended my inglorious career as a soldier. I must have cost the nation quite a lot of money, giving back little in duty or work. I realize now that my nervous breakdown was the method used by my unconscious to keep me from danger. On a conscious level, I seemed ready to go to the fighting front without any abnormal fear. In fact, I felt that as an officer it would be easier because I would be leading men and would have to show them how to face danger.

Years after the war, Walter Martin, my cigar-king friend, said something to me that was unbelievable.

"Neill, I saved your life."

"How?"

"I had a pull at the War Office and arranged that you would not be sent to the front,"

I can scarcely believe this, but if it *were* so, it would explain why my name never appeared on the draft notices in the officers' pool. Walter died before I could ask him to tell me more, and I still doubt very much if any such influence could have exempted an individual soldier.

After a long convalescence, I began to think of a job. Back in the Gretna Green period, a lady who was much involved with King Alfred School in Hampstead had written me, after having read my *Dominie's Log* and when I went to see her she told me about Horner Lane, who founded the unique Little Commonwealth reform camp for juvenile delinquents. She gave me a report of one of his lectures. She had also introduced me to John Russell, the headmaster of King Alfred.

While at the cadet school, I learned that Lane's Little Commonwealth was in Dorset, not very far from Trowbridge. I wrote him asking if I could come to see him, and, when he said I could, got weekend leave. Homer Lane was easily the most impressive personality I had met up to then. He told of his cases as I listened, entranced. His young delinquents charmed me, and I got Lane to promise to let me work at Little Commonwealth when I had finished army service.

My first act when I felt fit enough was to write Lane, saying I could come. I got a reply telling me that the Commonwealth had been closed, and that Lane himself was in

bad health in London. Disappointed, I thought I should try second-best. I wrote to John Russell about a job, got one, and joined the staff of K.A.S.

J.R as we all called Russell was a dear old man. I liked him from the first moment I saw him, and he liked me. Since Russell's beginning as a pioneer thirty years before, K.A.S. had been regarded as the most advanced school of its kind. While perhaps not the first to practice coeducation, it did more to force the issue upon English opinion than any other school. Long before my time, it had done away with prizes and marks and corporal punishment.

I entered this famous school rather timidly with my very Scottish accent. My reputation as a mad Scots dominie had preceded me, and some o£ the pupils later told me that they had stared at me the first day, wondering if I were really mad or only a crank.

I liked the *Stimmung* of the school at once; its free and easy discipline took my heart. But I disliked the staffroom, and often have wondered why it was not a happier place than it was. It did not have the congenial atmosphere of the classrooms; and although the staff members were friendly as individuals, they were collectively—what I called them then— bloody. J.R. got me to ask Homer Lane to come and give the staff a few talks on psychology. Lane sat with a face like vinegar, and after the first talk, said to me; "My God, Neill, what is wrong with that staff' It gives me the absolute jim-jams. It's full of hate." In a way, I think that I may have been a fly in the ointment—the young whippersnapper who had come to tell them how to run their school. Very properly, they put me in my place.

Fundamentally, the problem was J.R. himself. He was God, a lovable old God, but nevertheless, God—and a moralist of great force. I first realized this when Patrick, aged eight, kissed Clare, aged seven. J.R. had a "call over" about it and spoke for nearly an hour. I came away feeling that kissing must be the main sin against the Holy Ghost.

There was something dead about the pupils; they lacked an interest in life. This seemed most obvious at meetings of former Alfredians, when the "old boys" sat at the feet of J.R. or George Earle, an English master who served as second-in-command, and listened as if their one-time teachers had all the wisdom in the world. Their attitudes toward the old school resembled a St. Andrews student's toward his old alma mater— a regressive looking-back to Elysium, They were not quite of this world.

I learned with mixed feelings that some of the big lads in the school had never heard the word *shit,* and did not know the ordinary swear words, but that one or two of the girls knew them all. Dimly, I began to sense that I had come to a school whose life attitudes were fundamentally and essentially those which had damned my own life in Scotland—moral standards from without. K.A.S. was far from being free and very soon I found myself "agin the government,"

I had begun to be analyzed by Lane and became a frequent visitor to his home. What he said about freedom was the gospel I had been looking for; a scientific foundation for the vague yearnings shown forth in my *Dominie's Log.* Thus it came about that I began to try to "improve" K.A.S, in staff meetings. The school wasn't moving with the times, I complained. It should have self-government. Dear old J.R, spread his hands and said, with his usual smile: "Go on, Neill. Try it. Try it."

I tried it. The classes changed from one room to another at the ringing of the lessons bell. Thus the Betas would have maths the first period, say, and then come to me for geography when the bell rang. Naturally, all self-government meant to them was a chance to let off steam in my room for an hour. They made a hell of a row, and the teachers in neighboring rooms got annoyed. At the next staff meeting, they all said it was obvious, of course, that self-government didn't work. It didn't, but it certainly "played." The day came when J.R. came to me very perplexed and very sad, and said: "One of us has to resign, Neill." Once more I was unemployed.

## The Death of Clunie

It was while I was at K.A.S. that Clunie died. A wire from home sent me north to find her ill with pneumonia. For years, she had had some obscure disease of the throat; and for years, she had been treated by x-rays. I think I knew that she would not recover. I sat by her bedside for hours, trying to appear hopeful and cheerful. God, it was a week of the kind of hell that I had never known before and have not known since. I did not dream, but woke up each morning feeling that I had been in the deepest pit of Dante's Inferno and feeling I had been there for a thousand years. Most men know what it is to have someone who will always understand, someone you naturally turn to in joy or sorrow. To me, Clunie was that one: I knew exactly what her reactions would be to anything I said; knew what would make her laugh, what would pain her. I knew also that she was always on my side; I was her hero, and I could do no wrong. The Peter Pan in me loved Clunie because she appreciated me. When something amusing happened, my first thought had always been: "I must tell Clunie this. How she'll laugh!" At her funeral, some small thing happened—I forget what, maybe only a top hat falling off some dignified mourner—and my first thought was: "Clunie will laugh at this when I tell her."

My grief was made more harrowing by remorse—the remorse that is always a component of grief. I remembered the times when I had neglected her. She had wanted me to come home for the previous Easter holiday, but I went to Dorset. To me, in my despair, that seemed unforgivable. I kept remembering what I did not want to remember. My mother, on the other hand, kept forgetting what she did not want to remember. As her wet eyes followed the coffin to the hearse, she said; "Clunie was the perfect daughter. I never had to lift my hand to her in all her life." It struck me then that that was one of the things I should have liked to tell Clunie, for Mother had given her many a spanking. Clunie had often laughed at our mother for her extrovert's trick of trying to deceive herself; and, although my father was an introvert, he had a similar ability. At one time, Clunie and I called them "the ostriches."

Nearly all children go through a stage during which they become very critical of their parents. This happens with the strengthening of a psychological urge to break free from the apron strings. I went through such a stage from about eighteen to twenty-four. At one time, I was ashamed of both my parents. My father embarrassed me because he had no "manners"; if we had a guest to dinner, Clunie and I implored Mother not to have soup because of Father's loud method of supping it. I was ashamed of Mother because she talked too much, often irrelevantly. She was really a very bad listener, and always tried to edge in a word, even when the conversation dealt with subjects she knew nothing about. I recall one occasion when this infuriated me. A visitor was telling us about his adventures

in China, and she kept interrupting him with silly remarks about her brother Sandy once having known a man there. I was impatient, arrogant; my father, on the contrary, had the patience of Job. He read his *Scotsman* every morning, while my mother always took up the paper about bedtime. "Listen to this, George," she would say and proceed to read out a whole column of news that he had already seen. Not once did he dare say: "I've read it, Mary."

My rather hateful, critical attitude toward my parents seemed to disappear after Clunie's death. Only then did I begin to have tender feelings about my father. No longer was I the Cinderella of the family; by this time, Father had accepted me as a son to be proud of—someone who had made good—though he still tried to look out for good jobs for me. When an old friend of Mother's came on a visit from Australia, where he had made good, my father spoke to him about my prospects out there. He said that he was a bosom friend of the Prime Minister, and would get me a job as inspector of schools if I said the word. I didn't say the word, but have sometimes wondered what would have become of me if I had gone out to Australia.

I was ashamed of my mother's garrulity, for she liked to make conversation a monologue. But all the time I hated myself for criticizing her. My parents gave up so much for us; they were so concerned about our health and happiness and future. They were really grand folk, but so very remote from us in every way that was of inherent moment

As a grown man, I used to write home once a fortnight. Every letter took a long time. I sat and chewed my pen and wondered what to say. Most of the letters were about the weather. And when I went home as a young man, I found it difficult to talk to my parents. We had no common interests. Poor souls, they were so naive about us. When I was nineteen, on occasion I would come home late. Father asked where I had been, and I could not tell him I had been out with Liz Macdonald because one did not tell parents such things in the early days of the century. I did what all other sons and daughters did then—and may do now—I lied. I always got away with my lies, but my brother Willie made a bloomer when he said he had been having a chat with old Geordie Cable. Geordie had been dead for five years.

I am sure that most people carry throughout their lives a guilt feeling about their parents. My mother used to lecture us on our ingratitude. "We have done everything for you, fed you and clothed you, and what do we get? No gratitude. Mrs. Smith who half starved her children and treated them harshly, her children adore her now and would do anything for her." The sad feature was that the statement was true.

The gulf between Victorian parents and their children was unbridgeable. It is too often the same today. The fear a child acquires from angry adult voices and spankings in babyhood lives on for a lifetime. It was fear of our parents that made us strangers to them.

At the university, I knew only one student who could share a risqué story with his father. When I was over thirty, a visiting teacher once began to tell my father and me some sex stories. I was much distressed and embarrassed, and I think my father was, too. I could get into some kind of a human relationship with my mother, but never with my father. My sisters did not fear him and used to be pert with him sometimes, and in my

innocence, I wondered why he seemed to like their pertness. He mellowed when he grew old; but as a young father, he was stern and heavy.

Freudians have told me that my zeal for educational pioneering arose as a reaction against my father. How they explain the fact that my brothers who also feared him did not go in for pioneering, I do not know. There must be at least more than a grain of truth in the assertion, nevertheless.

I have long given up theorizing about the origins of behavior. It is so pointless, for even if my life work has only been a protest against what began over seventy years ago, what can be done about it? Who cares? I do not.

In his notorious statement that history is bunk, Henry Ford was not so far from the truth, if we consider history from the individual angle of any human being. I attach tremendous importance to environment. My school testifies to that. Yet there is something beyond environment that we cannot get hold of. Saying that a great composer was born into a musical family does not explain him. On the dark side, failing as a house-painter does not explain Hitler. I really wonder if my fear of my father had much to do with my career.

Looking back on my own experience as a teacher, I can say without boasting that I was a good one, although not ideal from the point of view of preparing pupils for States examinations. My teaching stressed imagination. When I set a subject for an essay, it was never *"How I Spent My Holidays"* but rather, *"What Happened when my False Teeth Fell Out on my Plate/'* or *"A Snail's Description of its Journey from the Front Door to the School Gate."*

Nearly fifty years ago, I said to a class: "I am going to give you the first sentence of a story; 'Hell and Buggery!' said the Bishop. Now, boys, you carry on."

A boy of thirteen wrote: "The bishop leaned over his pulpit. 'Brethren,' he said solemnly, 'as I entered the cathedral this morning, I heard one of you use these dreadful words. I shall take them as my text.' "I certainly could not have risen to that standard; I'd have made the bishop flub an eight-inch putt on the green.

I had to give up teaching older pupils because they protested that my methods would be of no help to them in passing outside examinations—a true criticism that condemned the deadly officials who set up the English papers—not their teacher. I could determine a child's standard in English within a half-hour's talk, plus a look at his notebook that contained his writing on any topic he liked.

Granted that one cannot teach anything of importance: to love, to be honest, to be charitable. But there are skills that *have* to be taught; hence the good old apprenticeships, even if the first year consisted of making tea for the qualified journeymen. My contention is that schools, by and large, deal with things that do riot matter, and that teachers become as narrow as their subjects. Bacon, if he lived today, might say that specialization maketh a narrow man. This applies not only to teachers but to other professionals, including doctors. Seldom have I met a doctor who had a wide interest or a wide area of conversation.

The older generation of teachers may have had a broader outlook than today's crop. My father, I recall, had interesting discussions with neighboring village dominies. In those far-off days, the dominie was the oracle, for he, apart from the minister, was the

only educated man in his village. Since Kingsmuir was too small to have a kirk, my father served as advisor, materially and spiritually.

Like the schoolmaster in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village.* Father had a fund of information:

*And still they gaz'd, and still the wonder grew,*

*That one small head could carry all he knew.*

Though not a man of good judgment so far as his own family was concerned, he seemed to give good advice to the villagers. True, the matters may have been minor ones, but not to the one asking: "Should I send Wullie tae the Academy, or let him work as a loon on the farm?"

Sometimes pupils at a higher school brought him intricate problems to solve—the kind in which a man rows up a river at three miles an hour against a current flowing at one mile an hour; he stops for lunch foe half an hour and meanwhile the current has changed—problems beyond me, but my father never failed once.

I know that my ability as a teacher came from watching my father's methods. Long before modern devices were used for teaching geography (the method consisted mainly of lists of names), he made his pupils ask questions: "Why is Glasgow where it is? Why London? Why is there more rain on the West Coast of Scotland than on the East?"

Somehow I knew all the rivers of Britain; the cotton, pottery, iron, and coal towns. Snippets still remain—Hexham famous for hats and gloves, Redditch for needles, Axminster for carpets. And even now, I feel that motoring to Scotland means going uphill, because it was uphill on the hanging map. He had no way of knowing how foreign names were pronounced. For him, the capital of Iceland was *Reeky-a-veek;* Bucharest was *Boo-carest;* Arkansas was pronounced with the final "s." He followed his own pronunciation for common English words: pencil was *pincil,* a lantern was a *lantren,* a physician was a *phyiecian.* Yet he always knew the meanings of even the most uncommon words. If crossword puzzles had existed in his days, he would have been a whiz.

Father failed to make some things clear, and I never understood ratio and proportion until I had lessons from Ben Thomson, the maths teacher in Forfar Academy. Father and I did square roots, but I never knew the reason for the method. And I still don't know. Maths to Father was a mechanical process.

In a word class, we formed a half-circle; if the boy or girl at the top of the line did not give the right answer, the one who did took that pupil's place. On one occasion I reached the top. The word was *evident,* and I offered, *easily seen.* But I had a very bad conscience later, for I had just learned the word from a line my brother Willie used: "That's quite evident, said the monkey after he shat on the tablecloth." I had a vague, frightening notion that the word *evident* was associated with shit and that my father knew that.

Father's method certainly gave us a vocabulary. And he offered us a sound training in grammar, so that even today I feel a mild shock when someone says: "He spoke to Jim and I" or "These sort of things are useless." In teaching us Latin, Father showed us how that language helped in spelling; we knew that *committee* had two "m's" because it came from *con* (with) and *mitto* (I send).

I had just begun to appreciate the lines of Virgil when I had to face an examination. After passing that test, I never opened a Latin book again. And that is the absurd feature about learning classic languages. One spends dreary years over the grammar; but unless one continues to take Classics at a university the whole subject disappears from memory.

I am convinced that my father showed me how to be a good teacher. Though he had little humor, he had some imagination, and he could make history live for his pupils.

## Origin of Summerhill

When I had to leave K.A.S. early in 1920, I was genuinely anxious, for I saw no future. True, I might get a job as English teacher in a Scots school, but London had gripped me, and I didn't want to leave it. Mrs. Beatrice Ensor stepped in and offered me the job of jointly editing *The New Era* with her. I took up my duties in Tavistock Square, sharing a room with her husband, a nonsmoker who hated my smoking all day at work. The Ensors were Theosophists, and the paper was owned, I believe, by The Theosophical Society. Some people found Mrs. Ensor a forbidding person, but I liked her and teased her most of the time. She was the only adherent I ever met who could laugh at Theosophy and at herself.

It was good fun having a paper to edit. Mrs. Ensor gave me a free hand to say anything I liked; and I soon saw that the more outrageously I attacked pedants and schools, the more delighted she was. She was a born organizer, and through her, I went to Holland that same year to meet some Austrian children who were coming to England after the war. This was my first trip to the Continent, and those ten days in Holland were full of interest. Everything was exciting, and today I would give all I possess to recover the special sense of adventure that accompanies a first trip abroad. Today I go reluctantly, hating the waits at customs offices, the examination of passports, the monotony of hotels and porters, and, worst of all the long train journeys. Experience always dies; it can never live again. I drive a car automatically, but when I was learning, every mile was a delightful mastering of a difficult challenge. In truth, though it sounds like a platitude, the surmounting of difficulties is the dearest part of life.

Pleasant as my work could be. *The New Era* was no abiding place; I knew that I must move on. Luck brought me an invitation to take part in a New Educational Fellowship Conference in Calais, and another invitation to go on to Salzburg to lecture to an international conference of women. Salzburg's beauty and warmth bowled me over and made me want to stay there always. Though I still have vague longings to go back, I know that I never shall.

From Salzburg, I went on to Hellerau, a suburb of Dresden, to stay with and visit my friends Karl Baer, and Christine, his American wife; the architect, Dr. Otto Neustatter, and his wife, Frau Doktor; and there, in 1921, under the pedagogical eye of the German Ministry of Education, we founded an international school.

Germany gave me much that I could not get at home. For one thing, I lived there nearly three years in an atmosphere of rhythm and dance, of great opera and orchestral music. I met nationals of nearly every European country, and each day learned something new. My stay in Hellerau turned out to be the most exciting period of my life thus far. Only the German educational system could teach me nothing. To me -it seemed barren

and hollow—pedantry masquerading as progress. Recalling it now, there comes to my mind in metaphor, the German rneistersingers with their rules and foot measures, hating and fearing the new young Walther with his *Preislied* of freedom. The Germans did not really want freedom. They were afraid of it, and their more, honest and enlightened teachers confessed to this.

At first, I knew not a word of German. "When I brought over my first English pupil—Derrick, aged eight—I was trying to learn German with *Hugo's Tutor:* but in three weeks, Derrick was not only talking German—he was speaking Saxon dialect. (In Summerhill my German pupils speak English in a few weeks, and, oddly enough, answer in English when I talk to them in German.)

Our International School had three divisions: eurhythmics (rhythm and dance), the German school, and my own Auslander (foreign) department. 1 won't discuss here the deep-seated differences between my division and the German one. The important thing was what my stay in Hellerau did for me. It gave me Weltanschauung—a world view—and in killing my nationalism, made me an internationalist forever. The experience humbled me. There I was with my M.A. in English, having to sit silent while others talked of art, music, and philosophy. I felt uneducated, and do so today when these subjects are discussed. For me, a university education had been no education at all.

How blind I was then—how blind we all were—not to see that the postwar poverty of Germany would lead to Hitler. Personally, I lived like a millionaire; much of our tuition was paid in pounds, I traveled first class from Munich to Vienna for three shillings, the exchange rate was that good; Benedictine and Curacao fifths were eight pence each. On the other hand, I recall changing ten pounds in a Dresden bank when a telegram arrived asking me to come to Vienna. I was away for ten days, taking my marks with me. On my return, they were not enough to pay my tram fare to Hellerau.

Every day at school was stimulating, some days more than others. I gave psychological talks to the girls studying eurhythmics. One day, a Russian girl came into my office. She threw her arms round me and said: *"Herr Neill, ich Hebe Sie."* I did not know her name, and it was a shock to get a declaration of Jove from someone I had never spoken to. My shock became alarm when she continued: "I have told my husband, and he is coming Saturday to shoot you." In spite of my alarm, I felt slightly amused at the idea of being shot for a woman whose name I didn't know. On Saturday morning, as I walked to school, I saw her approaching with a man about six feet three. I thought of fleeing, but we met and she introduced us. Her husband shook my hand warmly, if painfully. The woman had transferred her desires to me and had built a fantasy around the two o£ us.

During the early twenties, a more frightening situation arose when the French put black soldiers in the occupied Ruhr. The Germans were furious. One day, while I was in a Dresden tram, four tough-looking youths entered. I saw them eyeing me, and heard one say: "He's a Frenchman." They rose and came toward me. I hastily took out my passport. They smiled. "Ach, an Englishman!" "No," I said, "Scotsman," Then they insisted I get out with them at the next stop and have a drink. I did and discovered that they were filled with pity for me, because to them Scotland was a slave state held down by the bullying English.

As already noted in this book, I was never a particularly brave man. But more than a decade later, about 1936, I had my moment while idling in Hanover between trains. It

was a fine Sunday morning for walking through the town. Suddenly, I heard musk, and round the corner came a troop of SS men. Everyone on the sidewalk stopped to give the Hitler salute. But I could not bring myself to do it, and just stood and looked. At a signal from the leader, two troopers came toward me. I trembled, for not long before, when my friend Geoffrey Cox (now Sir Geoffrey) had had a similar experience in Berlin, his British passport did not protect him from a beating. Still I could not raise my hand in salute. Hastily, I showed my passport. They hesitated and then handed it back to me, after which I sought the safety of the Bahnhof waiting room.

Since the Germans did not allow me to teach Germans, my school division consisted of English, Norwegians, Belgians, and Yugoslavs only. I was forbidden to teach English to the German division because I had not taken my degree in a German university. For such instruction, I had to appoint a German woman whose pronunciation was terrible. She kept arguing with me about accent, and when an Irish visitor appeared whose brogue could be cut with a knife, she cried: *"Wunderbar—das* is the proper Oxford accent."

Our staff of teachers was a mixed lot. The Communists among them demanded that the school be ruled communally. For about a million marks (fifteen shillings English), I bought a bicycle; but it was never there when I wanted it. "It should be common to the whole staff," I was told. How earnest these Germans were! I made a gift of a cinema projector to the whole school, and a program committee was elected to choose the films. When I gave priority to Charlie Chaplin, they were shocked. "That is not education." So we had the children sit and watch boring films about travel and shellfish. If a film did not have a pedagogic message, it was considered useless. The leader of the German department began his speech to parents with the words: "Here we work," and was annoyed when I asked him why his opening words were not: "Here we play." He and I shared the hostel, the *Scbulhetm,* with me taking the upper story and he the lower one. Of an evening, my group would dance to records, while below he was reading aloud Goethe or Nietzsche. One by one, his pupils would sneak up the back stairs to join in the dance; there were bad feelings about that.

Many of our pupils were Jewish, and I am sure they all ended up in Belsen or Dachau. Even in 1921, Dresden shops had notices saying that no Jews would be served. Once I pulled a futile trick on a bookseller's shop. I asked to see editions of Ibsen, Strindberg, Nietzsche, and the counter was soon covered with beautiful volumes as the staff fussed around the "rich Englander." Then I told them there was a book in the window I wanted to see. Whereupon I went out, came back, and said: "I see you don't serve Jews."

"But, mein Herr, you aren't a Jew," "No," I said, "I am no Jew but in my country we do not bar Jews from shops." I had had no intention of buying anything.

Later, I saw that such tactics would most likely add Anglophobia to anti-Semitism.

I cannot go into all the arguments and difficulties we had in the school; our fights with the State authorities, our internal differences about policy. I had an early encounter with German prolixity when the board o£ governors asked me to translate a printed syllabus into English, so that we could get English and American pupils. It was about ten pages long; my translation ran to a page. There was annoyance. "But," I replied, "That's all you said." Brevity is not a strong feature of German writing.

My co-governors (and founders) of the school were good people, all of them, and we weathered the interminable difficulties well. Dr. Otto Neustatter appeared as a dear old man in my *Dominie Abroad.* Neustatter's wife, Frau Doktor. whom I later married, was a sister of the brilliant, once-famous Australian novelist, Henrietta Richardson Robertson. who wrote under the name of Henry Handel Richardson, One of the pleasures of those long-ago days was the presence of Edwin and Willa Muir. Willa taught in our school; Edwin wrote poems and prose.

We took a lease on the school building; but Gurdjieff, who was looking for a house for his philosophical school of thought, fell in love with our *Anstalt,* and persuaded Harold Dohrn, the owner, to hand it over to him. When we said we would fight the case in court, the owner suddenly came over to our side. Later, I heard that Gurdjieff had made a case of it, and Dohrn said in court that Gurdjieff had hypnotized him. In any event, Gurdjieff lost the case, and later, with Ouspensky, set up his school in Fontainebleau. I could not read Gurdjieff after that incident; somehow I never got over his remark: "They don't matter; my work is infinitely more important." He and all my Hellerau associates are long dead—Baer and Dohrn shot by the Russians.

Here I should say that most of the people mentioned in this book are no longer living. Every autobiography is, if not a lie, an evasion of the truth. Suppose one of my brothers had been a criminal, or one of my sisters a prostitute, I could not tell of them, for their children would most probably be alive. Indeed, I wonder what value an autobiography has. To know that J. M. Barrie, Ruskin and Carlyle were impotent, to know that Freud when catching a train had to be in the station an hour beforehand, to know that Reich was overzealous or that Wilde was a homosexual—I cannot see how such knowledge affects our judgment of their work. Luckily, we know almost nothing of Shakespeare. Wagner was a nasty man, anti-Semitic, mean to his friends, mean about money; but knowing this does not take away from the delight I have when listening to *Die Meistersinger* or *Tristan und Isolde.*

In 1923, revolution broke out in Saxony. Shots were fired on the Dresden streets. Our school was emptying. The dance division went to Schloss Laxenberg near Vienna, and I took my division to a mountaintop at the edge of the Tyrol, four hours' train time from Vienna. We were housed in an old monastery, and beside it stood a *Wahlfahrtskirche,* or pilgrimage church. According to hearsay, such pilgrimage docked off four hundred years from purgatory.

This church had Stone saints all around, and when the pilgrims came from all over Catholic Europe, our English pupils placed haloes on the sculptures by shining broken mirrors on them. There was much crossing themselves by visitors, and when the trick was discovered, I wondered why we were not lynched, for the local peasants were among the most hateful people I ever met. Few had ever seen a foreigner; and the fact that we were "heathens" was enough to kindle, and keep alight, their hatred of us. A German girl of nine sunbathed in a swimsuit. We had a policeman up next day saying the village was shocked and angry. Farmers and their wives threw broken bottles into the pond we bathed in. The climax came when I was summoned to the education ministry in Vienna. "Herr Neill, do you teach religion?"

"No."

The official took down a hefty volume and read out the law: every Austrian school must teach religion. I explained that I had no Austrian children, but that was no excuse to him; the law must be obeyed. So it happened that I took my little group to England.

But we had fun, too. When we arrived in Austria, the snow was deep and we had to buy skis. (We pronounced the word in the Norwegian and German way—*shees.)* Our postman took nearly an hour to climb the mountain, but only about ten minutes to return. None of us, however, reached that stage of skiing proficiency. We danced a lot—foxtrots and tangos— which I loved. Today 1 cannot dance, not because of age—I could still do a tango—but because the new rhythms are too quick for me, and I can see no skill or grace in wagging knees and bottoms.

I had a sentimental attachment to anything Austrian. The first German book I ever read was *Das Tagebucb ernes halb-wuchigen Madchens,* which was translated later into English as *A Young Girl's Diary.* This diary of a middle-class girl from the age of eleven to fourteen was written, of course, in a child's language and was therefore easy for me to read. Indeed, I learned from it a great number of Viennese words that many Germans do not know. Freud wrote a short preface for this book, calling it a jewel, and in a way, it does explain much of his theory about sex, for he must have been influenced by the ignorant sex repression of the late nineties. In fact, he could have found his whole sexual philosophy within its pages. The diary gave me a glamorous, really romantic view of Viennese society with its afterglow of Strauss waltzes and *Rosenkavalzer,* along with the city's gaiety and *Gemutlichkeit.*

In late 1924, when my pupils came with me to England, I rented a house in Lyme Regis, Dorset. It was called Summerhill and stood on the hill going to Charmouth. Lyme was. and is, a class-conscious little town made up mostly of retired people. My wife and I (by this time I had married Frau Doktor Neustatter) were outsiders; upper-class noses looked down on our dirty little youngsters—till one day a crested Rolls Royce drove up. The Earl of Sandwich, one of the founders of the Little Commonwealth, had come to visit us for a few days. After that, people bowed to us.

This reminds me of Bertrand Russell's story in his autobiography. During an antiwar protest, he was being roughly handled by a policeman. A woman shouted: "That is Bertrand Russell, the writer and philosopher." The cop paid no attention and went on hustling Russell. "He is the brother of an earl," cried the woman,

"What!"

The hustling stopped. Good old English snobbery. We had only five pupils, three paying half fees, two paying nothing. My first wife and I stood looking at an ironmonger's window wondering if we could afford a spade, Because Lyme was a holiday resort; we turned the school into a boarding house in the vacations and managed to make ends meet. Then we got too many problem children, misfits that other schools did not want. Fifty years later, we have the same trouble. In fact, the school's whole life has been handicapped by too large a proportion of such pupils. An American father will write: "My boy is a normal kid but he hates lessons." The pupil arrives, his face full of hate; he bullies, steals, destroys. Obviously, the father knows he is dumping his failure onto us. It is interesting to note that none of our academic successes—our professors, doctors, lawyers, scientists—came as problem children.

Our staff was small in Lyme. George Corkhill taught science—good old George, who was with us for nearly thirty years; "Jonesie," who had joined us in Austria, taught maths; my wife acted as matron. It was a stirring time; and because they were so interesting, the problem children then gave us more joy than sorrow. One girl, who later became golf champion of half a dozen countries, had been accustomed to making her parents and teachers angry at her defiance. She decided to take me on. She kicked me for an hour but, in spite of the pain, I refused to react. Finally, she burst into tears, and learned the hard way, I expect, that her attempts to take the micky out of adults did not always succeed. At that stage, I was a proper fool. I thought that psychology could cure everything, barring a broken leg. I took on children injured at birth, cases of sleeping-sickness, and mentally deficient boys and girls. Of course, I soon found that I could do nothing to cure them.

When our three-year lease was up, we had twenty-seven pupils and could not house them. I bought an old Morris Car and set off along the south coast to find a larger place. There I saw some beauties at 50,000 pounds each. Then I went up the east coast, the last house on my list being Newhaven in the small town of Leiston, Suffolk. It was only 2,250 pounds, a sum I did not have but could handle on a mortgage. I brought the name Summerhill with me; yet in forty-four years, not a single visitor has asked me what it means, despite the fact that the place is dead flat.

"When World, War II broke out, we remained in Summerhill during the "phony" period. After Dunkirk, however, when invasion was expected, we had to move. In North Wales, we found a big dilapidated house whose lavatories and most of its windows had been smashed by local boys. There we stayed for five years, the longest years of my adult life. It rained continually. I had to give up my car, queuing up for buses. All around us were Welsh-speaking people, of course; and some of the aged knew no English.

The atmosphere of Festiniog made me feel as though I had returned to my native Scottish village. Chapel services and hymns, with their usual hypocrisy, were everywhere. One shopkeeper said to me: "I don't believe in any God; but if I didn't go to the bloody chapel every Sunday, I wouldn't get any custom." The villagers were shocked by our pagan behavior, yet, one by one, they began to sneak into our Sunday-night dances.

Wales was hell for me. Shortly after we arrived, one of our brightest boys accidentally drowned; and later, after my wife Lilly had a stroke, she lost her speech and became confused mentally. No wonder Festiniog was a misery to me. We lived in gorgeous scenery, as on our Austrian mountain; but after a week, I never really saw it.

During this period, the school was not really Summerhill. Many parents sent their children there to be safe rather than free; and when peace came, such children were withdrawn. Before vacations, our pupils made the long, weary journey to London. But we were lucky; not once did they get blitzed.

We suffered from overcrowding. Food was rationed, and tobacco became difficult to buy. The pubs closed at *9'-00* P.M. as against 10:30 in England. Our boys perpetually warred with the village boys, who were very aggressive in spite of—or because of—all the chapel-going.

I discovered that I had returned to the joys of the Scottish Sabbath. In Festiniog, one dared not even dig the garden on that holy day. Once, after a spell of rain had flattened the corn, we had a bright, windy Sunday; but not a farmer would reap.

Even so, with its deep resentment against England and the war laws, Wales had certain advantages. Our school was registered with a coal merchant for fuel, stiffly rationed then. When a competitor asked if I needed coal, I said yes but explained that I could not deal with him because of being registered with Jones Brothers.

He laughed and said: "That's okay. How many tons do you want?"

"But," I replied, "what about the law?"

"Bugger the law!" he said "In any case, I have just supplied two tons o£ coke to the leading magistrate, and he also is registered with Jones Brothers."

After that, we never ran out of coal or coke.

Though we heard Welsh spoken during those five years, I never learned a phrase. In another period of my life, while spending a year in Norway, I never learned to speak a word of Norwegian. On both occasions, there was no motive to learn; my residence was temporary.

Those years in Wales have few memories for me. My wretchedness there seems to corroborate the Freudian theory that we forget what we want to forget. I cannot even recall the rooms in our house, nor remember the names of most of the staff there.

I visited the Leiston Summerhill once a year during the war, staying with Watson, who was most kind about chauffeuring me around. It annoyed me to see soldiers at every window, and to be ticked off by young officers.

"Sir, what are you doing on government property? Who are you anyway?" I would be asked.

"Nobody of any importance; I just happen to own the house."

"Can you prove that?"

"Oh," I said wearily, "arrest me and take me out to the road and ask the first passerby who I am."

But when the Scottish Fusiliers were occupying the school, and I told them it was my old regiment, they let me go anywhere I liked. Only once did I have the courage to say to a blustering subaltern: "I want your name, to report you to your commander for insolence." But then, when the power-struck young officer climbed down, I felt sorry for him.

Perhaps the most joyous day of my life was the one in 1945 when I set off on my return to Leiston with my second wife Ena and a cat. In the five years the Army used the school; it had done more damage to the premises than my kids had done in twenty-five. But nothing seemed to matter; we had come home to dear old Summerhill. Until our furniture began arriving from Wales at least ten days later, we gladly sat and slept on floor mattresses. For me, all problems were forgotten in the quiet happiness of being back at last in the place I loved. Never have I felt that same emotional attachment to a school. I never revisited my schools in Germany and Austria, or went back to Wales to see our house there; nor have I ever had any wish to do so. Perhaps because Sumrnerhill is my

own—something I bought and improved—the place has become an extension of my own personality.

I have already written so much about Summerhill that I have no desire to describe it now. Today, in 1972, it is still not well-known in Britain. Many Americans say to me: '"We talked of Summerhill to people in London, and they had never heard of it; whereas in New York or Los Angeles, many know of it." Not claiming to be a seer, I hesitate to quote the Biblical adage that "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country." Maybe the answer lies in Britain's class system. Most of the landed families have had to sell their old castles and mansions —partly because domestics are few and far between— but the gentry tradition lingers, with its Eton and Harrow for the upper class, its grammar schools for the middle class, and its secondary modern schools for those who will never work in white collars. But I suppose the same system exists in all countries, even in the communistic ones.

Summerhill was never patronized by the elite—the rich, the stage and TV folk. I doubt if Princess Anne would have fitted in—not after her first vacation, when Buckingham Palace might have heard a few four-letter words. Ethel Mannin, the popular novelist, sent her daughter; Professor Bernal, his two sons. Generally, however, famous parents have eschewed us. Of course we get many Americans, and I know not which are scions of celebrated parents there. Two years ago, I met a woman in New York who runs a day school and charges 3,000 dollars a year; but I am sure that none of her parents would send their kids to a school like Summerhill.

Interestingly enough, children have no class feeling at all. If one of our pupils were driven to school in a Rolls Royce, the others would have no reaction whatever. So it is with color. When we get black pupils, even the smallest child does not notice their color. We have Jewish pupils, and no one knows or cares. I had one staunch Roman Catholic forty years ago, who had to tell his beads every morning, and wrote home saying he had lost them. His father drove up in chauffeur-driven Rolls, said nothing to me, but took his boy by the collar, shoved him into the car, and drove off. I was not concerned, for he had paid a term's fees. So with another Catholic boy I finally had to send home. The poor kid was living most of the year in a school that did not believe in sin, yet during vacations he had to go to a priest and confess his transgressions. The conflict was more than any child could bear. I don't know what would happen if we had a Jewish child from an orthodox home.

I never regretted corning to Leiston. The air is bracing, and the eleven acres are a paradise for kids. When often asked what the town thinks of us, I never have an answer. I don't think the town understands what the school is all about, but all the people are friendly. My staff and I frequent the local pubs, yet I have never seen a State teacher there, or for that matter, a doctor or a lawyer. Summerhill, having no class, belongs to all classes. One youth of about seventeen hung about our gates for a time, and when I asked him what he wanted, he replied: "A free fuck." I don't say he was typical of Leiston inhabitants. I am "Neill," without the mister, to some of the workmen, as I am to staff, domestics, and pupils. No one touches his hat to me, and some locals may wonder what the crowds of world visitors come to see. I was a member of a local golf club for twenty-five years, but I think that only one member knew who I was—my school doctor.

I have always had the ability to laugh at myself, even when being capped for an honorary degree. Years ago, when a friend wanted a copy of my first book, written in 1915, I went into a bookseller's shop in Ipswich.

"Have you ever heard of a book called *A Dominie's Log* by A. S. Neill?"

"Heard of it? Why, I've got it, saw it on the shelf the other day." He could not find it. "That's the worst of insignificant writers; their books go astray," he said. "If you leave your name and address ..."

"Thanks, I'll look in again."

Some years ago, while walking in the woods above Oslo, I lost my way. Suddenly, I saw a man corning up through the trees, and not knowing any Norwegian, simply pointed and said: "Oslo?"

"I'm buggered if I ken," he said.

We talked for a bit about Scotland.

"Now that we have met," he said, "we may as well exchange names. My name is McDonald."

"My name is Neill."

He looked up at me quickly. "You aren't *the* Neill?"

I made a fitting gesture of modesty. "What do you mean by *the* Neill?"

"Bobby Neill, the footballer."

I think Stalin and Hitler's problems were caused by an inability to laugh at themselves, and maybe that is Nixon's trouble, too. The first requirement of any man is to recognize what a little guy he really is. There are few great men but too many great names—or at least popular names. Who will remember the pop singers of today in ten years' time? One day, some history of education will have a footnote about a man called S. A. O'Neill, an Irishman who ran a school called Summerville, and I won't be there to have a laugh.

## Homer Lane and Wilhelm Reich

Though American by birth, Homer Lane is much more widely known in England. After working in that well-known American reform school, the George Junior Republic, he was invited by a few well-known social reformers—the Earl of Sandwich and Lord Lytton among them—to open a home for delinquent children in Dorset: the Little Commonwealth. It was that remarkable experiment I had tried unsuccessfully to join after leaving the army. Lane never wrote about it, but after his death in 1925, pupils who had taken notes at his lectures allowed an editor to make a book of them: *Talks to Parents and Teachers*. The man who did most of the work was John Layard. Three years ago, Schocken published an American edition in paperback, for which I wrote the preface. W. David Wills wrote Lane's biography, and the matron of the home also published a book called *The Little Commonwealth.* Lane could not write, for he was not an "educated" man. His correspondence, written on post-cards, abounds in misspellings.

Without describing Lane's philosophy of education here, I would like to explain what he did for me, for he exerted the greatest influence on my life. After the Commonwealth

had been closed, Lane set up in London as an analyst. In the early twenties, I knew nothing about analysis, and had hardly heard of Freud. So, naturally, I had no thought of being analyzed myself until Lane told me that every teacher should be. He offered to take me on for free daily sessions. It was not a Freudian style of analysis, and I did not He on a couch; we just sat and talked. Like my later analysis by Stekel, it did not touch my emotions, and I wonder if I got anything positive from it. Indeed, I feel certain now that Lane's chief contribution to my life lay outside the field of analysis altogether—in his treatment of children. His immortal phrase was: "You must be on the side of the child."

Lane told me of his charges, the toughest he could get from the juvenile courts. The whole thing was incredible—thieves and robbers cured by freedom and self-government—no, surely not. When finally I mixed with the youths, I knew that Lane had not exaggerated a bit.

Lane was a wonderful personality; I do not want to cail him a genius because the word is too often abused. Lane had great gifts; he had an uncanny instinct for seeing in a flash the motive behind some unusual behavior.

If Lane did not cure my complexes, he managed to give me a new one. Interpreting a dream one day, he said: "This shows a fear of heights."

I laughed. "Good heavens, Lane, in my student days I used to climb a tower and sit with my legs dangling over the side while I read a book."

"Dreams don't lie," he countered.

"Okay, Lane, I'll prove you are wrong," I said, and next day climbed the Wren Monument, which stands two hundred feet high. Looking down, I was terrified. The usual explanation of a height phobia is an unconscious wish to jump—and that may be—but what puzzled me then was the fact that I could easily look down a deep well. Once also, on the top of a mountain in Bavaria, I had a sudden attack of fear. Yet there was no temptation to jump, for it was a gradual slope downward. The real import of Lane's role lay in his dealing with wayward children, not with neurotic adults.

Lane's humor pleased me. I recall how he once took up a word from one of my dreams—*lime.*

"Lime, the stuff that binds," said Lane. "I am the lime. I am helping you to rebuild yourself—*lime-Lane*—see the connection?"

"But, Lane, I dreamed about a line, a railway line."

He roared with laughter. Dream analysis seemed just a game to him, a sort of crossword puzzle.

Lane was charming, always immaculately dressed, genial— and a dreadful romancer. He told us stories of his youth: how he had run away to the Indians, how he had knocked out a gang leader and taken his place as foreman on the job. His biographer David Wills discovered that he had done neither.

Lane was a great admirer of Barrie and hated Shaw. He loved *Peter Pan* and *Dear Brutus.* Like Barrie, he never really grew up; and all the stupid things he did in his life were infantile things.

Yet it was this Peter Panism that made Lane the creator of a new treatment for sick people. Once he built a wall along with his Commonwealth boys. When they saw that his structure looked perfect while theirs was bad, the boys began to knock it all down. And Lane joined in. He rationalized this by saying that he had to show them that children were more important than bricks; but I have an idea that he enjoyed the destruction because he also was a mischievous little boy. Every Sunday night, while Lane was "analyzing" me, I supped with his family—his wife, children, and a few ex-delinquents from the Commonwealth, Often he was the merry soul of this quiet group; often he sat silent in deep gloom.

Lane's influence was limited. Since his death in 1925, the state institutions for problem children have not been changed in favor of freedom and understanding. They treat young delinquents with all the evils that made them so—punishment strict requirements of obedience, hard discipline, moral talks. I wonder how many teachers in Britain today have heard of Lane.

I recall my first visit to the Little Commonwealth, arriving in the middle of a stormy self-government meeting. Lane and I sat up into the wee hours talking—no, he talked while 1 listened. I had never heard of child psychology, or dynamic psychology of any sort, for that matter. I had written two books before meeting Lane—books groping for freedom. Lane showed me the way, and I have always acknowledged it. To me, he was a revelation.

I don't think I am being smug when I say that many who have been influenced by Summerhill have not acknowledged it in books and articles- This is always so. Recently an English doctor published an article on the connection between neurosis and the stiffening of the muscles—Reich's discovery—but the article did not mention Reich. I grant that such things do not matter in the long run, but I believe that honest)' should admit sources.

We, his disciples, accepted Lane as the oracle. We never queried his dicta. When he would say something like "every footballer has a castration complex," we nodded our heads in agreement. We never questioned how he came to that conclusion, and we were not all young fools; his group included Lord Lytton (already mentioned), later Viceroy of India; Dr. David, the Rugby headmaster who became Bishop of Liverpool; doctors, teachers, and students. David Wills, in his biography of Lane, says that of all his disciples Neill was the only one who could view him objectively later on. That may be because I am a hardheaded Scot, or more likely, that my transference was not so strong that time could not break it.

I had a quarrel with Lane in the middle of my analysis. He accused me of misrepresenting his ideas when I went lecturing. We had a proper set-to, and I stopped going to his sessions. For a few months, I went to Maurice Nicoll, a London doctor who was the leading Jungian there, but again I got no reaction emotionally. I cannot recall anything about the analysis save that when I dreamed of a black dog, the analyst said it represented free, floating libido—whatever that meant. One Sunday night in Lane's home, he asked how my London analysis was going and I told him. "You come back to me," he said, and back I went again to listen to his elaborate breakdown of my dreams.

In perspective, I can see he was not a good analyst. He was brilliant in interpreting the symbolism in dreams, but what he said never touched my emotions.

I've said that on my discharge from the army I wired Lane COMING, NEILL. and got a reply from London saying the Commonwealth had been closed by the Home Office. The story was that a delinquent girl had stolen money, and had run away. Caught by the police, she said that Lane had tried to seduce her. The Home Office sent down an unsympathetic K.C. to investigate. He had to report that there was no evidence against Lane, but the Home Office nevertheless ordered the Committee to appoint another superintendent, The Committee, of which the Earl of Sandwich, Lord Lytton, and Lady Betty Balfour were members, refused to remove Lane, saying they would rather close the Commonwealth.

I have never had any doubts about Lane's innocence. His taste in women was too aesthetic to allow him to seduce a problem girl. Every man who has dealt with difficult adolescent girls knows how far their dreams will carry them. I myself have dealt with them for years, but never have any accusations been made against me. This was partly due to the fact that at the first sign of a dangerous fantasy, I would at once get in touch with the doctor or teacher who had sent the girl to me.

In 1925, Lane was tried on a technicality—for being an alien who had not registered with the police. In reality, he was being tried for the same misdemeanor he had previously been accused of; in this instance, for seducing a woman patient. He was deported, went to Paris, caught pneumonia and died.

I don't know whether these accusations were justified, but I have never thought that it mattered if he did sleep with a patient. After Lane's death, the late Lord Lytton was much upset; he seemed to be lost. When he invited me to sup with him at his club, I had the feeling that Lytton was endeavoring to find a substitute for Lane. If he were, he must have found me sadly lacking.

I said to him: "Lytton, suppose you had complete proof that Lane had been guilty of sleeping with a patient, how would you feel about it?"

The question seemed to shock him for the moment. "I don't think," he said slowly, "that it would alter in any way my love and admiration for the man."

Lane, by the way, had an unpleasant habit of telling one patient all about the one who had just left the room, an unpardonable habit in any therapist.

I never believed the stories of Lane's seducing delinquent girls in the Commonwealth. Later, when the law accused him of seducing patients on the analytical couch, I had some doubts, but even then, never once had any shock about it. Maybe some of his female patients got more out of seduction than I got out of dream analysis. Professionally, of course, it is wrong, for when a woman becomes the analyst's lover, the analysis stops dead. Professor Jack Flugel, an old friend and well-known Freudian, once quoted a New York analyst to me: "Flugel, I am not one of those analysts who fuck every patient." Jack was one of the few analysts I met who could laugh at himself and others. The tragedy of Lane's life was his being associated with social scandal, rather than being renowned for the great work he did with problem children. Scandal cannot kill a man's work forever, but it can ruin his life.

I have called Lane a romancer, and took with a pinch of salt his story of a dinner party where he sat next to Barrie. "When I asked Barrie if he knew the symbolism of Peter Pan,

he gave me a look of alarm. 'Good God, no,' he said, and then turned to the lady on his other hand, and never spoke to me again."

When I read of Lane's death in the papers, I found myself smiling. At first, this seemed like hardheartedness, but later I got the true explanation: I was free at last. Up to then, I had relied entirely on him—what would Homer say? Now I had to stand on my own feet.

Later, in Vienna, I became a patient of Dr. Wilhelm Stekel, a member of the Freudian school who broke away, like Jung and Adler. I had reviewed a book of Stekel's that claimed that analysis was too expensive and too long. He said that an analysis should not take longer than three months, a statement that appealed to my Scottish thrift. Stekel was a brilliant symbolist. He hardly ever asked for an association to a dream. "Ach, Neill, this dream shows that you are still in lof with your sister." His words touched my head but never my emotions. I don't think I got a transference to him, maybe because he was so boyish in some ways.

"Neill, your dream shows that you are in lof with my wife."

"Stekel, I like your wife, but she has no sexual attraction for me."

He flared up angrily.

"Vot, you do not admire my vife? That is to her an insult. She is admired by many men."

Another time I asked him if I could use his W.C. When I returned, he looked at me in an arch fashion and pointed a finger. "Ach so! Der Neill wants to be Wilhelm Stekel, the king; he vants to sit on his throne! Naughty Neill."

He brushed aside with a laugh my explanation that I had diarrhea. One of his favorite sayings regarding Freud was: "A dwarf sitting on a tall man's shoulder sees farther than he does"—a doubtful assertion.

I have no intention of describing Reich's work, but simply his effect and influence on me. We first met in 1937, when I was lecturing at Oslo University. After my lecture, the chairman said, "You had a distinguished man in your audience tonight—Wilhelm Reich."

"Good God," I replied, "I was reading his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* on the ship coming over."

I phoned Reich, and he invited me to dinner. "We sat talking till late. I was fascinated.

"Reich," I said, "you are the man for whom I have been searching for years, the man to link the soma with the psyche. Can I come and study under you?"

So for two years, I went to Oslo for the length of my three yearly vacations. He said I could learn only by undergoing his Vegetotherapy, which meant lying naked on a sofa while he attacked my stiff muscles. He refused to touch dreams. It was a hard therapy, and often a painful one, but I got more emotional release in a few weeks than I had ever had with Lane, Nicoll, or Stekel. It seemed to me then the best kind of therapy, and I still think so, even after seeing that some Reichian patients apparently remain neurotic following their treatment.

Reich often said: "Bend the tree when it is a twig, and it will be bent when it is fully grown." But I doubt if any therapy ever gets down to the roots of neurosis. In the early

twenties, we were all searching for the famous trauma that caused the sickness. We never found it because there was no trauma, only a plethora of traumatic experiences from the moment of birth. Reich came to realize that only prophylaxis was the real answer, rather than therapy, but kept up his practice mainly to raise money for scientific studies.

When war came in 1939, I trembled about Reich's fate, for he was a Jew on the Nazi destruction list. An American patient, Dr. Theodore Wolfe, who later became the translator of his books, managed to get him into the United States. His history there is well known up to his death in prison. His widow Use's book, *Wilhelm Reich: A Personal Biography,* is a brave and sincere description of a brilliant and complicated man.

Reich, as Use points out, was deficient in humor, and my friendship with him was marred by the fact that we could not laugh at the same things. No one would have dared to tell a sex story in his presence. The word *fuck* infuriated him: "The sick sex—the aggressive male—fucks; but women do not fuck. The word is *embrace."*

He had no liking for ordinary conversation about cars or books. Gossip was anathema to him. His talk was always about work; later, in the U.S., he relaxed when he made his weekly visit to the movies in Rangeley, Maine, near the locale of his school and clinic. He was completely uncritical of films. Once, when I described a film as kitsch, he was angry with me. "I enjoyed every minute of it," he said.

I stood in a special relation to Reich. Around him were all his disciples, his doctor trainees, and all was formal. I appeared to be the only one who addressed him as Reich. True, I had also been his patient, his trainee, but maybe owing to my age, I was in a category by myself, along with Dr. Ola Raknes from Oslo. We had seminars. Reich filled the blackboard with hieroglyphics, equations that meant nothing to me, and I doubt if they meant anything to the others present. His orgone theory was Greek to me. Reich said orgone energy was visible, but I had a blind eye to it. Reich had a small motor which was charged by a small orgone accumulator. It ran slowly; but when gingered tip by volts from a battery, it seemed to revolve at great speed. Reich was in ecstasies. "The motive force of the future!" He exclaimed. I never heard of its being developed.

*'Reich was jailed because of his failure to answer the accusation of a U. S. Gov't. bureau that he had been fraudulently advertising his orgone box. This bureau believed that alleged claims that the accumulator might cure certain ailments were unfounded; Reich, while unable scientifically lo prove his representations in court, refused to withdraw his box from circulation.'*

I do not know enough about his "rainmaking" to form an opinion. What one might call psychic orgone energy cannot be used in any way I can imagine. But here I admit my ignorance of science of any kind; I was never interested in Reich's later work. To me he was the great man of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Sexual Revolution, Character Analysis* and *'The Function of the Orgasm.* I still think *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* is a masterpiece of crowd analysis.

I wish our conversations in Maine could have been taped. We talked and talked, and consumed a lot of Scotch and rye, but oddly enough, had no hangovers. Though Reich scarcely relaxed, as I have said, his lower jaw was so loose that it worked as a well-oiled joint, on a machine. His muscles could relax, but his brain never did.

Often he tried to persuade me to bring Summerhill to Maine. “No, Reich,” I would reply. “I once had my school in a foreign country, and would never do it again. I don’t know the customs or the habits of the U.S.A.; and anyway, my school would come to be regarded as a Reich school, and that I could never have.”

Reich was an all-or-nothing man, impossible to work with: any dissenter had to go his way, or out on his neck he went. I knew I could never work with him.

He was not a fearful man—not for himself anyway—but when being driven in a car, he sat on edge, just as I do if the driver is not good. He was anxious for others. When Use drove their small son Peter to school, it was always: “Be careful, Use. Don’t drive fast.” When he was having his observatory built, I climbed a high ladder to get a view from the top. (What had happened to my height phobia then?) He stood at the bottom with much concern. “Be careful, Neill. Look out. Come down.”

Reich and I loved each other. In 1948, when we parted in Maine for the last time, he threw his arms around me. “Neill, I wish you could stay. You are the only one I can talk to. The others are all patients or disciples.” Then I knew how lonely he was.

Once I said to him: “Why are you so formal? Why do you address Wolfe as Dr. Wolfe? Why aren’t you just Reich to them all?”

“Because they would use the familiarity to destroy me, as they did in Norway when I was Willy to them all.”

“But, Reich, I am Neill to my staff, pupils, domestics, and no one ever takes advantage of the familiarity.”

“Yes, but you aren’t dealing with dynamite as I am,” was his cryptic answer.

Reich had no effect on my school. I had been running it for twenty-six years before I met him. But he had a strong effect on me personally. He widened my perspective, my knowledge of self; he uprooted remnants of my Scots Calvinism about sex matters, showing that my approval of children’s sex play had been intellectual, not emotional.

It is obvious from Use’s biography that Reich lost his reason in the end. That never worried me. Many great men have gone mad—Swift, Nietzsche, Schumann, Ruskin, lots of others. And the fact that I haven’t gone mad is proof perhaps that I am not a genius. It is an odd world indeed, in which a Reich is mad while a Reagan, a Nixon, a Wallace are sane.

Use has told about Reich’s jealousies, his tempers. I saw the tempers often when he would fly off the handle about seeming trifles. One morning at the breakfast table when he had been raging at Use, he turned tome. “Neilie, why do I do it?”

“Because of the reconciliation,” I said. “You want a second honeymoon.” And he burst into laughter, crying out: “That is a profound and true explanation.”

I wish I could recall his sayings. One I do remember: “The trouble with psychoanalysis is that it deals with words, while all the damage is done to a child before it can speak,”

From the time Reich went to America until he went to prison, we corresponded. Use tells of the only time he rejected me, when he was being tried. I *was in* Oslo then, and Ola

Raknes and a few of his old friends sent him a telegram of sympathy. The reply came back: DON'T TRUST NEILL.

I knew why. His boy Peter had visited me in Summer-hill; and when American planes flew over, he said that they had been sent to protect him. I knew he was quoting his father. I told him this was nonsense, and when he went home, he must have told Reich. But we made up after that, and no break occurred in our friendship.

Reich gave me the German manuscript of *Listen, Little Man* to read, and asked my opinion about publishing it in English. "No, Reich," I wrote, "It will make your enemies attack you as a conceited fellow who sees all others as inferior or sick." He agreed with me, but shortly afterward, when a woman wrote a poisonous article about him, he rushed the book into print as a counterblast. I often told him he was a fool to react to every ignorant or spiteful journalist. "Ignore them as I do," I said. But no, he had to fight.

Like other men, Reich had the qualities of a little man; but unlike most men, he was conscious of the fact. Not that he had humor enough to laugh at himself;' but I am sure he was aware of his extreme jealousies and suspicions. Yet, as Use said, he had no *Menschenkentnis*—knowledge of people. More than once, I saw him taken in by people I suspected as phonies. He trusted people, and when they turned out to be fakes, his fury was terrible. But it generally subsided as quickly as it arose.

Unconsciously, he was seeking martyrdom, I am sure. The *Murder of Christ* is almost autobiographical. Again and again, I heard him say: "They will kill me." He had been a martyr before I met him. When fleeing Hitler, he was thrown out of Denmark and Sweden; and his enemies were scheming to have him thrown out of Norway, a plot killed by the war.

Use tells of a shattering thing that happened to Reich when he was a boy. He found his mother in bed with his tutor, and told his father. His mother killed herself. This incident accounts for his life-long jealousy, his distrust of all his womenfolk—his suspicion that they would betray him.

I felt his death more acutely than I felt the death of Lane. A bright light had gone out; a great man had died in vile captivity. I think that Reich will not come into his own as a genius until at least three generations from now. I was most lucky to know him, and learn from him, and love him.

## Love and Marriage and Zoe

I call myself normal sexually, even though I fancy I have sublimated sex to ambition. In my student days, I had the usual unedifying adventures with girls. As mentioned earlier, the nice girls were taboo: "Who touches me, marries me." So we students picked up shop girls—girls from the working classes. I never once went to a prostitute, maybe because so many enthusiastic amateurs were around. But it was all wrong, all degrading. Once, after intercourse with a showgirl on Blackford Hill, she began to cry. I asked her why. "It isn't fair," she sobbed. "You students take us out and we like your manners and educated speech, but you never marry us. I'll have to marry some workman who can only talk about football and beer." That was the end of my picking up showgirls.

Twice I nearly got married. Both girls, like me, were of the lower middle class. I hesitated. I was in love, but reason crept in: you want to do something important in life; will she be able to keep up with you? Stupidly, I tried in both cases to educate these girls, gave them books, talked of Shaw and Wells and Chesterton, of Hardy and Meredith. I think it was the old snob complex my mother had given me, now transformed from social to cultural climbing.

Also, there was the economic factor. I did not earn enough to support a wife and family, which would have meant settling down for a lifetime as a country headmaster, far from an urban intellectual life and a career in literature. Emotionally I was wrong, but I could not act in any other way, not with my grandiose plans.

At the time, I had no definite idea what kind of success I was after. I knew I had to write, but did not know what. Plays, novels, essays? I had no notion that my life work would be children rather than books. In the end, of course, it meant children *and* books, but the books were not literary creations; they were records of my work with children.

My sex life was subsidiary to my work life. I got little pleasure from hole-and-corner affairs; these adventures were sex without love, without tenderness. My Calvinistic conscience that made them even dirtier must have more than once made me impotent. Indeed, I sometimes wonder how anyone reared as a Roman Catholic or a Calvinist can ever get away from the sex guilt inculcated in early life.

Looking back now, I wonder if the handicap in my love life came from Calvinism or from the fact that I could never arrange a sex life with girls of my own social level. In my youth, contraceptives were just coming in and were not considered safe. Also, in a Scottish small town, virginity was priceless to the middle and upper classes; an illegitimate child was an eternal disgrace and precluded any chance of a girl's getting married. Only plowmen and farm lasses fornicated. (They often had two of their bairns at their wedding later on.) As a son of the village schoolmaster, I could not make love to dairymaids. Social snobbery and sex fear put middle-class girls beyond any contact other than golf or tennis. The lower class had very little guilt about sex; but everywhere else, sex outside marriage was the main sin against the Holy Ghost. This applied to women folk, of course. In my native town, quite a few married men fooled around; but then, there was one law for men and another law for women. Women had to be "pure."

Earlier on, I told of the time when my sister Clunie and I were beaten for sex play. Just as Reich's guilt about his mother colored his entire life, so I fancy did this beating have a most sinister effect on my own sex life. It bound me psychologically to Clunie till she died in 1919. It made the genitals the center of the greatest wickedness.

I never had any symptoms of homosexuality. But I wonder if some homos could date their condition to an early incident that made a certain girl, and therefore all girls, taboo.

In our schoolhouse home, nakedness was shunned like the plague. But there are worse customs. An American Rabbi told me of a Jewish sect that will not allow a boy or man to touch his penis when urinating. Incidentally, the Kinsey Report listed Judaism as the most sex-suppressive of all religions.

There is a Scottish story about a man of eighty who got married and visited his physician. "Doctor, the lassie is young and I want to have a family. Do you think that at my age I can . . . ."

"Why not," said the doctor, "but if I were you I'd take in a lodger."

A year later, the old man met the doctor on the street. "Doctor, I have graun news today; the wife is to have a bairn." "Oh," said the doctor rather cynically, "that's fine. What does the lodger say about it?"

"Delighted. She's pregnant, too." Composed, I guess, by some old wishful thinker. At my age, sex is academic. As my doctor brother said just before he died at the age of eighty: "We end where we began. When we were babies, our penises were only for peeing with; and at eighty, they are just the same."

I am slightly worried about the sex of today. So much of it is sick sex. What man with a healthy sex appetite could watch a striptease or a play in which sexual intercourse was shown? It may be my Calvinism speaking, but I cannot think of any of my old pupils who would seek vicarious sex excitement in such ways. Free children, in general, have a healthy attitude toward sex.

In Hellerau, I danced with many a pretty girl but remained fancy-free. Violent passion was not for me, and that is why I came to marry a woman older than myself. Walter Neustatter, one of my pupils in King Alfred School in London, was the son of Dr. Otto Neustatter. The boy's mother was an Australian who had been a music student in Leipzig. Becoming friendly with Frau Neustatter, I discovered that we had similar views on education, and that Lil was a well-traveled, cultured woman. She and her son Walter came to stay with her husband. Otto, in Hellerau—I've told about that period earlier. Lil (some complex kept me from ever addressing her so) became matron of my department when we moved to the mountains at Sonntagberg. Later, she occupied the same position in Lyme Regis. Lil divorced Otto when we were in Lyme Regis. I married her because of my school, but there was another motive besides respectability. As an alien, Lil had to register with the British police; and being an outsider, she was full of misery and resentment. Marriage to me made her a British subject.

Otto, Lil, and I all remained the best of friends, and we went holidaying together, along with Otto's second wife. I loved Otto and he loved me. He was Jewish but not orthodox. Otto escaped Hitler in time to get to the United States where he later died.

My wife worked hard, and "Mrs. Lins," as the old pupils christened her, from Lilly Lindesay Neustatter, became just as important to the school as I was; just as my wife Ena is today. I have been lucky with both wives, wonderfully competent and understanding women.

My work filled my life. Mrs. Lins and I got along splendidly. She loved travel, so we went on trips to Germany, Italy,

France. Sometimes we took cruises. I was always slightly annoyed at these expenditures, preferring to spend the money on a precision lathe or a shaping machine; yet all that travel must have enlarged my outlook.

But to get back to sex; some place along in my first marriage, the obvious thing happened; I fell in love with a pretty young Austrian who worked in England. Then a miserable hole-and-corner business began. I had to lie, inventing trips to town to see my publisher or my agent. We stayed in out-of-the-way hotels, scared that someone we knew would enter the dining room. On country walks, we hid our faces when motor headlights shone on us. We registered at hotels under false names. It was hell and damnation.

Then Lin discovered the affair; weeks of wretched argument and cruel statements followed. I thought of walking out and living with my new love. I didn't. Again the conflict arose between love and job: to have gone with Helga would have wrecked the school. And now, I think that at fifty my emotion then was what is often called the middle-age climacteric, a final attempt to renew youth and romance and passion. I loved Helga, but not enough to sacrifice my work. She married a man of her own age. I believe she would not have been satisfied with a father-substitute.

I have said that I will not write about people now living— Helga's name wasn't Helga—so I will say nothing about my second wife Ena, except that ours was a love match and produced a love child, our daughter Zoe.

I cannot recall my emotion when Zoe was born, only my natural and general feeling of the unfairness that makes the mother have all the pain. I don't think I have ever had a feeling of possession about my daughter, never had the thought she was made of clay that had a smoother texture than that of the child next door.

In a way, my married life in a community set up has been easy compared with the life of a couple who lives in complete privacy. Many marriages are wrecked because of propinquity; husbands and wives are too much together. In the best of families, characters clash. In a school, there is no time for clashing; the common task binds the spouses together.

Many men in Britain complain about women entering pubs, for the pub is about the only place where a man can get away from his family. Homes are full of ambivalence—love and hate—but a community is comparatively free from character conflict.

I now break my earlier resolve not to write about folks now living to speak about daughter Zoe. I have written of her in more than one of my books, and her name must be familiar to millions. Many have asked me about her and her life. Some have wondered if she typifies the old Scots saying that the shoemaker's bairns are the worst shod. My brief answer must be that Zoe, at twenty-four, is as good a product of a free home and school as I could wish to see. Thus far, she does not seem an academic; from earliest infancy, she has had a great interest in horses. She is a qualified riding mistress, and has a large stable on the school grounds. She laughs at my own view of riding acquired more than twenty years ago by seeing a rodeo in Madison Square Garden. "Cowboys can't ride," she says. "They simply sit on horses."

Zoe's schooldays were difficult. When she lived in our cottage, she was an outsider to the children who boarded in the main school. But when we made her a school boarder along with the other children, she felt she hadn't a home. And she suffered much from the jealousy of others.

Ena and I have long been convinced that boarding-school teachers should never have their own children in their schools. So when Zoe was eleven, we sent her to a foreign boarding-school. "Daddy, you are a swindle," she wrote. "You give freedom to other kids, but not to your own daughter. I hate my school; its freedom is fake, and it offers no real self-government." I visited the school, and brought her home. Incidentally, two other Summerhill girls later attended that school; both had the same criticism.

At the back of my mind, I suppose, was the wish that Zoe would choose my own work and interest, and run Summerhill after me. Many parents have indulged such wishful

thinking, especially fathers with big businesses. We are all wrong; luckily, we have no control over our children. In time, I came to realize that horses were Zoe's life. Her happiness was all that mattered.

Today, Zoe is a recognized horse expert, known for kind and gentle methods. Her prize-winning stallion Karthage did not need to be broken; when she first jumped on his back, he took it as a natural show of kindness. "My stable is a horsey Summerhill," she says.

In September of 1971, Zoe married a young farmer and now they own a farm, a few hundred yards from the school. At their wedding, I had to propose the health of Tony and Zoe Readhead (pronounced Redhead), and although I can lecture for hours without any nervousness, I was a little anxious about making a short speech on so emotional an occasion. Having a vague memory of a fitting passage from one of my books, *The Free Child,* I quoted:

*Yesterday was my birthday. My Zoe, who will be six next month, said, ''Daddy, you are old, aren't you? You'll die before me, won't you? I'll cry when you die."*

*"Hie. wait," I said, ''I will maybe wait to see you married."*

*"In that case," she said, "I won't need to cry, will I?"*

I did not read further but added: "It strikes me that if a small child can take for granted that she won't need her father when she grows up, she has automatically solved the dear old Oedipus Complex."

## A Matter of Identity

I really did not want to write this autobiography. Others bullied me into it. To me, my life is not important. Only what I have done seems cogent, and what have I done anyway? Unlike the Freuds, the Einsteins, who made great discoveries, I unearthed nothing new, but built upon an existent, dynamic psychology. This psychology showed that emotions—not intellect—are the driving force in life, and I founded a school in which the emotions would come first.

I ask myself: what sort of guy am I? Folks call me amiable, and it may be so, for I *am* pretty equable and placid, never flying off the handle as Reich used to do. I don't see myself as a Pharisee thanking God that I am not like other men, yet aren't we all in some way? Every criticism of another is Pharisaical.

I have no idea how I look, since I can't recall looking into a mirror since I took to an electric razor some years ago. It takes one a long time to realize that nobody else cares a damn. The lovelorn swain of twenty really thinks that the desired one will be impressed by his having socks and tie that match in color, just as the simple fellow believes that if a girl is beautiful, she has a beautiful character. I have often wondered why beauty in a girl's face is so important, why graceful carriage or lovely figure takes second place. But most questions in life are never answered. H. G. Wells said that one just begins to understand a little about life when Nurse Death comes along and tells us to put away our toys, because it is time to go to bed. At eighty-eight, I understand what he meant.

I have had fame—or maybe it should be called publicity— with two thousand visitors coming to Summerhill each year. My heavy fan mail is pleasing even if it means hours of answering folks I do not know.

I never expect to be recognized on a street, and would be surprised, even pleased, if a stranger identified me as A. S. Neill. This may be the result of my youthful experience of being the dunce of the family—"Mary, that boy will come to nothing." Perhaps I came to something as a compensation for my early inferiority.

Along with humility goes the opposite. If a new book on progressive education contains no reference to me, I am annoyed —but not very strongly. When one is old, praise is sweet to be sure, but blame has no special emotional impact, either. A bitchy article in a Sunday paper about the Summerhill fiftieth anniversary party did not make me angry or even concerned; I have not been accustomed to enmity. I know of no one who is my open enemy, but there must be a few thousand parents in the United States, in Germany, in Brazil, etc., who hate my guts. Some of their children write: "When I quote *Summerhill* to my parents, they go haywire. Daddy has forbidden me to read the book."

I sometimes wonder what other writers think about their own books. I have written twenty; and if I had to read them again, it would be torture. The only work of mine I still can read and enjoy is *The Last Man Alive,* a story I wrote for some of my pupils in 1937. This was the only book completely written in the spirit of fun, and it took the form of pure fiction, while most of my others have been full of opinions, some proved wrong by time and experience.

It is possible to write one's life and make the environment of more importance than the private life of the writer, but here one comes up against snags. What is of importance to the general reader? Is it of interest to anyone that I stole apples as a boy? Some years ago, when I intended to write the life of George Douglas Brown, the author of *The House -with the Green Shutters,* I went to his birthplace to interview old men and women who had known him. "Tell me," I said, "about Geordie Broon."

"Man," said a very old native, "I mind the time when Geordie and me went poaching rabbits and the gamekeeper cam and . . . ."

I failed to learn anything of moment about Brown and never wrote the book, but passed on a sheaf of correspondence about him to James Veitch who did. Now that I sit down to write my own life, I feel very chary about boring readers with commonplace reminiscences of a Scottish village. Still, I cannot explain myself without bringing in the environment that formed me.

Many, many times 1 have been asked how I became a reformer in education. Was it rebellion against my village dominie father with his tawse? I have never been able to answer. Environment does not account for a Churchill, a Charlie Chaplin, a Horatio Bottomley. In my own experience, my brothers and sisters did not become rebels, though I must own that my doctor brother Neil, three years older than myself, created anatomical paintings for many years. Granted that no two children in a family have the same environment, there is a general environment common to the whole family; but in the words of Carlyle; "Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a book decides the conquest of the world."

I have often thought of that quotation. In one mail, I was offered two jobs, the head mastership of Gretna Green School, and English master of Tain Academy. I chose Gretna Green because I would be my own boss. Had I chosen Tain, my life would have been completely altered. I might never have met Homer Lane; certainly I would not have gone to Germany and Austria. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Or is it? Had I accepted the invitation to become an Australian school inspector in 1912, would I ever have had a pioneer school? My star would have been a bureaucratic job of watching others run their schools. I think of the one or two bright lads in my father's village school who could have had brilliant academic careers, according to my father, but became slow-witted plowmen instead.

My philosophy is rather like old Omar's: everything by chance without plan or justice. I recall a near thing once, when I moved away from a railway Left Luggage office and an I.R.A, bomb exploded, killing two passersby. Poor Leslie Howard was shot down in a plane because the Nazis thought Churchill was on it. So how much do we control our fate?

I like to fantasize about what might have been. Had I chosen Tain, I could have ended up as a teacher of English in a State school until I retired at sixty-five. But what would have become of the compulsion within me to challenge? Would environment have killed the spark? If his environment had been different, Hitler might have remained a mute, inglorious agitator in his home town. The Second World War made Churchill, a man of many mistakes, the savior of Britain. A death made Lyndon Johnson president, so I guess that even his enemies are praying that no one assassinates Nixon.

It is a world "where Destiny with men for pieces plays." There is no logical reason why I should live to be well up in my eighties when so many died young—Chopin, Keats, Shelley, Lipatti, and Chatterton among them. Scores of young potential geniuses must have died in the two great wars; they were not captains of their souls.

This brings up the question of free will. In small matters possibly, the will is free. I can decide whether to order whiskey or beer in a pub. In larger matters, I cannot see any free will. How can a man, indoctrinated by Catholicism in infancy, ever get away from the feeling that he is a sinner? A Calvinist may get away from the guilt of sin as I did. There can be no free will as long as conditioning of the young obtains. It is true that a small minority becomes free to choose—challengers of the status quo—but the huge majority, accepting establishment molding, has no will to challenge anything. I arn one of those who challenged, yet my will is not free. I can choose to be a pioneer in education; I can choose not to be a Communist or a Catholic or a football fan or an admirer of TV kitsch. I don't alas have the free will to stop smoking when I know that my heart would be better without tobacco.

So what is the answer? John Smith is a blend of his innate character and his environment. I run my school in the belief that environment is the primary necessity, but have to concede that even this can fail if a child has had no love as a baby. Yet environment is the only thing I can deal with; it is concrete and not abstract.

Environment alone can negative any free will. Summerhill and Eton pupils do not become crooks later on, but I grant that Eton has produced many a cabinet minister. Middle-class morality inhibits the personal: dress alike, think alike, and behave alike. At the other end of the scale, what chance is there for free will in a boy born in a slum, a

Negro in a ghetto? Maybe the chief result of therapy is that it convinces the patient that he has no free will, that his behavior has been conditioned all the way from birth.

Then comes the dilemma. I was conditioned by religion, authority, middle-class morality, social mores, and broke away from them. Other members of the family did not. Determinism is not an answer either; under it, I would have remained a conventional Scottish dominie in a village school, possibly an elder of the kirk.

In German, *ich will* does not mean I *will;* it means *I want to.* A nasty word is the word *will',* a man with a strong will is usually a selfish bully, bossing other people. Funny thought: here am I, a weak-willed man, doing a job that required oceans of will but without bullying anyone. I give up, but still think that we have no free will in emotional affairs. Maybe it is all a matter of semantics.

I read recently that a coward is always an introvert, a solitary person. The hero is brave because he is one of a crowd, unconsciously feeling its strength and courage behind him. An interesting theory. It may be that while the brave extrovert is physically courageous, the introvert is morally brave.

But, then, who is wholly introverted or extroverted. We go in both directions, but I fancy that most people lean toward the extrovert side. They are the ones who are influenced by public opinion, by speeches, by TV advertisements.

Here I am, gropingly trying to say that I am a split personality: both a pioneer educator and a child still bound emotionally to my parents, to my early environment.

# II
# THOUGHTS
# ON SUMMERHILL

## Summerhilll's Inspectors

Britain is the freest country in the world. Nowhere else could I have had the Summerhill School. All schools in this country are under the control of the Ministry of Education; and all schools, public and private, are examined.

The report of our first big inspection, in 1949, was printed in *Summerhill.* After a gap of ten years, there came another inspection and another report. I have never been badgered by the Ministry, and His (or Her) Majesty's Inspectors have always been civil and friendly and helpful in their own ways, if not mine. Their chief job has been to investigate the school's domestic arrangements, the quality of the teaching, and the course of study.

John Blackie, the first H.M.I, we had, was a broad-minded man. I told him he could inspect progress in maths and French, but would be unable to inspect happiness, sincerity, balance, or tolerance. "I'll have a try," said John, and he made a good one.

As to what school inspectors will be in the future, I am no prophet; I can only make guesses founded on the trends of today. The Education Ministry's attitude toward Summerhill has been one of sufferance rather than favor. The school owes its continued existence to the presence there of a few enlightened officials, as well as fear on the part of

others that closing Summerhill would brand the Ministry as reactionary. Over the years, few of the visiting inspectors have had any understanding of what we were doing. Most measured us with a yardstick that did not consider our products—sincerity, balance, tolerance, happiness. They were men and women who, if they had ever heard of child psychology, did not betray any sign of it. Their standards were achievement, and methods of teaching relevant to the State schools they inspected.

A boy of twelve appeared unwashed with filthy clothes. Out came an official notebook. I thought it useless to explain that he had come to us as a bad problem with a deep grouse against society expressed as defiance of society's mores. Really, I could see little difference between that inspector and the dreaded, stiff disciplinarians who inspected my father's village school eighty years earlier.

To be fair to the inspectors, they are doing the jobs their government demands of them, treating education as a matter of learning and not of living. Both parliamentary parties agree about education in essentials; both see schools as factories to produce citizens who know school subjects. The fact that possibly only three in a football crowd of 80,000 could do a square root or list the exports of Peru does not seem to concern the Establishment.

The Ministry is—*must be*—the Establishment. It represents education as generally accepted by the majority of parents and teachers. If a Minister of Education were to forbid corporal punishment by decree, the outcry from many parents and teachers would be terrific. If the Minister ruled that religious instruction be prohibited in schools, there would be public meetings of protest all over the country—the majority of attendants, I fancy, being those who make no attempt to live as Christians. To most folks, a child's playing is a waste of time. It is impossible for some people to consider play more important than work. The Ministry tolerates schools like Summer-hill, but could not officially approve of them.

In England, every private school is registered; but to be "recognized as efficient" it must apply for recognition. Recognition follows, or is refused, after an inspection. I have never applied, partly because recognition to me means something bestowed. I didn't apply for my three Honorary Degrees; nor does one apply for a baronetcy. I have a notion that Summerhill would not qualify for recognition because of its failure to meet the normal standards for book learning. Indeed, the fact that every new pupil when told that lessons are optional immediately drops all school subjects—except the creative ones like art and woodworking—proves to me that lessons are forced on children against their wishes. Summerhill pupils often bloom late from an academic point of view. One old boy, an engineer, seldom attended any lessons. Today, he has half a dozen earned degrees. To a visiting inspector, that boy would have probably been classed as a failure.

To my way of thinking, the very word *inspector* is an insult. Adviser would be a better name, especially since that is what an inspector actually is today, even if his advice is limited to irrelevancies like methods of teaching.

Inspection makes Summerhill insincere. The kids tidy up, rub out the *shits* and *fucks* on the walls; they feel self-conscious and unhappy. Some time ago when an H.M.I, inspected the school, he got a hostile reception from the pupils and was troubled. So was I. But I knew what lay behind it. A sensational daily paper had published an article alleging that the Ministry was gunning for Summerhill, and the kids looked on the

harmless inspector as a dangerous spy who might close the school. The Ministry, of course, can close an independent school; but I fancy that this seldom happens except where a headmaster is a practicing homosexual or an alcoholic.

Some time ago in a newspaper, there appeared an excellent example of the hypocritical Puritanism of the British Establishment. A training college expelled a female student who had been found with a man in her room. Her appeal to the High Court was dismissed. The seventy-two-year-old presiding judge sternly told her she was not a proper person to teach children. Her sin had been the breaking of the eleventh commandment: *Thou shall not be found out.* How unjust is such a verdict, when thousands of such girl students who lodge extra-murally in cities are permitted a sex life.

Tories are always more moral than socialists; our present Tory Government in Britain is inspiring all the sex-haters, life-haters, and Mrs. Grundys to have a sort of orgiastic bean-feast of self-righteousness. The most vehement seem to be the Roman Catholics, and also the members of Moral Re-Armament. I mention these dangerous people because they are the social equivalents of the inspectors of my apprentice days. They are the anti-lifers par excellence.

Why does the teaching profession tolerate inspection? Doctors and lawyers, with their powerful professional lobbies, do not tolerate inspection. True, they are not State servants as teachers are; but since National Health began, most doctors are paid by the State, and I am sure they would fight any attempt to make the practitioners of medicine an inspected body.

I should reject inspection on the ground that my old pupils are nearly all successful in life. I should say to the Ministry: "For fifty years, educated and intelligent parents have sent their children to Summerhill, believing in its system, pleased with its results. Why should my school be judged by an official standard that is not mine? Summerhill is primarily for living, and it refuses to be judged by a body of people who think only of teaching methods and discipline. Let the inspectors rule about the number of water closets, and baths, and fire extinguishers. Summerhill accepts that ruling. But leave our education to us."

Alas, I am not brave enough to defy the powers above, so I compromise. I employ eight teachers for sixty children—some the wrong teachers from my viewpoint—those who teach the exam subjects, subjects which I find most pupils regard as necessary dull grinds.

England is the land of independent schools; there are few on the Continent. Until the new school rage proliferated in the United States, I think that the private school in the U.S. was usually a military academy. Scotland never had the tradition of private institutions; there are four so-called public schools there, but they are English schools with the English tradition of Eton and Harrow, and at a venture I should say, English speech. John M. Aitkenhead's Kilquhanity is the only "free" boarding school I know of in Scotland; it also has had its troubles with the inspectorate.

Ah, well, I should not complain. The Ministry has very much let me alone, and will do so until I die. What will happen then I cannot guess. Some Minister may say: "We tolerated that school until the old man died, but we cannot go on allowing a school in

which children can play all day without learning lessons." I shall look forward to reading about it in the *Paradise Post,* or more likely the *Hades Herald.*

## The Summerhill Staff

Sometimes I think that I have had more trouble with staff than with pupils. Among the odd bods of my time was the science man who let a boy of eight handle a bottle of cyanide, and a girl of the same age pour fuming nitric acid into a test tube so that she burned herself.

There are no set duties for the Summerhill staff, except their being in classrooms at teaching periods. And many of the teachers have reacted to freedom like unfree children. Some neurotic types have taught classes all morning, and slept or read the rest of the day; whereas the really good teachers have always used their free time mixing with the kids.

New teachers are hard to find, and in spite of Summer-hill's fame, it is not easy to get a good staff. Advertisements draw letters saying: "I am not a teacher, I am a bank clerk (or a librarian or whatnot), but I know I can teach." Since many people think that teaching is an unskilled employment, I do not know why so few apply. It may be a question of money, yet we pay close to the State standard—eight hundred pounds a year, plus board, lodging, and laundry. It may be that teachers fear to teach in a school where lessons are voluntary. Under such circumstances, only a good teacher can have a well-attended class, and my worst job is to say to a poor teacher: 'The kids say your lessons are so dull that they won't go to them; you'll have to leave." If such a system obtained in State schools, our city streets would be full of unemployed teachers. By law, I must have qualified teachers. Not that an academic background makes much difference, for I have had both trained and untrained teachers with varying results. Obviously, teaching is an art, not a science; a teacher is born, not made. But the law is there, and Picasso could not get a job as an art teacher in England because he has no certificate. Of course, I want a teacher to put across his or her lessons, but that is not the main consideration in Summerhill. I look for teachers with humor rather than dignity; they must not inspire fear, and they must not be moralists. I am inclined to acquire more introverts than extroverts, but I do not want he-men with strong personalities. Free children reject such. When we had an ex-scoutmaster with his: "Come on, lads, we'll build a boat;" they turned away in scorn.

One sort has appeared again and again: the teacher who seeks popularity by being on the side of the child for the wrong reason. Children soon see through that type. Too many-new teachers and housemothers have trouble discriminating between freedom and license. One housemother let her group smash a lot of furniture because "I thought 1 wasn't ever supposed to say no," But there have been some excellent teachers—community-minded people. I have already mentioned George Corkhill, our science master for nearly thirty years—stolid, never ruffled, always the center of a group of little ones. Corkie followed *their* interests; his idea of chemistry was making lemonade and fireworks. His retirement meant a great loss to the school.

Since this book is about me, I must tell of my own reactions to the staff, and its reactions to me. Never once have I told a teacher what to do or how to teach; one or two complained that I did not come to their classrooms often enough. My chief difficulty has

been handling disagreements between teachers and pupils. A boy once wanted to make a banjo, but the woodworking teacher refused to let him, saying that it was too difficult a task. Both came to me for arbitration. I said: "If he wants to make a banjo that is his wish; if he makes a mess of it that also is his affair. Give him the wood." The teacher was furious, accused me of siding with a pupil against the staff, and resigned on the spot. I realized too late that this should have been a matter for our general meeting to decide. I have an almost morbid complex about being a boss. I hate telling anyone what to do, in the belief perhaps that if he does it only because I ask him to, he isn't being original enough. I hate playing God; when I have to send a pupil away for terrifying small kids, I always feel miserable and slightly guilty. But I never feel guilty when telling an unsuccessful teacher to leave—just embarrassed. I may be demanding too much from my staff. Balanced people full of fun, active in school life, are what I want. I get a few, but not as many as I should like.

Once a big stone, knocked off a wall by some kids, lay on the path below. I stooped to lift it and then paused, deciding to leave it and see what happened. Staff and pupils walked around it for six weeks before I lifted it back to its place. But one must take a certain factor into account: I have a feeling of possession about the house and grounds that my staff does not share. I understand. When I used to help my brother plant his potatoes, it was not a work of joy; they were his spuds, and he would eat them.

Generally speaking, the Summerhill staff has been a contented lot with little of the bickering and jealousy so often found in staffrooms: "Jones has six periods for English, while I have only four for maths."

Now and again we have had a crisis within the staff. One young man who thought he could run the school better than I, agitated among the staff and made some converts, so that the atmosphere was strained. When such a challenge appeared years ago in Dresden, I got rid of the rebels as soon as possible— but reluctantly, for they were good teachers. Psychologically speaking, one might say that instead of challenging Father at fourteen, they waited until they found a father-substitute, even a non-authoritarian one. As a mother-figure, my wife gets much more hate than 1 do. Through my work with children, I can understand this.

Once, in the days when I used such treatment, I got our needlework teacher to make dolls for play therapy. These appeared as father, mother, son, daughter, all with sexual organs, of course. Children up to the age of twelve played with them. In six weeks, poor mother was kicked to bits, but father remained untouched. This made me wonder if Freud's Oedipus Complex was all wrong. Father is out all day; Mother has to live with the children, feed them, say no to them. Because she is the real authoritarian figure in the home, resentment against the mother looms greater than that against the father. Such hate becomes most evident when Ena is serving meals and the "me first" clement springs forth.

My staff men and I seem to get less hate from disturbed pupils than women teachers do. In my own case, the obvious explanation is my neutrality. The English teacher can complain at a general meeting about the savagery of a problem boy, but I dare not; I cannot be an accuser and a therapist.

It is sad that former pupils do not become teachers and return to Summerhill as members of the staff. I have had ex-pupils as housemothers, and they did this work well,

partly because they did not require a period of living out their complexes when coming into a non-authoritarian atmosphere. Contrariwise, when I offered one of my girls, age nineteen, a job as housemother, she said: "I'd love to, but no; I'd feel I was making Summerhill an escape hatch instead of facing the outer world."

## New American Schools

When *Summerhill* was published in New York in I960, my publisher, Harold H. Hart, founded the Summerhill Society, whose aim was to set up a Sumrnerhill type of school in the United States. He subsequently resigned from the organization; but since then, dozens of new schools have sprung up, all claiming the freedom of Summerhill. While this has been heartening to me, it has also been a bit disturbing.

Through the New York press, I have asked schools not to call themselves "Summerhills", for a number of these schools do not really follow Summerhill principles. For example, I was told of one school, claiming to be run on Summerhill lines that had half an hour's compulsory religion every morning. In that school, if a boy swore, his mouth was washed out with soap and water. On the other hand, some of these so-called Summerhills mistake freedom for license, I hear that some of these new schools have failed; perhaps because the founders had freedom in their heads instead of in their guts; but more likely, because most of them are day schools, and it is almost impossible in any single community to find enough parents who believe in freedom. My pupils come from the United States, Germany, France, Denmark, and England; none of the parents could find an adequate free school in their home towns. I regard Summerhill as part of a wide challenge to Establishment education. Certain educational writers inspire as much as Summerhill does—Carl Rogers, John Holt, George Dennison, Bruno Bettelheim, George Leonard, Goodwin Watson, Paul Goodman, and many more. Freedom is not a one-man show. It is a new *Weltanschauung,* a great hope in this mad world.

The London Summerhill Society was founded over a dozen years ago. Its function was utilitarian: to raise funds for a school deficit. True, the London Society made good propaganda with its magazine *Id;* but its main concern was to raise money—an aim that had its difficulties, for most of the few who believed in Summerhill were comparatively poor.

The London Society and its magazine are now defunct, but I look back with warm gratitude to what the Society did. When, after the American invasion, we began to get out of the red, the necessity for adjunct supporting funds ceased. But in its time, the Society was not only a financial support: it was a token of love for the school by old pupils, parents, and sympathizers. The Society's biggest "do" was the school's fiftieth anniversary party held in London. More than 250 guests attended. It gave the school stoves, a refrigerator, and some electrical equipment. When it offered us a TV set, I put the proposal to a general meeting, and the offer was refused by a large majority. I asked a girl of fourteen why. "Because it would ruin the social life of the school," she replied. The school has a TV set now, but its use is limited by the community.

I cannot mention by name the members of the London Summerhill Society, but I must pay tribute to David Caryll, a musician and a fellow Scot. He wanted to turn my farcical novel *The Booming of Bunkie* into a musical, and he sent me the first act; but he was

killed by a car when crossing a London street. He was one of the most loyal parents Summerhill ever had.

## Child Psychology

After coming back from the psychoanalytic atmosphere of Vienna in the early twenties, I thought that analysis was the answer to the problem child. I spent years analyzing the dreams of such children, and I was proud when a boy who had been chucked out of Eton for stealing graduated from my school cured.

But another boy and girl, who had also been expelled for stealing but refused to come to me for analysis, *also left Summerhill cured.* It took me a long time to realize that it was not my therapy but rather the freedom to be themselves that cured the offenders. A most satisfactory belief, for if therapy *were* the answer, millions of kids in the world could not afford cure. I think I have had more success with the kind of psychology that is not found in textbooks. When I rewarded a bad thief by paying him a shilling for every theft, I was not acting on theory. The theory came later, and may have been inadequate, if not wrong. The unloved thief was stealing love symbolically. So I gave him a token of love in the form of a coin. The point is that the method worked again and again, but I know the situation was more complicated than that. How much did his new freedom in Summerhill help to cure the boy ? How eager was he to be accepted by his peers as a good guy?

When a new boy broke windows and I joined in the fun, I was not reasoning. The explanation came later: Billy wasn't breaking windows but protesting adult authority. My joining in put him on the spot: authority breaking windows? Looking back, I think it was a bit unfair to spoil his wrecking fun. The simple rationale of ray methods may be that I thought of the wrong way to treat a kid, and did the opposite. In conventional schools, stealing means the cane, or at least a moral talk. I made stealing non-moral.

One boy ran away from three schools. On his arrival, I said to him: "Here is your fare home. I'll put it on the mantelpiece, and when you want to run away, come and get it." He never ran away from Summerhill. But was it my attitude, or the pleasure he had in being free for the first time in his life? There is no final answer.

I have had successes but also failures. In Dresden I told a Yugoslavian girl that she was using too many nails making a box. She lashed out at me: "You are just like all the bossy teachers I have had." I couldn't make real contact with her again.

Once, while giving out pocket money, I said to Raymond, aged nine, "You were fined sixpence for stealing the front door," and he burst into tears. I should have known that he was a mental case.

Telling the nine-year-olds a story that involved them in adventures, I made Martin the character who stole the gold we had found. Later, he came to me weeping. "I never stole that gold." From then on, I made none of them baddies, even in fiction.

In the early days, when Summerhill had so many crooks, I was not always the winner. One boy asked me for my autograph, and I did not notice that the paper I wrote it on was folded, until a local shopkeeper showed the whole of it to me: "Please give bearer fifty Players Cigarettes—A. S. Neill."

For a week, Dick kept selling me stamps; only the accident of my having stained one with green ink made me aware that he had been robbing my stamp drawer. I gave him five shillings' reward for his cleverness, childishly showing him that he couldn't take the old man in. Old man? I was in my forties then.

Today, I doubt if I could use the reward trick with a thieving pupil. There is a new, intangible sophistication among the current youth. This fresh orientation may stem from the spread of knowledge about psychology. Some of my older pupils, Americans especially, juggle terms like inferiority complex, mother fixation, etc. Nowadays, if a boy was charged with destroying books in the library, and I made the proposal at one of our self-government meetings that he be appointed chief librarian, I am sure there would rise a cry: "One of Neill's psychological tricks again." No child would have said that forty-five years ago.

In Summerhill, we do not seem to have the usual generation gap. Visitors ask: "Who are the teachers and who are the pupils?" In general, such a gap can be avoided only if parents grow with their children. This is not easy; for it seems that as people grow older, they become more conservative. I find this true in myself. I cannot join in the modern enthusiasm for showing sexual intercourse on stage, because my whole background has conditioned me to think that this is sick sex. After two thousand years of repression, I cannot get away from the notion that sex is a private affair, and I wonder how an actor can get an erection with an audience looking on. I do not like to see men with long hair or even beards. Here I am conservative; but on the other hand, I like youth's freedom of dress and language.

## Our Old Pupils

Sometimes I have been asked if I am prouder of our Summer-hill graduates who have proved to be academic successes than of those graduates who went into arts or technical work. The answer is no, although I have often mentioned our two professors, (one in maths and the other in history) and our two university lecturers. We've turned out a few good doctors (one a lung specialist and another surgeon) and two lawyers. I mention scholars, because the usual criticism of Summerhill is that children will not be able to pass exams when free to attend Or stay away from lessons. But I am as proud of our furniture maker, our potter, our artists who show in Bond Street, and our old boy who is making a name for himself with his illustrated children's books. I know of only one old pupil who cannot hold down a job. Not a bad record for fifty years. Naturally, I am not in touch with all past pupils, so I cannot be aware of what everyone is doing. I speak only of those who spent at least four years in the school.

I am not primarily interested in whether former students are professors or bricklayers; I am interested in their character, their sincerity, their tolerance. I like to think that they have a better chance of being pro-life than disciplined, molded children have. Our boys and girls are not rebels; they don't take part in violent meetings and marches. They know that spouting freedom from a soapbox is no answer.

One former pupil said: "All I can do is bring up my own kids in freedom, hoping that our neighbors will learn something from their behavior." Another parent, who married a Summerhill boy, made a wise and arresting remark: "The effects of a Summerhill

education are not felt until the second generation. We know how to avoid the restrictions and suppressions of our upbringing."

Many of my old pupils are fine men and women, hardworking, tolerant, pro-life; some, of course, have been disappointments. For them, Summerhill did not sink in far enough. True, I think that most of them treat their own children in a free way; but of course, one must remember that most of the children who came to my school were greatly influenced by un-free homes and unfree schools.

Summerhill has often been criticized because its graduates do not seem to be crusading to make this sick world better. This may be true. I am sure that most of my students share my distrust of politics and politicians, people who find it almost impossible to be honest. A British prime minister might consider the Vietnam war a barbaric crime against humanity, but because of arms and trade and dollars, he must publicly support the policy of the United States. If his constituency is made up mainly of Roman Catholics, he dare not vote for a bill to legalize abortion or homosexuality.

I have written half jokingly that a Summerhill pupil owes any success he might have to the school, but can pin his failure on his parents. This is nearly true. Our successful graduates came mostly from homes with some freedom and family affection, while many of our "semi-successes" came from unhappy homes. More than once have I said that freedom alone will not cure a child who had no love as a baby; it can ameliorate his condition, but too often the chip on the shoulder abides. My vision of a Summerhill full of children from self-regulated homes remains a daydream.

I have often criticized universities and schools because they develop the intellect to the neglect of the emotions. Summer-hill attempts the opposite. Nevertheless, Summerhill fails in those instances when a child grasps freedom emotionally without the intellectual capacity to amalgamate head and heart. I am sure, however, that the majority of old pupils have synthesized both factors easily and naturally.

I still cannot be sure whether Summerhill freedom is better for the bright ones than for those with lesser intelligence. Bill, who happens to be a doctor, reads the weekend literary journals. Paul, now a farmer, reads the tabloids. Well, if both are happy, what the hell?

Above everything else, I must record one characteristic common to ali former pupils. Their loyalty to Summerhill is both sincere and heartwarming. Two years ago, at the school's fiftieth anniversary party, the warmth and enthusiasm of those who attended was tremendous.

# III
# THOUGHTS AT THE END OF A LIFE

## Changes I Have Seen

*Time, you old gypsy man,*

*Will you not stay,*
*Put up jour caravan*
*Just for one day?*
RALPH HODGSON

Everyone, I fancy, sometimes wishes to return to pleasures long dead. But nostalgia is not one of my virtues or vices. I can return to the haunts of my boyhood with no emotion whatever. So with tomorrow; it gives me no thrill to imagine that one day in my native town of Forfar, some town council may put up a brass plate on the house in which I was born, 16 East High Street. Posterity means nothing to me.

But to get back to that caravan and time's refusal to stay; I have seen many changes in my long life. These are not only material things like motors, films, radio, TV, but what one might call cultural things, changes in human outlook. Years ago, we had to be well-covered when bathing. Free sex and swearing were taboo. When Shaw's play *Pygmalion* was produced with Eliza Doolittle's "not bloody likely," every paper printed the word b—y. Today, even some highbrow papers will print the four-letter words. But why good old Anglo-Saxon words were ever thought obscene, I never knew.

I have lived to see a great sex release in women. In my early days, a woman was not supposed to have any pleasure in sex, a belief sponsored by many women without orgiastic life because of the ignorance or selfishness of their men. Today, women openly acknowledge their demand for as much sexual freedom as men enjoy. It was not a woman who coined the phrase: "A fate worse than death"; virginity has lost its air of sanctity. I am glad that I have lived long enough to see this new freedom for women, even though we have a long way to go before seeing equal numbers of men and women in parliaments, senates, and businesses.

I have seen the gradual change in attitudes toward war. Half a century ago, the hero was one who died for his country, but now among many young people the hero is he who lives for his country. The university campuses show this difference. But it has not gone far enough yet. Most young men, conditioned to obey authority from cradle days, become soldiers without challenging the forces that lead nations into wars. But many are realizing that war, or prison punishment, never solved anything. A cynic, comparing the economic strength of Britain and Germany today, might claim that it is better to lose a war.

Things have moved, but not always in a forward direction. Sixty years ago, Britain had no color question. Today, in 1972, our racial problems are threatening to make Britain another America with irrational hate in every town, in every street. Racialism is the most sinister promise of the future, more dangerous than pollution, because racialism comes of human weakness and hate. Myself, I could never understand it. I have no feelings about Negroes or Jews or Chinamen or Indians; to me, they are fellow travelers on a long, difficult road.

I first met racialism at Edinburgh University, between 1908 and 1912, as already mentioned. I met it again in South Africa twenty-four years later, and was not too surprised, but still recall my own somewhat cowardly behavior. When someone at a lecture asked me my opinions on color segregation, I said that I had come to talk about

education, not racialism. Looking back, however, I think this was wise; to attack the segregation policy would have kept many from my lectures, and the newspapers would have blown it up. Bernard Shaw was braver; one report of his visit to South Africa said that he had shocked the country by predicting that, one day; it would become a light-brown nation through mixed marriage.

In my lifetime, the world has become more sinister, more dangerous; and here, I am not thinking of hate and conquest wars. I am thinking of the lessening power of the people and the growing power of big businesses and combines, the de-humanization of industry. At the beginning of the century, small businesses were common. The boss was Bill Smith, who knew his employees and their families. Today, workmen have no Bill Smith to approach with any difficulties they may have; they have the great bureaucratic, inhuman company.

In Leiston, I can go to a small factory and ask for the manager; but what American can seek an interview with the head of a large industry? The class war has become centralized, workers against a great international corporation. Recently in England, the postal and electrical strikes angered this nation of householders. George Orwell's *1984* is only a few years ahead of us.

Changes in education have been too slow for me. Freedom in schools has grown, but not as fast as belief in book-learning and examinations; the old patriarchal demand for obedience and discipline is as strong as ever in all state systems.

I have seen a change in children since Summerhill began, a change so subtle that it is intangible. My pupils seem to me to be less communal, less able to grasp and practice self-government. Some get too much money from their parents, so that saving for a rainy day is something unknown to them.

Today, I don't see the young, even those in their twenties, saving money. It burns a hole in their pockets. Partly, this may be the result of the insecurity of modern life with its wars, crimes, and hatreds, and the threat of ultimate nuclear destruction, which could come, because so much of our diplomacy is of the nineteenth-century kind. In a war between Israel and Egypt, with Egypt backed by Russia, the United States could be dragged into a war that might destroy humanity and all life. Fundamentally, the change in youth must be blamed on its loss of faith in those in authority.

I have lived to see the decline of the Protestant religion, in the orthodox sense. Churches in England are not full; too often, they are empty. Youth does not believe in sin, nor in heaven, nor in hell. The gods of the youth are more or less harmless—pop stars, disk jockeys, football heroes. One might call these the apostles of a new religion, a religion which has one characteristic in common with the old religion: the hate and violence between the supporters of football teams compares easily with the hate and violence of religious Ulster whose Roman Catholic and Protestant teams want to murder each other.

A few words about today's pornography. Pornography has been with us always. In 1900, shabby men asked us to buy dirty postcards. Few do today; the sexy weeklies, handle the job for them. The only cure for pornography is freedom from an antisex education. My old pupils would see nothing exciting in a leg show, a strip tease, or even a show with intercourse on stage. The ultimate cure for all pornography would be—climate

allowing—a civilization in which we all walk about naked, and in which sex had no connection with guilt.

I am reasoning from the fact that the Catholic Church is shocked by nakedness. Oh, you should have heard the Dublin priest who had seen a Summerhill film on TV with boys and girls bathing naked; you should have heard what they said to me about it in the TV bar where, by the way, they exhibited no inhibitions about imbibing large whiskies and brandies. I saw more drunks on Dublin streets that weekend than I had seen since my Scotland days when whiskey was two shillings and sixpence a bottle. On Saturday night the town was full of drunks. According to the Irish, God approves of drink but not of sex.

## Vanity

I sometimes think that the sickness of the world is due to human vanity. For generations, women have bedecked themselves with furs, indifferent to the agony of trapped animals. More money is spent on cosmetics and dress than on books and music. Men, too, have showy vanities; they are proud of their houses, their gardens, their cars. Primarily, men like to be esteemed for their activities, their success in business or in academics or in sports.

What is common to both sexes is the longing for approval. A large part of our lives consists of this desire to be seen, to be heard, to be appreciated, to be admired. Fear of death is fear of the end of one's ego. When all our egos are combined, we get nationalism and the Establishment. I am the center of the universe—therefore "My country! Right or wrong!" This can result in "Heil Hitler!" or "Heil Nixon!"

The race for money is fundamentally a race for recognition; so is the race for power. Rich people, not content to leave their money in the bank, must show they are wealthy by their standards of living. The poor have little to be vain about. "My Bobby has passed the eleven-plus exam, but Willie next door failed." "We are the only ones in the street who have a color television set,"

Vanity gives us a blind eye for the miseries of the world.

It is expressed by the slogan: "I'm all right, Jack," with the emphasis on the /. We read of tortures in dictator countries and then placidly turn the page to read the football news. We see Chicago cops beating with clubs, and we switch the TV to look at a show for ten-year-olds by Andy Williams. We are all guilty. Nowadays, many youths from rich American homes are scorning wealth and safety, and subduing their vanities, to seek free, untrammeled lives of their own. These members of the new generation have no desire to seek the fleshpots of Egypt, bless them.

It is interesting to guess who in history has been without vanity—possibly Christ, Gandhi, and Einstein; Dr. Livingstone, too, though many missionaries thought they were spreading Christianity when all they did was to bring a sense of guilt to innocent people. The Bible tells us that there are no marriages in heaven, but our local bigwigs are pretty sure that people going there are divided into classes at least. Reich, who showed no signs of vanity in life, willed that he have an elaborate tomb in Orgonon, Maine.

My vanity may lie in the thought that after I am dead my books will keep my memory alive. But this thought brings no comfort; I cannot lay the flattering unction to my soul

that my books will endure as long as the tombstones in Forfar Cemetery. Yet Shakespeare wrote in a sonnet:

*Not marble, nor the gilded monuments*

*Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime.*

Was he right?

## Politics

The politician's stance, "I speak for the people who elected me," often suggests a man of no principles and no guts. If one of my old pupils became a prime minister, I should feel that Summerhill had failed him. Politics means compromise, and free people are very bad compromisers.

The mystery is why folks are Right or Left or in the middle. Of course, it is a case of early conditioning. For many years, I have been distinctly Left in politics, education, and life. Perhaps I'm as perverse as the Irishman washed up on a foreign shore whose first words were: "Is there a government here? If there is, I'm agin it."

I believe most humane reforms have come from the Left. In Britain today, it is the Tories who seek to clamp down on moral issues. It is usually a Tory who reports to the public prosecutor on allegedly pornographic books. The very word *conservative* means standing still or looking backward. It refers to all who have anything to conserve or preserve: money, property, or position. In Britain, most shopkeepers, farmers, and lawyers vote Conservative.

My interest is in the origins of Right and Left. I have known politicians who were Socialists at twenty and Tories at fifty. Time tends to move one toward conservatism, but I like to think that I have remained a challenger in my old age. The basis is probably emotional, not rational. Originally, my politics were mixed up with emotion. When I threw a tomato at Winston Churchill and missed, I was prompted by the bonny daughter of the local Tory chairman. Winston was then a Liberal candidate.

In 1913, when I first went to live in London, I joined the Labour Party and spoke ignorant rubbish in Hyde Park. After the Russian Revolution when reports told of new sexual and educational freedom, I fondly imagined that Utopia had suddenly arrived for good. But as a canny Scot, I did not join the Communist Party. Still, for years, I had a blind spot; I simply would not accept the stories of Stalin's mass murder by starvation of a million or more peasants who would not fit into his collective farming scheme. But I *did* wonder why Bolsheviks of the old brigade were confessing to crimes they had never committed—before they were shot in the back of the neck.

The truth is I wanted to believe in the new order; I wanted to think that the new education in Russia was wonderful. My disillusionment took years to surface. In 1937 I applied for a visa to visit Russia. It was refused, no reason being given. By that time, I had given up my hope that Communism was a cure for world sickness. I ceased to be interested in politics of any kind, but voted the Labor party in the belief that it was more pro-life than the Conservative party. In spite of my disappointment with Labor rule, I still hold to that belief.

I was not conscious of politics again until 1950, when I applied to the American Embassy for a visa. I had already lectured in the U.S.A. in 1947 and in 1948 and my 1950 tour had been arranged by the Reich people. After being kept waiting for an hour at the Embassy, I suspected that something was wrong. Then I was called before an official. "Are you a Communist?" "No, I am not." "Have you ever written anything in favor of communism?"

I guessed he had phoned the Home Office and asked for my dossier.

"I have written about eighteen books, but have never read them since, and have little idea today of what is in them. But I have a vague feeling that I praised Russian education as it was after the Revolution. Then Russian education was for freedom; but today, it is like your education and our education, both against freedom."

My application was refused, and my lecture tour canceled. Those were the McCarthy days, of course.

I recall saying to the consul: "I am a communist in the way Jesus Christ was one—communist with a small 'c.' "He gave me a look of shock; I guessed he was a Catholic, and I found out later he was. The sequel came in December, 1969, when Orson Bean invited me to come to the States to take part in the Johnny Carson show. Once again, I went to the Embassy.

"It won't take more than twenty minutes, Mr. Neill. Please fill in this form."

Question: "Have you ever been refused a visa by the American Government?" I signed and wrote, *"Yes, in 1950."* Which meant that the twenty minutes would be more like two hours. I was asked to fill in the complete form. Then more waits, and more interviews. Finally, I was given a visa for four years. The annoying thing was that the consul said: "We have no record of your being refused a visa." I felt like kicking myself for my useless honesty.

I suddenly realize that I am quite proud of having been refused a visa by both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. This may be my claim to immortality.

But this is gossip, not politics. I know that someone has to deal with government, finance, foreign policy. I know that democracy is phony; our last election in Britain gave the Tories a majority, though Labour and Liberal combined got more votes than those cast for the Tories. But since the alternative to democracy is dictatorship, we cannot give it up.

It is all so sinister. When I watch, on TV, the national party conventions in the U.S.A. with their infantile parades and bands and flags, I feel dejected and hopeless. Behind these silly facades, I see the self-seeking lobbyists and the rat race of capitalism. When a President makes some gesture—Nixon to China, for example—who knows what the motive is? Some Americans say he is thinking of the next presidential election. Certain Englishmen say that the U. S. Government soft-pedals its support of Israel because it is worried about repercussions among the suppliers of Arab oil.

International politics is a dirty game; home politics can be likewise. The Tory government is thriving off industries that the previous Labour government nationalized, paying ones tike Cook's Tours. *Trade follows the flag* goes the old saying. But trade often seems to control politics. The three political parties in Britain are against apartheid;

yet if any party tried to stop diplomatic relations with South Africa, the trade lobbies would kill any such parliamentary bill.

A few years ago an American writer wrote that if the Vietnam war were suddenly stopped, forty per cent of American industry would collapse.

Nay, my politics are confined to our school democracy, which is as near real democracy as it can be. We meet in a big room and make our laws by a general show o£ hands. But I know that the mass of voters cannot meet in a room. The democracy in which one man is supposed to represent the opinions of 30,000 is somewhat specious; yet I do not know the answer. I am aware that many politicians do much good work; I grant many have made humane rules. But politicians who concern themselves with social ills are rare.

In Britain, our prison system is a disgrace. Men are treated with scant humaneness, are deprived of sex, of culture, of everything that makes life, life. According to reports, some prisons in the U.S.A. are much worse. The barbarous prison system is accepted not only by politicians but by the clergy, the doctors, and the lawyers—indeed, by most people in general. It is because politics does not deal with crying evils that I cannot arouse any enthusiasm for politics. Schools beat kids and the politicians turn a blind eye. Our government will build a new school with modern appliances, and then leave its administration to some headmaster to run with the cane—if he is that sort of criminal. When parents in Britain complain about their kids' are being beaten in school, the magistrate usually sides with the caning teacher. In a sick world, politics must be sick. The politicians tell us that the laws they make apply to all—whatever their class. Yes, that is true! A tramp can sleep on the Thames Embankment, and so can a duke.

I am constantly being asked why Summerhill does not teach politics. A democracy is supposed to be governed by the electorate. But the electorate is composed of millions of individuals who were character-formed in their cradles, in their homes, and in their schools. They were taught to obey authority, to repress sex, to fear a God of fear. In short, they were castrated, so that in later life they have become sheep seeking a leader. Hence a nation's following Hitler against all its interests. Hence, in Britain, where the majority of voters are wage earners, the electorate puts in a Tory government whose interests are almost entirely the opposite of workers.

Summerhill aims at a new democracy of free citizens who will not follow any leader. Until children are no longer molded into castrated sheep, democracy remains a fake and a danger. This is no theory; it is founded on long observation of children who have self-government. No child in my school holds up his hand because he sees me doing so when we vote.

I grant that our little school parliament could never fit a large democracy. That is why I have never been willing to have more than seventy pupils at most. With 200 boys and girls, it would mean electing representatives; all real interest would be gone. I grant our system is impractical; we cannot have millions of voters raise their hands at a public meeting to vote for or against the Common Market. But a day may come when voters will be free enough to see through all the tricks and oppose lobbying and the self-interest of many politicians; in short, a day may dawn when voters will not be overgrown school kids conditioned from birth to follow leaders mechanically.

## Spiritualism and other Religions

I have already told how my parents gave up their Calvinism for spiritualism. When my sister Clunie died in 1919, they asked me if I could get in touch with a medium. I was then in London. With great difficulty, I arranged to have an interview with Mrs. Leonard, Sir Oliver Lodge's medium. She went into a trance and said things that astonished me: that Clunie had been a teacher, and that she had died of lung trouble—both correct. I began to wonder if there was something in spiritualism after all.

Then: "Have you any questions for your sister?" "Yes, ask her if she ever thinks of Sport." "She says, yes; she loved Spot. But then, she loved all animals."

Alas, my question had referred to Spott, the village where Clunie had taught. I did not tell my parents about that part of the interview.

I doubt we shall get far with the esoteric until we grasp what our conjurers do. I spent three nights trying to discover where the great magician David Devant got the dozens of eggs he was clutching from the air. I never learnt. A friend who belongs to the *Magic Circle* tells me that such tricks are simple; but because of his oath, he cannot tell me how they are done. Another conjurer with less scruple explained to me how the levitation act is performed.

I simply cannot become interested in a life after death. Billions have died, but where are they? The metempsychosis folks make the matter easy. The soul of the dead is parked; and when a babe is born, some power selects a soul to put into the new body.

I have doubts about psychic manifestations in haunted houses, but am puzzled about poltergeists who seem to throw furniture about the room. My first wife's sister believes that her house in Lyme Regis was haunted. She and her husband, Professor George Robertson, went to the cinema one night. She had been knitting before they left. George, an unbeliever, said to me: "When we got back, Ett's wool had been draped all over a picture frame. I couldn't reach the wool, and had to borrow a ladder from next door."

I often heard knocks in her house; but only when a certain German girl—said to be a medium—was present. Long after the death of the Robertsons, I knocked at the door and said to the new occupant: "Do you ever hear knocks in the house?" She stated at me blankly, and said of course she didn't. The poltergeist had apparently moved elsewhere.

About forty years ago, I experimented with table-rapping; Eric Ding-wall, an investigator of psychic research, was present at the time. Eric was a sceptic about anything psychic, yet he told me that on more than one occasion he had received answers that no one taking part at the table could have known. My lack of interest in things psychic may be associated with my indifference to the spiritual in life. I am not one of Wordsworth's little ones who came to the world trailing clouds of glory. I am an earthy guy, even if my head is sometimes in the clouds.

Reich once told me that religion is sex removed as far as possible from the genitals. I did not understand that statement then, and still do not.

Why did Reich see religion as displaced sex? He believed that sex energy is the mainspring of life. Religion, in relegating pleasure to a world after death, sublimated this energy. It lifted sex to the head, and made it something to be thought about, not practiced.

Whatever the motive, millions of children have carried through life a sex guilt given them through orthodox religion. Therein lies the danger. The world will never be happy while such religious belief lives.

I say this in spite of the fact that the death of religion under communism does not seem to have given us anything better than a police state. Any argument with a devout Communist will convince one that communism is no longer a creed of freedom from exploitation; what began as a Marxist analysis of society has now become a new, emotional religion. To some party members, blasphemy against Lenin or other leaders is the sin against the Holy Ghost. Still, communism will change; I am told that Russian youth can't be bothered reading Karl Marx. In any event, when I speak of the abolition of religion, 1 refer not only to Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism but to all the emotional isms including nationalism, politics, and the Brazilian worship of football.

Here I express my fear that Summerhill itself may become a religion. Many schools are claiming to go our way, some even calling themselves Summerhills. It scares me. My motto has always been: TAKE FROM OTHERS WHAT YOU WANT, BUT NEVER BE A DISCIPLE OF ANYONE. That was the main reason for my refusing Reich's invitation to transfer my school to his estate in Maine. I knew I'd be classed as a Reichian.

The Christian God, the great Father, is like the average earthly father in his strictures on sex. The Christian church, especially the Roman version, has made sex the dirtiest thing in the world. Today, in England, Roman Catholics and Moral Re-Armament puritans are nosing out pornographic books and getting the law to prosecute authors and publishers.

When a man spends his time ferreting out what he thinks are obscene books, as Alfred Lord Douglas did in his later days, I make the guess that he has a latent sick interest in sex and pornography; so when the church makes sex the super sin, I can only suppose that its unconscious fixation is on sex.

In Christian Spain, a bullfight is infinitely more of a pornographic show than any staged in a theater, more than any erotic writings in a bookshop. But the Church approves of bullfighting. And in England some parsons follow the foxhounds. In our British church schools teachers beat boys. Why is sex attacked while cruelty is accepted? Perhaps because sex affords the greatest pleasure in the world, and religion is against pleasure. In Macaulay's words:

*The Puritan hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, bti because it gave pleasure to the spectators.*

In my young days, cards and theater and whistling on the Sabbath were regarded as sins. Only recently has Scotland allowed tennis or golf on Sunday. In my native town, you cannot play golf until after the morning service,

I am not a strong hater, but my greatest aversion is the Roman Catholic Church. I hate—as violently as H. G. Wells did—an authority that gives five hundred million guilt about sex—guilt that makes them all underlings. To me, this church is anti-life, paternalism writ large. How comic, were it not tragic, that a pope, who has never had a sex life, orders millions of women not to use the Pill. I cannot associate the Roman Catholic Church with Christianity. The savage beatings that go on in Catholic schools in Eire

must be expressions of bottled-up sex coming out as sadism. Christ did not say: “Suffer the little children to come unto me and get beaten up.”

Protestantism is dying rapidly because it has dealt mainly with the head through long sermons and intellectual arguments. The Roman Catholic Church grips a child’s feelings in its cradle, and what one acquires emotionally can seldom be overcome. Like many a Scot, I broke with hellfire Calvinism, which never touched any emotion except fear of hell. It was truly a “head” religion—I am told that a Glasgow public library contains sixty thousand books of sermons. Protestantism reasoned; Catholicism molded. But why organi2ed religion degenerated into hate of life, I cannot guess. All I know is that Nietzsche was right when he said that the first and last Christian died on the Cross.

To me, it is a perversion of Freud to say that a violent dislike for something or someone betrays an unconscious desire for that something or someone. Utter bosh! Hence, I cannot believe that my hatred of Catholicism indicates an unconscious desire to fall into the arms of Mother Church. Organized orthodox religion is the most virulent epidemic in the world. For many of its followers, God is not in Heaven; he is in the Vatican and in Canterbury, the abodes of all that is anti-life.

Maybe the world will not find happiness until the last religion is dead—and among religions I include those ugly sisters, capitalism and communism.

## Lecturing

In my student days, I played with the idea of becoming an actor. I knew that I had little chance of success; for one thing, I could not have got rid of my Scottish accent, and few Scots are required in plays. I had some talent but not enough to make me reach the stars, and I am sure that I would have jibbed at being told how to act by a director.

Looking back many years, it occurs to me that I might have felt that acting was not creative enough; it was like working out a geometrical problem that someone else had set, or playing music composed by another. Oddly enough, a fictional character might outlive the real virtuoso, like Dick Martin in *Young Man with a Horn* by Dorothy Baker. This was a vivid characterization of a trumpeter whose life was said to be founded on that of Bix Beiderbeck. The author almost makes us hear him playing his horn. I have read the book four times.

Whatever the cause, I renounced my ambition to go on the stage and have never regretted it. In a way, I did become an actor, lecturing to thousands of students and parents and teachers. At first I had stage fright and a phobia of not being able to go on, hence I used notes; but for many years, I have never needed them. I think we tend to depreciate a lecturer who relies on notes or reads his talk. Lecturing is an art, a trick if you like. I had an uncanny knack of summing up audiences. When I got on the platform, I knew if the audience would approve of me or not. The trick in lecturing is to hold your audience. If people looked bored, I would tell a funny story. Once in Scotland I faced a grim crowd of set faces. What’s wrong with you lot?” I said. “You all look dead, so I take it you are all teachers,” Laughter, and immediately they were with me.

On another occasion, I began: “I feel guilty. When I knew I was to speak to teachers with all their respectability, I did a cowardly thing—I put on a tie.” Then I took my tie off. So I did become an actor after all.

I have had some odd lecture chairmen in my time. Once in Scotland, my chairman was the headmaster of the local academy. When I sat down, he got up.

"Now the lecturer will be glad to answer questions, but I warn any of my staff who are here that I won't have them trying to bring this man's ideas into my school."

There were no questions.

In Johannesburg, in 1936, the professor who took the chair was notorious for falling asleep on every public occasion. It was partly because he kept awake all through my lecture that South Africa treated me as a VIP. It wouldn't today.

I once had a chairman who was vague about my name. "I am sure that you will join me in welcoming the celebrated educationist, Mr.—Mr. O'Neili."

The best chairman-host I ever had was a rich man in a York town who told me: "I am not interested in education, and won't come to hear you, and I'll be in bed when you return. You'll find all you need at your bedside." And I did—whiskey, brandy, beer.

What I liked most about lecturing in South Africa was the fact that in every town my chairman was the mayor, and behind every town hall platform was his room with a bar filled with rows of bottles. What I disliked most was the racialism. Black teachers were not allowed to attend my lectures, except once in Brakpan, a suburb of Johannesburg that had a broad-minded mayor.

Once in Stockholm, the hall could not hold half of those who wanted to hear me, so the church opposite was asked if I could speak there. Yes, they replied, but on condition that I did not mention religion or sex. That sure cramped my style.

The worst lecture I ever gave was in Oslo where each sentence had to be translated right away. Of course, I kept losing the thread of my discourse.

I never had the gift of extemporaneous speaking. Even today, if I were asked at a dinner party to propose the health of the ladies, I would be terrified. My father could stand up and make a speech about anything, but I never had his talent; I can only lecture on what I know, my work.

I cannot recall ever responding to interruptions with witty answers. I hadn't the quickness of the suffragette who answered the shouted taunt: "How would you like to be a man?" with the sharp rejoinder: "How would *you* like to be a man?"

I once answered a question in a way that I regretted later. In Kimberley, I think it was that a woman asked: "Should I tell my child who his father is?" "Yes, if you know," I said, and immediately kicked myself for being cruel at a poor woman's expense. With that one exception, I have always answered questions civilly.

## Honesty

How much does society depend on honesty between people? I have just had a visit from a man who wants to found a colony of people who will be absolutely honest and forthright with each other. Some time ago one of my teachers, against my advice, started such a group at Summerhill. After the first meeting, an adolescent girl came to me in tears, saying that the others had said beastly things about her character and behavior. My

advice about closing the meetings was then taken. In free-and-easy group therapy, more faults than virtues are pointed out; the hate element comes through too often.

In Summerhill, I have always taken the line of letting new teachers discover their own limitations and talents. It may be moral cowardice that makes me refrain from saying: "Smith, you are a lazy sod; your lessons show no imagination. Buck up or get out." The Smith problem is usually solved by a boycott of his lessons by pupils, forcing him to leave.

Myself, I could not take part in a group that was intent on being completely frank. If told that I was a self-centered poseur who disguised my innate meanness with a smile, I would be angry; and even if I tried, I could do nothing at my age about changing my fundamental character. Group criticism could work in things that do not much matter—Jones being told that he makes a noise supping soup. Jones might resent the criticism, but would react to it by being conscious that he was a noisy eater.

Reaction to criticism within a small group can be hell, as the family unit shows. Often have I heard a wife say: "Peter is useless in the house. He can't mend a fuse. He has neither hands— nor head, for that matter. Thinks only of cricket." It has been my observation that women, more than men, make such statements about a partner; and I expect that in extreme cases, the Peters of life do some strangling.

I try to visualize a world of honesty, where no one had armor, no one pretended, no one had private secrets. Imagine a typical situation with John and Mary. He is fifty, and she forty-nine. She has lost her looks and makes no attempt to adorn herself. He has an eye for a well-turned ankle at the bus stop. Maybe he is having a hidden affair. John refrains from shouting at his wife, "Damn you, woman, your inane chatter, your persistent nagging, your lack of any pride in how you look—they make me sick of the sight of you," If I were John, my main motive for not revealing my true feelings—for being dishonest—would be my fear of hurting another person. It's all really a matter of good manners; one does not talk about swinging when having tea with the widow of a man who has been hanged.

I acknowledge that society would be healthier if we were all honest with each other and spoke our thoughts aloud. When meeting academic people at some formal function, like getting an honorary degree, I feel a hypocrite. During a "weather" conversation with some professor or his wife, I feel innerly like crying: "We are boring each other; we are not talking the same language." But no, it cannot be done.

Before a mutual honesty group is set up, I would advise its promoters to read Ibsen's *Wild Duck* to see what happens when a fanatic for truth thinks he is bestowing happiness on a family through truth. Yet Ibsen may have been wrong, and

I may be wrong. Maybe honesty ail around would make a saner, happier world.

I wonder how truthful I really am. If I am honest, is it because of innate goodness or because of fear of the police? During my days of sojourn in Germany. I hated German tobacco. Every time I came home for a visit to England, I returned to Germany with my pockets stuffed with John Cotton mixture. *"Haben Sie Tabac?"* I would be asked. With an innocent look, I would reply: "Nein." Swindling my countrymen was another matter, and only infrequently dared I travel a railway without a ticket. I think that kind of honesty is induced mainly through fear of being caught.

When dealing with kids, one is forced to be sincere unless one is a disciplinarian. If they have not been conditioned into being hateful little brats, children have a natural sincerity. Let me say unashamedly that I think I am sincere in one of life's larger aspects. On a TV program, I would not claim that a certain soap powder washed whiter than others. My conscience would not allow me to do so, even for a fortune. I could advertise something I believed in—John Cotton tobacco, for instance. Years back, when I worked in Fleet Street, I knew some left-wing journalists who prostituted their talents by working for a Tory paper. I wonder how many of the ad people on TV believe in the goods they are boosting.

## Heroes and Half-heroes

Hardly ever have I known great men. I met H.G. Wells, the hero of my youth, when he was quite old; my dream was shattered by a little man with a squeaky voice and an arrogant manner. Later, I sent him one of Wilhelm Reich's books.

His reply:

*You have sent me an awful gabble of competitive quacks. Reich misuses every other word, and Wolfe* [his translator] *is a solemn ass. There is not a gleam of fresh understanding in the whole bale. Please don't send me any more of this stuff.*

My reply:

*Dear Wells, 1 cannot understand why you are so damned unpleasant about it. I considered you the man with the broadest mind in England, and sincerely wanted light on a biological matter I wasn't capable of judging myself. Your black-out letter might have been writ/en by Colonel Blimp himself. 1 hoped you would give an opinion on bions and or gone s. whether they were a new discovery or not, and all I got was a tirade against Wolfe's translation of Reich's German. You apply /he word quack to a man whom Freud considered brilliant.*

*I grant that I asked for it. 1 intruded. I apologize, and being a Scot, refund your postage. Your reputation is that of a man who can't suffer fools gladly. Apparently you can't suffer sincere research gladly either. When a New York Medical School is trying out bions and orgones on cancer patients, your "no fresh understanding in the whole bale" sounds odd. But this is no quarrel, and I won't bother you about Reich or anyone else.*

Wells's reply:

*Dear Neill; No, I decline your stamps, but this business is quackery. You call me a Blimp. I call you a sucker. Bless you.*

Reich was furious with me for approaching Wells. "I don't need the approval of Wells or anyone else," he blasted.

"Then why did you send me a dozen copies of *The Function of the Orgasm* if you didn't want me to distribute them?" I asked.

Reich just grunted.

A hero who did not disappoint was Henry Miller. After someone had sent him one or two of my books, Henry wrote to me, and we kept up a desultory correspondence for

some years. Then he came to London, and we had lunch together. I loved Henry; so warm, so humorous, so obviously genuine. I have often sighed to think that thousands of miles separate us. But to be honest, my judgment of Henry may have been more or less conditioned by the fact that he once wrote in a booklet announcing the publication of *Summerhill:* "I know of no educator in the Western world who can compare with A. S. Neill. It seems to me he stands alone. . . . Summerhill is a tiny ray of light in a world of darkness. . . ." But again, to be honest, I loved Henry long before he had written those words.

In my time also, I have met entertainers of the stage, cinema, and TV, with that almost unconscious, yet common feeling that folks who are popular idols must be in themselves enormously interesting. Millions would have been delighted to meet Gary Cooper, for instance, but I make the guess that Gary Cooper off-screen was just an ordinary, amiable guy. My first disillusion with stage people occurred when I was a student. A touring Ibsen company came to Edinburgh, and I wangled an invitation to have supper with the performers. I was seated beside the leading lady, who had played Nora, Hedda Gabler, Rebecca, and this was to be the treat of my play going life. But the woman had no interest in Ibsen; I wondered if she even knew he was a Norwegian.

I sometimes wonder what effect fame has on young people; pop singers who become millionaires, footballers who have world acclaim. Maybe they squander it as they do their money. But I reckon it is all a matter of age. When I published my first book, *A Dominie's Log,* in 1915, I subscribed to a press-cutting agency; and when my mail arrived, I always opened their envelope first. Today I usually leave this to the last. Yet the mere fact that I still employ a press-cutting agency shows that I am not indifferent to public opinion. Unfortunately, almost everything in life comes too late. I have three honorary university degrees which I never use; had they come to me fifty years ago, I would have been elated. I think of Wilde's dictum: "In this world there are two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it."

Never have I felt natural with the aristocracy—earls, lords, and countesses—the few times we met. When staying in big houses with a butler, I have felt very much out of my element. Manners tire me—jumping up when a woman rises from her chair. And the class distinction: I never have seen a gentleman

rise when a maid brought in the tea tray. The poor have no manners—they don't hold doors open for their wives—yet I observe better manners in a village pub than I have ever seen in the Ritz or the Savoy. Luckily, the people I mingle with are too sincere to have artificial manners.

J. M. Barrie was my hero until I came under the spell of Wells, but we never met. Our birthplaces were only eight miles apart. Barrie went to Edinburgh University, and so did I. He was a famous writer; I also would be a famous writer. It was a clear case of identification. I read and reread his *Sentimental Tommy,* his tales of old Kirriemuir, his Thrums. My disciple-ship came to a sudden end when I read that tremendous counterblast to Scottish sentimentality, *The House with the Green Shutters* by George Douglas Brown. I fancy it was then that I adopted a new definition for sentimentality: giving a swan's emotion to a goose. *The Home* became my Bible; I knew it almost by heart. Now I saw Barrie in perspective as a minor writer with flashes of insight and humor. His *Peter Pan* appealed to children because of the pirates, the adventure; it appealed to their parents

because it dealt with the boy who never grew up—feeding their illusion that childhood was one long rhapsody of delight. That the author himself never grew up is brilliantly shown in Janet Dunbar's recent biography, J. *M. Barrie: The Man Behind the Image.*

Barrie had his whimsical patches. When an old lady asked him what he was going to be, he answered—an author. She held up her hands. "What, and you an M.A.!" Talent he had, lots of it. His play *Dear Brutus* is a model of construction. But I doubt very much if I would have appreciated meeting him. Of all past writers, the one I would love most to have met would be Oscar Wilde. To listen to his conversation in the Cafe Royal must have been a marvelous treat.

So much for the great. Less exalted types—teachers, students, parents, the hoi polloi—have been my milieu; and that has been good. So many never know what ordinary people do and think: judges, trying some poor victim of poverty and ignorance; statesmen, who have no idea what life is like for the poor; do-gooders, who visit the slums in their big cars. Since this is not a book on education. I merely mention the tremendous gulf between teachers and pupils, similar to the gulf between privates and colonels. But class systems would take a thick book in themselves.

## Biscuit

My Golden Labrador, Biscuit, is at the end of his tether. The aged boy has lost control of his rational functions and will have to be put to sleep. He was an ideal dog for a school. He never bit anyone, and he always allowed the children to pet and play with him. I shall miss him sadly.

The death of a cat does not as a rule produce the same grief as that of a dog. In my opinion, cats seldom show affection, and persons mean little to them. When I was in the hospital recently, Biscuit was miserable. Most of the time he lay on my bed, waiting for me. Dogs flatter one; cats do not. Dogs love, and cannot condemn those they love. I am sure that Herman Goering's dogs loved him as much as if he had been a Gandhi.

Most of us have affection for dogs because they show affection for us. Such a gift is not a matter of their being gregarious animals. Horses and cows are gregarious, but they show little or no love for their masters. Maybe it is an instinct of the species. The dog is a wolf—a pack animal—and in a wild state, dogs have no avenue for showing love, unless to the leader of the pack. Biscuit loves me because I am his pack leader. Being non-gregarious, cats have no leader. In a way they might be rated higher than dogs for they have a natural independence. They never fawn, never curry favor; whereas old Biscuit is always nosing my arm, hoping for a friendly pat.

Sometimes one can teach a dog obedience, though I never could with Biscuit; if intent on some object, he ignored my whistle. One cannot make a cat tractable. Why can one make a horse obedient and not a cow? Or can one? Oxen on the plow, yes. But cattle in a field, no.

One interesting thing about Biscuit; he had a consistent sense about timing. Every day after lunch, he knew it was time for his walk on the beach, and he plagued me until I put him in the car.

When I was a boy, if my father put on his hat and coat to go to town, ray Skye Terrier, Boulot, danced around with joy; yet when Father donned his tall hat and frock coat to go to Church on a Sunday, Boulot didn't even look up.

I once asked a shepherd who had won first prize at a sheepdog trial how much his dog understood. "He doesn't understand a bloody thing," he replied. "He just obeys my whistle. There never was a dog you could tell to put three sheep in one pen and five in the other."

Thousands of dog owners have said that they prefer their dogs to human beings, and 1 understand what they mean; the boundless faithfulness and love one gets from a dog can never be got from any human relationship. A wife, a brother may criticize; a dog never criticizes, never doubts. One might call it the higher animal, for it does not lie or slander, it does not make war, and it does not hate. If it is aggressive, it is because of a bone or a bitch. Much depends on its owner allowing it self-regulation, so to speak. I guess that if I had put Biscuit on a chain he would have been a biter in six weeks.

One day, dogs will be banned from cities. In Britain, there are local laws about messing sidewalks. Biscuit, by the way, never needed a law; he always left the sidewalk and sought the middle of the road or a grass bank. Mannerly dog was old Biscuit, and now I keep putting off the phone call to-the vet, just as I put off the sacking of a teacher. Too old at fourteen. I am too old to get another dog; but even were I younger, I would not have a dog because its life span is too short, and the parting too poignant.

## Entertainments

What do I do with my spare time? For years it was spent in my workshop, but a year or two back I suddenly lost interest in tools and gave mine to the school workshop. My hobby was metal work, hammering trays and bowls out of flat circular brass or copper disks. I was never very good at it, but I know a lot about tools and machines and processes. I once showed an old carpenter how to unscrew a large woodscrew that resisted all attempts with the screwdriver. I held a red-hot poker on the top of it, and the old carpenter said that in fifty years he had never learned that trick. I always had a lathe, but lathe work is dull because you can only make round things. Because of this hobby I have tended to value tools more than books. Like television or watching a football game, reading is passive, inactive. I prefer doing, and so do children. But having little chance for creation in home or school, millions of children today sit for hours with their eyes glued to the screen.

I spend, or should I say waste, a lot of time doing crossword puzzles in the evening, and watching TV; although I think TV is geared to a mental age of ten.

What do I read? Newspapers, of course; I take in four dailies and three Sunday papers. I enjoy the reviews: theater, TV, books—especially books. I am bored stiff with the old films so often presented in Britain, even those of Garbo; yet I put myself out quite a lot to see Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin is the boss in his films; he writes the script and the music, and produces the picture. His most recent films should have been edited; but his greatest films—*The Gold Rush, Shoulder Arms, City Lights,* and *Modern Times* did not require any advisor. Today, I would gladly walk a long way to see *City Lights* or *Modern Times.*

Occasionally our TV gives us a Buster Keaton film and I laugh like hell, just as I laugh over the best Chaplin. In general, Westerns bore me; but every week I watch "The Virginian," mainly because the characters are alive; whereas in "Perry Mason" no one lives—they are all sticks. In my twenties, I was not a popular guest at parties, for a prime activity was whist, and I could not play because I could not concentrate. I have never been a games watcher, and hardly ever saw a football match until the World Cup appeared on TV, and then I began to admire the skill of the players. Cricket has always been Greek to me; it is an English, not a Scottish game.

I took up golf when I was a student, and the irons I used were rusty, the shafts made of hickory, and the balls old floaters. I never was good at the game and cared little whether or not I beat my partner. I played for the shots; to place a three-iron shot two inches from the pin made my day. I discovered that one of the skills necessary for a golfer is how to avoid the club bore who explains every shot of his last round. I also discovered the tremendous hold of the game on a person; golf stories testify to that.

A man about to drive from the tenth tee sees a funeral approach along the road. He doffs his cap, and lowers his club and then goes on to win the round.

At the nineteenth hole, his partner says to him: "That was a nice gesture you made at the tenth tee."

"Gesture? No gesture; dammit all; we had been married for twenty-five years."

I never became silly about golf myself.

I often wish I had learned to play the piano, my favorite instrument. Not that I could have become a good player; I am not musical enough. Fifty years ago in Germany, I bought a trumpet, thinking that because I had been a bugler in the Volunteers at the beginning of the century, I could master the instrument. Someone stole it, and I never missed it. All I can do now is to make small kids look at me scornfully when I tell them I am the best phonograph player in the school. "Corny Neill!" is the usual reaction.

My attitude toward music is romantic; I have many Chopin records, but no Bach. I have no idea what counterpoint is and my musical knowledge must be like that of a foreign king who was the guest of Queen Victoria, She took him to a concert, and when the band finished tuning up, he rose and clapped his hands.

Games on TV have become an obsession with me. Seeing a crowd of many thousands yell their heads off at a football match makes me feel hopeless about humanity, but I cannot decide which is the worse opium of the people: TV or football.

I was never a gambler. Occasionally, I have bought lottery tickets. In 1922, I won second prize in a state lottery in Germany—possibly 200,000 marks. I had to go to Berlin to collect my prize, but didn't go when I found out that my fare from Dresden to Berlin would amount to more than my win. In Germany, I also speculated, buying coal, iron, and beer shares when the pound was worth a million marks. What became of my shares I never knew; probably the stabilization of the mark wiped them all out.

I am a poor businessman. I keep my money in the bank-doing nothing, when it could be invested in shares. I used to say that if I invested money, it would be in Rolls Royce. "Safe as gilt-edged securities," we all thought then. Tut, tut. how wrong can one be?

Betting has never appealed to me. Horse racing wearies me, although I watch show jumping with interest. I abominate performances with animals, and keep wondering what cruelty goes on in the training of animals. Years ago, Jack London's *Michael, Brother of Jerry,* gave me a hatred of animal training which has persisted for life. I cannot believe that a lion will walk along a wire because its trainer is kind. It sickens me to know that leading aristocrat members of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in England hunt foxes and shoot deer. America with its million shotguns must spread infinite pain over the countryside. Guns and Christianity seem to go together.

I know the usual reply of the animal killers. "You eat meat, don't you? You let others kill for you." True, indeed. Even Bernard Shaw did not get his shoe leather from animals that had died naturally. It is a good point and a fair one. The answer that our animals are killed suddenly and painlessly is a rationalization. In protesting against hunting, I am being a bit of a humbug. Possibly, it is the association of killing with pleasure that troubles me. Humbug I may be, but I know I would find a Spanish bullfight revolting.

In spite of hunting and killing, the people of England are, in the main, animal lovers; much more money is raised for animal protection than for child protection. When an Alsatian guard dog nearly killed a child recently, he was shot by a policeman. The child's parents received scores of letters accusing them of not looking after their child, and thus causing the death of a dog.

## Reading

I have often wondered how much reading affects formation of character. My parents and my grandmother always tried to get the children to read good books, meaning books that uplifted and led to a path to heaven—books like *Pilgrim's Progress. Robinson Crusoe,* stories of Livingstone and Stanley—all dull reading. My father's favorite, *Samuel Smiles' Self Help,* was enough to smother any budding ambition.

Once when I was lecturing in London, someone asked me at question time what my pupils read. I answered that I was disappointed that they did not take to the books I loved at their age, and gave as examples *Kipps* and *Mr. Polly,* which I considered the best books H. G. Wells had written. I was astounded and, of course, flattered to see Wells sitting in the second row. A parent had brought him.

When she introduced me to him, I said: "But how comes it that a man of your stature has come to hear me?"

He answered: "Our friend here said to me: 'You've been writing about education for years, knowing nothing about it. Come and I'll take you to hear a man who knows a lot about it.' "

I am sure Wells was bored, for my views on education could not possibly be anything like his science-bound viewpoints. The lady told me later that he did not like my reference to *Kipps* and *Mr. Polly* because he thought his later works were much better. I, as a writer of much lesser standard, can appreciate his attitude. To me, my first book, *A Dominie's Log* is a poor one; but many have said that it is my best.

In a gathering of artists in Oslo, J once asked what they thought of their early works. Most of them said they could look at work they did twenty years ago, but not so easily at

work done a year ago. No man can read his own character, and it is just as likely that no artist can judge his own work.

I liked Robert Graves when I met him years ago, but I have never quite forgiven him. Once during a discussion concerning the respect due religion, Graves asked me if I would strop my razor on the family Bible. I answered, "Certainly, if the leather were of the right sort." Then, in a book, he mentioned me as the man who habitually strops his razor on the family Bible—a slander, for I have never owned a family Bible.

I never could appreciate poetry, for never in my life have I written a verse; I am prosaic. Remember Wilde's: "Meredith was a prose Browning, and so was Browning"? I was not a prose anybody. Today, I cannot read poetry. If challenged to write down any poetry I know, I could only write *The Hound of Heaven,* Gray's *Elegy, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* and that little gem *Tarn f the Kirk.*

I have also joyed in Shakespeare's word-painting:

*And look, the gentle day dapples the drowsy*
*East with spots of grey, But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,*
*walks o'er the dew on yon high eastern hill.*

And I like Oscar Wilde's verse in *The Harlot's House:*

*And down the long and silent street*
*The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,*
*Crept like a frightened girl.*

I have never cared for Robert Burns, and Auden, Eliot and company leave me cold. But I do not want to be pitied. Poor fellow! What a lot he has been missing in life! That cry is fatuous. For I am also missing knowledge of architecture, music, metaphysics, astronomy, science.

Although I am no fan, I have a theory about poetry, which I expounded to Auden over a lunch table in New York. I argued that if a Shakespearean sonnet or *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* are poetry, *The Village Blacksmith* and *Lochinvar* are not. I said that there should be a definite line drawn between poetry and verse. Who could draw that line I cannot guess; all I know is that he would get a headache deciding the status of *The Deserted Village* or *The Lady of the Lake.* He probably would have no trouble placing William McGonagall of my native shire, a poor, gentle creature who sold his poems on the streets of Dundee at a penny each. Such an arbiter might choose *The Burial of the Reverend George Gilfillan:*

*On the Gilfillan burial day.*

*In the Hill of Balgay,*
*It was a most solemn sight to see.*
*Not fewer than thirty thousand people assembled in Dundee.*
*All watching the funeral procession of Gilfillan that day,*
*That death had suddenly taken away, And was going to be buried in the Hill o Balgay.*

That McGonagall was far from normal is evident from his verses; yet they live, and not only as things to laugh at. There was a warm humanity about the man that makes him a poet in spirit. Were I the umpire, I should hesitate before casting him forth from among the true singers.

*Beautiful Moon, with thy silvery light,*
*Thou cheerest the poacher in the night:*
*For thou lettest him see to set his snares*
*To catch the rabbits and the hares.*

It is not very far below the standard set by *Lucy Gray* or *The Queen of the May.*

I read *The Prisoner of Zenda* without realizing that the hero was a bastard. Clunie and I were forbidden by our parents to read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* but of course we read it secretly and could see no reason for the ban. Books that touched sex were taboo, but horror stories never were. *Draiu/a* kept my bedroom windows shut for weeks.

Today, horror comics are allowed in homes that frown on sex. Sixty years ago, we had no horror comics; we had the clean fun of Tom Browne in *Chips* and *Comic Cuts;* we had the thrilling adventures of *Deadwood Dick* and *Buffalo Bill,* but we did not call the booklets *penny dreadfuls;* to us they were *bloods.* They made a good introduction to Rider Haggard and Anthony Hope.

As in the films, the bad man always lost the battle. The heroines were lifeless puppets, but we were not aware of that fact. All was honorable: even the black-mustached villain refused to fire at a man's back. Yes, it was all clean in the sense that it was simple, straightforward, and without double meaning.

As a graduate in Honors English, I should be reading Keats and Shelley and Milton or Dickens and Thackeray. The books are on my shelves but I shall never read them, although I do dip into Keats once in a while. Detective stories bore me. Many books on education and psychology are sent to me, chiefly from the United States. Too many are written in *a.* stodgy style.

Reich killed any interest 1 had in reading about psychology, because he went deeper than most writers. All the volumes about psychological cases and their terminology seem to me now of little importance.

I seldom read a novel, but recently I have taken to reading biographies, wondering if it helps one to understand writers. I have never read a biography that made a man bigger or

more noble. The life tells mostly of the little man in all of us. Luckily, we know practically nothing about Shakespeare. In Britain, when writers give us books or articles about royalty, they rhapsodize about the family, the human touches—photo of the Queen making tea at a picnic. To be fair to them, the royal ones try to be honest; the Duke of Edinburgh confesses that he is no intellectual that he seldom reads.

My preference has always been prose, but I came to dislike the ornate style when it was euphuistic, roseate. I like the style of Mary Johnson in her novel *By Order of the Company,* a tale of the days of James 1 and the colonization of America. She caught the pictorial language of the period. No one today would write: "Death is not more still than in this Virginian land in the hour when the sun has sunk away, and it is black beneath the trees, and the stars brighten slowly and softly, one by one."

A phrase written by R. L. Mackie, who was a student at St. Andrews some sixty years ago, has always stuck in my mind:" Sometimes I am a grey-hooded monk who has renounced the world with Jove and music and all its vanities, till one day the scent of roses is blown into my face, and I find myself weeping." It must have been my Calvinist origins that fixed that quotation in my mind for life; that terrible religion saw to it that the scent of roses did not come our way.

Like Winston Churchill, if I were asked what writer in the past I should like to have met, I would reply: Oscar Wilde. But I doubt if the men felt themselves lucky when they sat in the Cafe Royal and listened to his conversations with Whistler and Frank Harris. Oscar's wit, unlike that of Whistler, was never cruel. Perhaps the nearest he came to cruelty was when a man claimed to be an old acquaintance.

"Mr. Wilde, I don't think you remember me."

Wilde studied his face.

"I'm sorry but I don't. I've changed a lot."

I never could stomach the wit of Gilbert in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. To me it was shallow and cynical, "based on a superficial view of society," I wrote more than sixty years ago in Jacks' *Self Educator.* Shaw, on the other hand, thought society rotten at the core.

At my age of 29, Shaw and Wells were my favorite writers, and possibly they had more influence on my career than all the later psychologists had. Yet, in hindsight, "Wells always disappointed. He labored a theme like the planlessness of the planners, and I kept looking for the solution that never appeared. When one came, it was no solution at all, as in *The Shape of Things to Come* where the world was saved by a group of scientists. I wonder what Wells would have made of the scientists today with their pollution and H-bombs, and the ruin of natural plant and animal life.

Shaw also had no solution. His brilliant analysis of society led to no promise of a new society. It must have been analysis without synthesis that made me lose interest in Shaw and Wells. They dated themselves; neither accepted the dynamic psychology of Freud. I write this acknowledging that I have dated myself, for I cannot accept the psychology of Skinner and Pavlov and Watson. Scientology seems Greek to me, and I suspect it as something phony. I have no idea what the word *existentialism* means. Every man must date himself in one way or another; I like to think that I have not become dated in education.

Like Reich, I dislike small talk and gossip; and that is one reason why kitchen-sink drama leaves me cold. Characters talk and say nothing. *Waiting for Godot* bored me; two tramps talking, just talking. Drama should he movement; yet I grant that much of Ibsen is conversation, but conversation that depicts character. The Godot tramps are simply saying that the world is very sick, but I cannot recall hearing any suggestion for doing anything about it. In *AN ENEMY of the People,* the doctor tells the little Norwegian world that it is sick, but he acts; he *does* something about it.

One of the regrets of my life is that I never learned French. In books, most French passages are not translated; German ones are, but I don't need them for I can read German. In my youth I learned little Latin and less Greek, which are long forgotten. I learned German simply because my stay in Germany compelled me to. 1 cannot speak it well, for I have never mastered the articles—*der, die* and *das*.

I meet very few Americans who can speak a foreign language, and the British are not linguists. On TV appear politicians from France, Germany, Holland, speaking perfect English, but I doubt whether any of our cabinet ministers arc proficient enough to be interviewed in French or German. Churchill's French was atrocious, yet he persisted in addressing the French in their own tongue.

In my travel days, I always avoided France because I am not very good at sign language. In a Parisian cafe, I once wanted honey and made a noise like a bee; the waitress fled from an obvious lunatic. I traveled in German-speaking countries. Even that had its difficulties. Once, traveling from Munich to Vienna, I got into conversation with a young man in my compartment—in German. As we neared Vienna's main station, I asked him in German where he carne from. "Edinburgh," he said. My hero, Ibsen, knew German because he lived in Munich for a long time, but he confessed to limitations in understanding French and seemed to have hardly any knowledge of English.

Yes, I regret not knowing French. My only foreign languages are German and American.

## Writing

Style cannot be taught; it is you.

True, one can learn about punctuation and grammar, but not about what might be called creative writing. I never had any difficulty about spelling; I am sure that it is primarily a visual skill. If I am not sure of the spelling of *niece.* I write down *neice,* and at once see which is correct. But again, this facility can't be acquired; it's inborn. There's a boy of fifteen in the school who reads all day and late into the night; yet cannot write a line without a misspelling.

My American pupils have difficulty with exams in England. Possibly some examiners do not know that in the U.S.A.. *traveller* contains but one "*l*", *Humour* is *humor,* and so on, It takes about two years for an American pupil at Summerhill to take a "bawth" instead of a "beth," but no American changes his or her: "1 have bin" into our "been." In the U.S., speakers and writers split infinitives. But what can you expect from a barbarous country.

In the matter of punctuation, I always put a colon before a quotation, and nearly every printer I have had changes the colon into a comma. Shaw was the only writer strong enough to insist on his own punctuation and his own orthography; he wrote *dont* not *don't.* Shaw was keen on simplified spelling; but even now, long after his death, people do not seek any changes, at least not in Britain. In New York I saw signs; "Nite Club." In time I suppose we shall recognize the difficulty a foreigner has with words like *trough, through, cough:* but I shall not live to see *truff, thru, coff.* Change must come, though.

Why does anyone write? Why do I write? I write because-I feel I have something to say, something that others might find interesting. And here I voice my grouse against TV. When I appear it is generally at a late hour when most folks are in bed; while all the popular performers who, in my opinion, have nothing to say, are on the air earlier in the evening. They get an audience of ten million, while I get a scant hundred thousand.

Authorship is frustrating, because one cannot know what influence one has had on readers. I once modestly thought that well-known people did not read my books, and suffered a mild shock when reading one of Asquith's letters to a young woman in hospital in which he mentioned sending her a book to cheer her up: *A Dominie's Log.* He was Prime Minister then. Yet I think it would be safe to bet that my books are not in the White House Library.

In fifty years of writing, I have seldom had any opposition or any rude letters. My books have not been banned by any country, even by narrow Catholic Eire or by race-hating South Africa. I did read once that Sydney Public Library in Australia had banned one book, but cannot recall which one.

The books I have written are milestones on a journey, things left behind. That is why I cannot read any of my own published works. Once written, a book illustrates my dead past, and I was never interested in the past. I have sort of a vague appreciation of what Henry Ford meant when he said that history was bunk.

Some authors have a hostile attitude to their publishers; I never had. In 1915, I wrote a series of articles for the *Scottish Educational News.* I sent the articles to a well-known London publisher, and got a reply from Herbert Jenkins who worked there. He said the book was too radical for his respected firm, but that he was setting up his own firm and would gladly publish my *Dominie's Log.* Thereafter, for many years, Jenkins published my books. His most famous author was P. G. Wodehouse, whose books must have been the main support of Jenkins' firm.

I had one big grouse with Jenkins; he would change my style. If I wrote: *"I am tired.'' Said Mary,* he changed that to: *"I am tired," said Mary wearily,* or *bitterly,* or what not.

Jenkins died of cancer comparatively young. He took no exercise, sat in his office seven days a week. There is a story about him that tells that he was so fond of his mother and sister that he would refuse any invitation to dinner if his mother and sister were not also invited. Yet upon his death, he left £60,000 to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and he left nothing to them, I cannot vouch for the authenticity of this story; I got it through hearsay.

I cannot say much about Harold Hart, seeing that he is the publisher of this book. I simply record that he saved Summerhill. In I960, when he published *Summerhill,* we were down to twenty-five pupils, and I wondered if we could carry on. The publication of

the book at that time was a real gamble. Hart believed in the Summerhill idea, and poured loads of money into full-page ads in the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* and in the *Saturday Review of Literature.* The publication of the book brought an invasion of American pupils to the school. Eleven years later, the German translation brought a Teutonic invasion. In Germany, the book was published under the clever title of *Ami-Authoritarian Upbringing,* and the book immediately became a best seller, selling 600,000 copies during its very first year of publication.

When my London publishers, Herbert Jenkins Ltd., merged with another firm, I transferred to Victor Gollancz. Ltd. and became friends with the new director, Livia Gollancz. Some thirty years after its original publication, both Hart and Gollancz republished my *The Last Man Alive,* a children's novel which Jenkins had issued in 1938.

They say that every comedian wants to play Hamlet, and it may be that every writer wants to be a different kind of writer. My desire to be a novelist or a playwright led nowhere. One can do only one job well in life, and no one has ever been able to analyze talent. Had I practiced golf twelve hours a day for twelve years, I would not have been a Jack Nicklaus. Not all the students who studied philosophy for a lifetime became Bertrand Russell's. Gray's *Elegy* tells of the "mute inglorious Miltons" that may be lying in the churchyard, but I think he was overestimating the potentialities of the population. Someone once wrote that talent is conscious while genius is unconscious. True in part, but not true enough, I refer to that hater "Wagner with his glorious music. Which element represented his unconscious—his musical genius or his misanthropy?

One of my chores has always been correcting proofs. An author should not correct his own proofs; he has a blind eye for minor points—misspelling, wrong punctuation, etc. Proofreading must be the dullest job on earth. Few proofreaders ever get gems to spot like; "Queen Victoria pissed over Waterloo Bridge on her way to Westminster." In 1913, when I was helping the editor of a washerwoman's weekly to read the proofs of a short story, we had to cut a sentence about a heroine who had been deserted by her unfaithful lover: "Mary knew that she would never find happiness until the sod had covered her."

I once heard an argument in an editorial room in Scotland. One editor said that a typesetter became so downright mechanical that he did not realize what he was setting. The editor claimed he had proved his point by giving a typesetter his own obituary notice to set; the typesetter did not notice that he was being declared dead. But I think my informant was a liar, for no man would miss his own name.

It suddenly strikes me that maybe I use writing as a process of thinking. Certainly I think more clearly when I am typing. It may be that print itself has a certain power; this would account for a million Babbitts accepting opinions from their daily newspapers. Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt never knew what to think until he had read the editorial in his daily newspaper. I guess that applies to most of the voters in our fake democracy. Hence, when I look at what I have typed, I may unconsciously think that what is down on paper may be of importance because it is in print.

Handwriting is inferior to the printed word—useful for letters to relations, or letters ordering coal. "Within fifty years from now all children at school will type, and the art of handwriting will have died out. A pity to someone like me, who can write beautiful copperplate and would hate to sec the art die.

In old age I can still write beautifully if I try to, although with the modern ball point pen I cannot use the thin upstroke and the heavy down stroke. Like all dominies, my father's handwriting was beautiful even in his old age. Not a shake in it, and there is none in mine at eighty-eight.

I see every day that handwriting does not seem important; my pupils smile in a superior way when I show off my copperplate. Damn the new generation. It won't give us old 'uns any opportunity to swank in pride.

"Writing maketh an exact man," said Bacon, but I see little proof that it does. Too many say too little 'in too many words. I like the story of the Scottish boxer who promised to wire his wife the result of his fight. He wired O.K.K.O. and saved a sixpence in the telegram.

My interest in plays began when I first read Ibsen. He is the only dramatist who ever tempted me to travel one hundred miles to London to see a play. I was enthralled with *Hedda Gabler* in which Peggy Ashcroft had the lead, and also with *The Wild Duck* which starred Dorothy Tutin. Both were fine performances. But I could never get interested in Ibsen the man. Friends in Norway often motored me over to his birthplace, Skein—pronounced Shane. I got no thrill out of seeing the room in which he worked. All I've read about him makes me feel that I wouldn't have liked that grumpy remote man, who was so critical of society but was yet so pleased to receive society's titles and honors. Another case of a big man having his little man component. But how great a dramatist that man was. For me, Ibsen's technique is almost beyond criticism.

Strindberg has interested me less than Ibsen. Before I knew a word of German, I was taken to see his *Totentanz* (Dance of Death) in a Berlin theatre. I didn't understand a word, but the play held me by the very intensity of its emotion.

It is because of my early fascination with Scandinavian plays that I cannot find any real satisfaction today in what is called "kitchen sink drama," with its long dialogues between tramps and others who have nothing to say to me.

I hardly ever have seen a play on TV that made me cry. TV drama seems to me to be ephemeral stuff. I see no revivals of Pinero, nor of Barrie (barring *Peter Pan);* even Shaw is seldom produced today; and alas! even Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham seldom get to the TV footlights. I wonder whether a play like Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* will last.

I used to write plays, and like to think my dialogue was witty. But my dramatic attempts failed, chiefly because I tried to explain the characters' actions, showing the psychology behind them. Ibsen and Shakespeare explain nothing; they let their characters reveal themselves through their actions.

In my younger days, I could have torn many plays to pieces—the artificial dramas of Arthur Pinero, T. W. Robert-son, H. J. Byron, Henry Arthur Jones—for I was completely Ibsenized then. Ibsen was my dramatic god. He killed for me all the banal stuff that struts on the stage and is never played again. It is said that a drama critic is a failed dramatist; there may be some truth in that, for all my attempts to write plays failed.

To sum up, I could not have been a scholar, or a playwright, or a novelist. My wish was to deal with the living, the growing, the children of tomorrow. I am content to think

that my books have helped parents to think twice before attempting to mold their children's characters.

## On Being Scottish

Although out of Scotland for nearly sixty years, I still speak with a Scottish accent. Robbie Burns is no longer Robbie Burrrrrns, but I have never adopted the barbaric English fashion of leaving out the "h" in *wheat, why, wheel.* In the north, I believe, *what* was once spelled *hwat;* hence the Scots' pronunciation of the aspirate. And this reminds me of a story, apocryphal perhaps, about the Labour leader, Jimmy Thomas, who became a member of the British Cabinet. Thomas never lost his Cockney speech.

One day, he said to a lordly colleague: "Birkenhead, I've got an 'ell of an 'ead; what can I do for it?"

"What about a couple of aspirates?" was the reply.

In my boyhood, many snobs had an ambition to speak with an English accent. This was a symptom of the Scots' national inferiority complex. Such a complex makes home Scots suspicious of others like me—rats who left a ship that did not sink. As it happened, I had to leave Scotland because its lingering Calvinism did not provide an atmosphere for a free school. But today, things are better. My good friend, John M. Aitken-head, runs his Kilquhanity school with freedom and self-government.

Another reason for my leaving: Scotland never had the boarding-school tradition. Its public schools *(private* in the U.S.A.) are schools with English accents, teachers trained in the tradition of prefects, and an overvaluing of games.

My stay in Germany and Austria killed any tendency of mine to be a nationalist. I never took part in the home-rule-for-Scotland campaign; possibly because I had no more faith in an M.P. sitting in Edinburgh than one sitting in Westminster; possibly because I saw the dear old Scottish shops with their tartans and tweeds in Edinburgh's Princes Street taken over by chain stores. Nationalism and international finance make strange bedfellows.

The Scots are much less starchy and more informal than the English. For example, I was a member of an English golf club for twenty-five years. If I made a remark about the nineteenth-hole greens to two men having a drink while I was ordering mine, their looks said *We don't know you.* For all those years, I scarcely ever addressed a member I didn't know. But when I played in Edinburgh and met a foursome going the other way, a golfer would shout to me: "Hi, man, ye're liftin' yer heid." I was.

The hardiness of the northern people is illustrated by a joke dating from my cradle days. An Englishman in the lavatory of a Scottish golf club sees a notice: "Members are requested not to scrub their balls with the nail brushes." The Englishman's comment: "Hardy race, the Scots."

Their money-making talent is another legend, but though this is the only remaining vice in a Calvinist country where wine, women, and song constitute sin, Scotland seems to have produced only one millionaire—Andrew Carnegie. Our reputation for meanness about money is worldwide. Fifty years ago in a Moscow paper, I saw a cartoon showing a Scottish taxi with about a dozen people crowding it. My carefulness with money, already

mentioned, has nothing to do with nationality; it stems from the comparative poverty of my youth, when a penny was a fortune to a boy without pocket funds. In my old age, I

travel first class on the railway, but always have a vague feeling that I am wasting money.

Scots and Jews are said to have much the same attitude toward spending money; and both races, by and large, have the blessed ability to laugh at themselves. Not always, however. Once, at the end of a lecture in London, I told this story:

A young Scots farmer, returning from a conference in London, was asked by his brother how he liked the English.

"Verra nice fowks. But, ma Goad, I never saw so many noisy buggers in my life. That hotel I was in—the whole bloody nicht, fowks shouting in the passages and hammering on my door."

His brother replied: "You wudna get much sleep, did ye?"

"Och, to hell wi' sleep; I was ower busy practicing my bagpipes."

When I used to cross the border, motoring north, the friendliness of the Scots became apparent. In a cafe, the serving girl had no deference; she was my equal. "Ye'll be on yer hoaliday?" she'd inquire. If one asked the way in Glasgow, most likely a man would walk down half the street to show him. That could not happen in South England, but it could in Northumberland among the Geordies. I don't say that this friendliness goes very deep; I do not claim that Scots are kinder folks than the English. But I am convinced that they have better manners up north, in the sense that manners mean thought-fulness of the feelings of others.

Politically, or rather economically, Scotland is badly treated by its much more populous neighbor. Unemployment in Scotland always remains proportionately higher. It is the poor relation of England. Yet when there is a general election, home-rule candidates seldom influence the voters, proving perhaps that the hardheaded Scots have no faith in a nominal democracy that is ruled by big vested interests. The U.S.A., by allowing its people to buy and carry guns, shows its barbarity

to the world; bur even if the vast majority of citizens wanted to make and enforce a gun prohibition law, I am sure that the gun lobby would successfully oppose them all the way. Among all the lobbies in Britain, the Scottish lobby has a wee muffled voice..

I am too old now to see Scotland again. For many years, I motored north every August and found that nobody knew me. Certainly, those who may have known would never admit it. I cannot recall any Scot's asking me how the school was going, or if I were writing any more books. So far as I know, the local paper never mentioned my name. And being a Forfar loon, I didn't mind a bit; I understood the reaction, which might be summed up this way: "We ken dawn weel that he is the son o' Dominie Neill, that he has a school in England, that he writes books; but to us he is still the laddie we played with, and we'll bedawmed if we let him think he is any better than we are." I am not the first Scot to experience that attitude toward the returning native.

Of course, such behavior implies another element: envy. Once, while visiting Dundee, I was speaking with my old friend, J. B. Salrnond, editor of the *Scots Magazine* there. He told me that Norval Srimgeour, the editor of the *Dundee Advertiser,* had expressed a wish

to meet me, and should he ask him to come over? Norval came and shook hands with me up to the elbow, “Man, Mester Neill, you are the one man I wanted to meet. Your line is education. Now, as I see the matter, it’s like this ...” And for half an hour, he told me his views while I nodded and dropped a few monosyllables. At the end, he gripped my hand again. “Man, I havena enjoyed a conversation like this for years.”

I became aware of a defensive attitude when lecturing in Scotland. A Scots audience was always more aggressive, more argumentative, than an English one. I recall a time in Edinburgh, for instance, when angry headmasters shouted at me as

I condemned corporal punishment, John Knox and John Calvin still live.

## Money

As explained earlier, I did not need to worry about money when the school was in Hellerau. During the postwar inflation, I was a millionaire, dining my German friends in restaurants with wine galore, the bill coming to a few English shillings. But when I returned to England in 1924, I was almost broke. I have told in these pages of the financial struggle we had in Lyme Regis. We had one stroke of luck there, however. An Australian called Cooper sent me a liberal check for the New Education Fellowship, to which I belonged. When I replied, saying that I was the wrong guy, and should I forward it to the Fellowship, he said no, keep it. The money was a godsend then, and may have saved us from bankruptcy.

For many years, we had no gifts. Then, in 1950, William K, Elmhirst of Dartington Hall made a Deed of Covenant giving me a thousand pounds annually for seven years. Bill was a retiring, modest lad; and since I felt that he did not want his generosity to be a public matter, I did not broadcast his gift. Some years ago, a law firm sent me a thousand pounds from an anonymous donor. More recently, Joan Baer gave me the proceeds, £1400 from a special concert for Sumrnerhill in London, and sent me an additional £2000 after singing at a pop concert in the Isle of Wight. Dear old Joan. One old pupil has given a lot of money to the school to repair, mend, paint, and change it. He made all our muddy paths into tarred roads. Like all truly generous people, he wants to remain anonymous, bless him.

When Her Majesty’s Inspectors advised our scrapping a few buildings we did not have the money to rebuild, so I sent out an appeal—much against the grain. The money poured in to the rune of £ l, 200, and we used every penny of it erecting new teaching huts and dormitories. For many years, I had poured all my book royalties and article fees into the school. A private institution cannot make much profit; too often Summer-hill has been in the red, mainly because of bad debts. Had all the debts been paid up during the last fifty years, I could have lorded it in a chauffeur-driven Rolls. But no, that would have meant wearing a tie.

Money may not buy happiness, but it surely does buy comfort. To roll up to the opera in a private car and have a seat in the stalls is comfort, whereas standing in the gallery queue for two hours is, at the least, uncomfortable. Money can also bring the means for creation, for a good job, for a university career. Summerhill has been unable to do all it wanted to do because of poor financing. My teachers—eight for sixty kids—are mostly to train our children in subjects that have to be passed to get into a university or even a

business. We have art and handwork teachers but cannot afford dance or music teachers—much more important to me than rnaths or history teachers. We long to have a fine library, a well-equipped physics lab, and a chemistry lab, plus a cookery department. State schools can afford all these—luxuries to some parents and teachers, but necessities to us. Yet we cannot. And I wish I could pay my staff more than I do.

In my earlier days, I daydreamed of my school's is being supported by a millionaire, and twice have I known men who wanted to finance the school. Both times I asked: "You would want a say in the running, wouldn't you?" And to the answer: "Of course," I said: "Nothing doing." The situation was different when money came from Henry Miller, Joan Baez, and many a kind American, for they attached no strings.

Perhaps Summerhill's own concept is responsible for its lack of funds. Certainly its old pupils do not seem interested in making money, possibly because this requires one to be competitive, while competitiveness, outside of games, is unknown at the school.

Often money causes unhappiness because too many valuable things have had to be sacrificed during its pursuit. One thinks of the banal form of culture among the Babbitts of America with their superficial breeziness and the back-slapping greetings: "Hullo, old horse thief!"

I am not mean with money, only careful after a boyhood minus money. Scots really have a money complex. Like myself, many over tip, an overcompensation for the alleged Scottish meanness, but I doubt the story that when Sir Harry Lauder used to cross to America first class he tipped the dining steward sixpence. Nor do I give any credit to this story about the Scottish-American millionaire Andrew Carnegie. A young man went to ask him how to get rich. Andrew was sitting in a small room lit by a candle.

"Oh," said Andrew, "then we can speak in the dark?" And he blew out the candle.

In my own life, I rule out the pursuit of money as an important motive. I am not saying that money does not matter. It does. I knew the pain of having to buy the cheap article when the best quality cost but a few shillings more. In later life, I have hated having to travel second class on ships, and "hard" on continental trains. Even today, I have a slightly embarrassed attitude to first class passengers on the railway, even though reasons tell me that most of them are traveling on expense accounts. Oddly enough, in my third or fourth hand car, I feel no inferiority to the owners of Rolls Royces and Jaguars, possibly because cars did not exist in my early youth, while trains with toffs in them did.

I do not think I ever thought of money as the criterion of success, nor regarded money as an open sesame to the society of earls and dukes. No, no, the only key to that door was fame—but fame for having accomplished what?

## Dreams

A man's dream life might show him how small he is—but not his daydream life. In the daydream, we are in control and we dream of success, courage, conquest. The night dream is beyond control. I doubt if Freud was right in claiming that every dream expresses a wish, however complicated the symbolism. Having had hundreds of my dreams analyzed in therapy, having analyzed hundreds of children's dreams, I cannot believe that all dreams are wish fulfillments. I don't think that analysis of my dreams

helped me one bit. I can never analyze my own dreams or my nightmares, which by the way, seem to disappear as one ages.

Dreams get behind the image a man has made for himself, behind what Reich called his armor. Big men can be little men in their dreams. I knew a high churchman who often dreamt that he stood in his pulpit naked. I once dreamt I was shitting in a pot in a crowded ballroom—an odd kind of wishful thinking. In our dreams, we all do daft things, infantile things, and idiotic things—but not, in my own experience, cruel things. This fact supports my belief in original virtue; rather than being a combination of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a man is a combination of an adult and a baby. The irrationality of the dream is that of a baby; its pictorialization is that of the nursery and that of children's books. A professor dreams of flying elephants.

My own dreams have no connection with people I know. I never dream of my family, my school, my early life, though I did when younger. For years after Clunie and Homer Lane died, I dreamt of them again and again. These were unpleasant dreams; the sun did not shine in them. Vaguely, I knew in my dreams that these persons were now dead; the contact with them in fantasy was not a happy one. Twice since Reich died, I have talked with him in dreams; but again, with no happiness. In all these instances, the wish fulfillment was not disguised by symbolism.

Dreams, of course, depend to some extent on the glands. Octogenarians do not have sex dreams or prowess dreams; they don't run races, nor do they drive fast cars—awake or asleep.

My anxiety dreams have gone with the years. I used to dream of standing before a large audience unable to say a word. I had distressing dreams concerning travel. The train was moving out of the platform, but my feet would not take me to it. For many years, I dreamt about traveling to my childhood home in Scotland. My parents were expecting me on a certain day by a certain train. I never got there. Everything seemed to stand in my way. The taxi was late, or the train was late, or I couldn't go because of a forgotten lecture date. It was all misery and frustration.

Some dreams are without much disguise. A man whose wife has just bought a new expensive striped coat will dream of going tiger shooting. A woman with an impotent husband will dream of being in the center of a bevy of he-men film stars. But most dreams are disguised by what Freud called the censor, the moral self that will not face raw instinctive longings. . . . Well, well, it would be most intriguing to know what popes and bishops and diehard puritans dream. Or for that matter murderers.

What is the connection between a waking man and a sleeping one? Is the dream the language of the Id, the deepest unconscious? I doubt that it is, for presumably, the Id is the pro-life part of man, while so many dreams are neither joyful nor creative. In my young days, a kiss in a dream was infinitely more ecstatic than a kiss in real life; on the other hand, grief in a dream was more painful than a grief in reality. Often I am confused. Who is the president really? Who the Prime Minister? Is it the dignified gentleman who makes speeches and laws during his waking hours, or is it the poor dreamer who walks down the street naked and ashamed? Who am I? The educator, or the driver who can't see the road? I think such challenging thoughts would even knock the conceit out of a pop star.

## Drugs, Tobacco, and Health

My vices these days, are few. I smoke pipe tobacco—have smoked John Cotton for over sixty years—and have always ignored medical warnings that tobacco, with latakia in it, is a danger to the heart.

I have never tried drugs. I know nothing about them, and only wonder why smoking cannabis is a crime while smoking cigarettes is legal, seeing that few die from smoking cannabis while many thousands die of lung cancer.

The drug problem bothers me. Taking drugs is a way to escape from a miserable life, and for some it seems the easy way. I am afraid that instead of seeking freedom through natural life, youth will continue the use of the quick trip. We cannot moralize about this. When I smoke my pipe, when I drink a whiskey, I am using drugs; and TV watching, reading novels, watching films, all represent a flight from reality.

All the evils of humanity could well be described as flights: the flight of the German nation into the fantasy world of Adolf Hitler; the flight of the American people into the dead safety of Nixon's silent majority, fearful of change and of youth; the flight of religious people into the dream of bodily immortality.

I like a drink but haven't been drunk for many years. Malt whiskey is my favorite. When I used to drink rye with Reich, I liked it; but over here in England, rye doesn't appeal to me. I always have drink in the house, yet seldom touch it unless a friend visits me. I could easily give up any drinking, but all my attempts to stop smoking have failed.

I can recall only one incident in my drinking life that was unpleasant. In 1936, on my South African lecture tour, I was a guest in the famous Diamond Club in Kimberley. In the bar, a merchant stood me a whiskey. Six other diamond merchants joined us, and I suddenly noticed that each was ordering me a double. I was in a spot. I had often heard of colonial hospitality, and how pained people were if their cordial gestures were rejected. I drank the lot, and then rushed to the lavatory and put my finger down my throat. I must have given a lousy lecture that night. Had I been older, I would have thanked them, and would have asked them to excuse my passing up the drinks in view of the lecture.

So far as my health has been concerned, I have been very lucky. Apart from two painful attacks of sciatica, my life has not been troubled by serious illness. About forty years ago, I lay for three months with phlebitis, and it was then that I became interested in Nature Cure. That notion seemed to coincide with my philosophy of education. I used to make an annual visit to a Nature Cure clinic, and most certainly felt refreshed and fit after each stay.

Nature Cure asserts that disease is generated from within; that the body reacts to the poisons in bad feeding by throwing out these poisons. A skin disease or a cold are self-cleansing processes. So far that sounds rational. My father and grandfather said that they owed their longevity to their many colds; and a French doctor once claimed that his longest-lived patients were those with skin disease. The medical profession scoffed at this "quackery," insisting that disease came from outside infection—from germs. Long before Vitamin C was discovered, Nature Cure practitioners were using oranges and lemons as cures. Some doctors, especially in Germany, used the cold compress method for sprains,' but did not go as far as the Naturists did with body compresses for pneumonia.

Emotionally, I was all on the side of Nature Cure. But in the course of time, doubts arose. If diet is so important, why did my father die at eighty-five after eating the "wrong food" all his life? Nature Cure warned against wearing flannel next to the skin; my father wore nothing else, summer and winter.

But I saw a positive side, too. I saw women crippled with rheumatoid arthritis who were scarcely able to move, yet who on my next visit a year later were walking about the grounds, not completely cured but greatly improved.

Both sides in this health controversy have been narrow and dogmatic. Nature Cure will have no truck with inoculations; few adherents accept the fact that tetanus injections have saved thousands of lives in the last two big wars. My doctor brother told me that after penicillin came in, he seldom lost a patient with pneumonia.

On the other hand, medical men have laughed at the idea of fasting, ignoring the fact that an animal does just that when ill. A vet told me that most of the mortality among horses and cattle in this county was caused by farmers forcing food down the throats of their sick animals "to keep up their strength."

When I boarded the ship after my South African tour, I felt like a dying man—too many drinks and no exercise. But I fasted on water for six days and arrived in Southampton the picture of health. The odd thing about fasting is that it makes one feel so bright mentally. During my fast, I felt I was sharp enough to tell even Einstein where he was wrong.

My doubts about Nature Cure increased when people who had lived according to its regimen all their days died of cancer or diabetes. That proved to me that the eating of good food wasn't the sole controlling factor.

I fancy that many naturopaths have been unconscious moralists: One of the best known cultists claimed in a book he wrote that many of his cases of ill-health were caused by masturbation. All Nature Curists have been down on stimulants: tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco. Also on meat of any kind. I believed, and at the same time disbelieved. I have maintained the same ambivalent and skeptical attitude toward doctors who prescribe a salve for a skin disease without asking what was causing it. I have hardly ever seen a doctor who asked what I ate, if 1 took exercise, if my *sex* life was satisfactory. Their solution, it seems to me, was to treat the specific disease, while the Nature Curist tried to build up the whole body. A combination of the two systems, Nature Cure and established medicine, might be the answer.

There is one great difference between the two schools. The Nature Curist says: "You must make an effort to cure yourself. You must take exercise, eat pure food, and avoid all stimulants. Your cure is up to you, not to me. I am only an advisor." The average medical practitioner does not appear to be interested in the way you live. "You have asthma, sciatica, kidney trouble—take these pills." If asked what the pills contain, many doctors get annoyed. I have heard so many sinister tales about cortisone that I do not want to take that drug; but for all I know, my pills may contain it. As Shaw said, every profession is a conspiracy against the laity.

I have suffered from constipation most of my life. The analysts kept telling me it was psychological. But I cured this condition by eating dates every day. When I attended a Nature Cure clinic, I was never constipated on their diet.

Reich, by the way, paid no attention to food; he seemed to think that what you ate was unimportant, and that sex economy was infinitely more important than domestic economy. Churchill smoked and drank all his life; Compton Mackenzie at eighty-eight smoked an ounce of tobacco a day. I knew two farmers in Scotland who appeared to live on whiskey, and both died past ninety. Oh, it is so hard to make up one's mind about health.

Causes o£ illness are largely unknown. Why does a man die of cancer, and his brother die of diabetes? Why are my sister and I alive at eighty-three and eighty-eight, while the rest of the family are dead?

## Armoring

Reich spoke of armoring—acquiring an outer shell with which to face the world, and hiding the depths of one's personality.

We all armor ourselves. Introspection is limited; and that is why a man cannot psychoanalyze himself; he dare not face his inner conflicts, his repressions. It would not be easy for a prominent evangelist to face his naked soul, to find out that he was selfish, mean, sadistic, and an unconscious womanizer. Rather impossible, I should think. A balanced man is one who is prepared to discover the little man in himself. From that angle, none of us is too well-balanced.

I wonder what form my own armoring takes. I have often been called amiable, kind, tolerant, a pleasant *guy* to meet. So I ask myself what lies behind this facade. It is difficult for me because during my analyses with Homer Lane, Maurice Nicoll, Stekel, and Reich I must have coughed up oceans of unpleasant material, which I'd rather forget. For one thing I recognize that my altruism in dealing with children covers much selfishness, but I see no harm in that. My altruism is selfish in that it gives me a feeling of self-satisfaction—But, of course, all altruism is ego-fulfilling.

I am selfish about certain material things. I don't like my car to be driven by anyone else; I never lend my typewriter; and many of my things are part of myself. I am comfortably off, but when I get an appeal for money for some home for poor children I do not subscribe, rationalizing that I need all my money for my school. I pass by a beggar in Oxford Street, and two minutes later enter a shop and buy tobacco at more than eight shillings an ounce.

Last night on TV, we were told that three quarters of a million have been killed in the Sudan war in the last three years. I felt no emotion. Distance kills emotion. If a thousand were killed in Suffolk, I would experience a great emotion, for the personal component would enter—"God! It might have been me!" But how selfish am I in other ways? I find it almost impossible to condemn, but that is mainly due to long experience in dealing with psychological motives; I see behind crime a sick person who cannot control his impulses. But suppose one of my little pupils were raped and murdered by a sex maniac, I fancy it would be hard to be objective then.

I am unselfish with my time. I see and listen to thousands of visitors who have as a rule nothing to give me; they come to get *from* me. Yet I see them patiently without, I believe, a deeper anger at being pumped dry. Yet, here again, what is behind my

patience? My armor, my facade? Neill cannot destroy his image of being a nice guy who offends not even the rudest visitor. Can he?

I have a "privy fault"—an expression possibly taken from Congreve where a lord remarks to a guest, referring to the pretty maid who brought in the wine; "She hath a privy fault; she farts in her sleep"—a lovely neat way of betraying his relationship with the maid.

I have a privy fault. I hate being opposed, and this is generally called a God-Almighty complex. When I used to lecture, I disliked the wise guy who got up and contradicted what I had said, disliked him intensely when I felt *be was right.* Tin gods don't make mistakes—or at least don't acknowledge them. Oddly enough, I am not much affected by

what folks write about me. One book reviewer will call me a genius; and another a stupid fanatic. Neither remark seems to rouse much emotion one way or the other.

I have no dignity in my job. Everyone, including domestic staff, addresses me as Neill. But dignity enters at certain times, when I'm rudely called to task by a cop when I park in the wrong place, when I go walking in the woods with my dog and a shouting gamekeeper bawls me out. In both cases, my dignity is offended mainly because I am in the wrong. On such occasions, I cannot laugh at myself.

Like many others I have always had a complex about my own name, Alexander was contracted into Alec, but Clunie as a small child could not say Alec and called me Allie, which made me ashamed as a kid because a girl in my class, Allison, was also called Allie. "Huch! You've got a lassie's name." More than once I have known married women who hated having lost their maiden names; and quite early in life, I discovered that many a woman was pleased when I called her Mary or Susan. Shakespeare to the contrary, there is something in a name.

When I was made an honorary Doctor of Essex University, I consciously set out to be a gentleman even to the extent of wearing a tie; but my shirt was the only blue one in the crowd. I listened attentively to conversations about things I had no interest in. I adapted myself to academic society in which I never feel at home. We all practice this kind of armoring on the ground that good manners mean thinking of others. As Reich often said: "You have to be a conscious hypocrite on occasion."

I like to think that I am not too heavily armored, that in general, I speak and act sincerely and seldom tell a lie—at least never to a child. Lying is pardonable, but living a lie is a tragedy.

I confess that I have it easy; I am my own boss and have no need to pretend. Think of the millions who work under bosses, bowing and saying "Sir;" maybe fawning in order not 'to get the sack. Too often the armor that is worn for the occasion comes to permeate the whole personality. You see it in the subservience of butlers and footmen, a dying race to be sure.

When young, I got most of my best dirty stories from clergymen who, when they preached on Sundays, appeared to be holy men. Many have the knack of being dual personalities, like one of the elders in my childhood kirk who praised the Lord on the Sabbath, and gave short weight with his sugar during the week.

The best way to escape being a dual personality is to be independent, a fortune given to few of us. That is not, of course, the whole story. An independent artist may have a nagging wife, and he hides his murder wishes with a few humble: *Yes, darlings*. A good illustration is *Babbitt* which I am now rereading for the fourth time. Babbitt is the picture of all stupid, money-mad, middle-class men in the C.S.A. Sinclair Lewis wrote *Babbitt* about fifty years ago, but Babbitt still lives. I meet him again and again, in buses, on trains, and on planes, the genial soulless Babbitt who thought that a glade of forest and lake were a waste of good space that might be used for garages, restaurants, and cottages.

Nearly forty years ago, in South Africa, I met a doctor who seemed to have no armoring. If invited to go out to a dinner he didn't look forward to he said simply that he didn't want to accept. He said to me: "Neill, I am not coming to your lecture tonight, because I have no interest in what you're to talk about." A really honest man, but I fear he had few friends. Reich was another who told no lies to evade social invitations. I was never so brave. It is only in my old age that I can say; "Thanks for the invitation, but I'd rather stay at home."

Any official occasion bars laughter, bars the human touch. Once, while giving evidence at an appeal tribunal on my income tax, I offered a light remark, and the subsequent frowns made me realize what officialdom means. It means the suppression of the emotional side of life; it means community armoring; it means the dignity of Bumbledom. I see it among local officials, town councilors, town clerks; they erect a hands-off-me barrier that excludes any familiarity. It is strong too, in the police force. A constable once said to me: "If the inspector heard you address me as Bill, I'd be transferred to another town immediately."

My idea of hell would be a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Crowd armor protects against the danger of making emotional contacts. This may be primarily typical of England; there is less of it in Scotland where class barriers do not seem so strong.

My honorary degrees make me think of crowd armoring. I have had three such ceremonies. They robe you in cap and gown; you march in procession; and you get your honorary degree in a crowded big hall. In spite of the presence of a few friendly professors and dons, I have always felt strained and unhappy in such an atmosphere. I think the reason is the blank impersonality of the Establishment. I make a remark to the man sitting next to me, and the reply is usually monosyllabic.

I feel somewhat guilty about receiving honorary degrees, not because of Establishmental aloofness, but because I do not value the academic education doled out at universities, and because 1 have written so much criticizing them. 1 never put my degrees on my school prospectus. I suppose I rationalize when I say that the only value these degrees have for me is that they protect me. No Ministry can now say that I am not qualified to run a school.

I am quite prepared to face the fact that underneath I may be as proud as Punch of my M.A. degree, for in Scotland an M.A. is of great moment. I've quoted the incident when an aunt said to J. M. Barrie; "What do you want to be, James?"

"An author."

"What, and you an M.A.!"

I suppose that conceit is a form of armoring. We are rarely conceited about what we can do very well. I was never conceited about my work in Summerhill, but used to be about my dancing. Fifty years ago, a young lady invited me to go to Budapest to partner her in a competition of original dancing, (Poor Nushi died in Belsen.) 1 was very conceited about that invitation, knowing all the time that, compared with professional dancers, I was a clumsy clod. Luckily for my self-approval, I did not go to Budapest.

I used to be conceited about my acting, again realizing that, compared with a professional, I was a ham. I am convinced that if Yehudi Menuhin's hobby was growing cucumbers, and he won a prize at a garden show, he would be more conceited about that than about his fiddle playing. Conceit is armor against admitting to oneself that one is inferior. Such conceit fades with the years but never quite expires. Reich's desire to have an elaborate tomb in Orgonon was a kind of posthumous conceit; in life, he scorned display and honors and pageantry of all kinds. Myself, I have no feelings about monuments after my death. All I want is a quiet cremation with no fuss, no flowers, no black clothes, no epitaphs. I should really like to have my body taken away by the undertaker and have no funeral ceremony at all; but I fear that my family would be criticized: "The hard boiled lot, not even giving the old man the respect of a decent burial."

But sensible burial customs should come, even though in the U.S.A. the funeral lobby would fight tooth and nail for their scandalous exploitation of the bereaved, their idiotic embalming and face-painting plus maybe many thousand dollars' worth of good oak that could be better employed in building.

Odd how the word *conceit* has lost its original meaning of a *thought* or *something conceived.* So many words have changed. A matinee is not a morning performance—it is an afternoon one. Manufactured goods (Latin *manu* by hand, *factum* to make) are made by machinery. In my town, a cafe is a *caff,* and a chauffeur is a *shover.*

Death is feared and hated because it destroys the little conceited man in each of us. A modern interpretation of Christianity might ran: *A belief that the little man in us will die and be buried, while the big man in us will pass to eternal glory and happiness.* In other words, the little man equals the body and its conceits and frailties; the big man equals his spirit, his soul. All religions are wish-fulfilments.

## Thoughts on Death

When Neil my doctor brother died at eighty, I felt no grief. I think that, with age. the emotions get dull; one can neither exult nor deeply grieve. I grieved when Reich died, but not much when Homer Lane died. My good friends Edwin and Will a Muir died and I did not shed a tear.

Distance makes a big difference. If your brother dies in your arms, you grieve painfully; but if he dies in Australia, the grief is less poignant. Grief is diminished by flight. The rich fly to another country, but the poor have to seek flight in humbler ways. After Clunie's death. I found myself doing all sorts of things I was not accustomed to do: washing dishes, mending chairs—anything to take my mind off my misery. But even then, I recognized the selfish element in grief: "I am left alone now,"

Possibly one's saddest grief is the loss of a companion in thought. After Edwin's death, Willa Muir said to me: "When I have a sudden thought, I say 'I must tell this to

Edwin'." I had the same feeling after Clunie's death. Maybe the loss of a companion is worse than the loss of a loved one. It may be that religion was invented to soften the emotion of grief. Unbelievers like myself do not have that consolation; I, for one, do not want it.

I cannot guess where the expression Good *grief!* came *from.* It may have some hidden connection with the unconscious relief so often associated with death. I think of the Scottish funeral with its tears, and the subsequent feast in the parlor with much laughter and ale. There is a similarity here to a military funeral with its dead march; on the return from the grave, the band is likely to play *The Girls I Left Behind Me,*

I make the guess that the family who harbors the most hate evinces the strongest show of grief.

At eighty-eight, especially after a bout in hospital with a heart attack, I cannot help thinking more of death than ever before. Following an injection of I.V.P.—whatever that is—just before an x-ray examination of my kidneys, I almost passed out. Vaguely. I heard a doctor call for oxygen. The odd thing was that I had no fear, only a curiosity; and later, when a doctor told me I had had a coronary attack, I was not alarmed.

I said to the doctor: "Do you know the story about the Coronary Club? The oldest member wins £75,000 in the football pools. His wife opens the letter and is afraid to tell him. She goes to the club chairman, the vicar, and he offers to break the news. He finds the old man in his garden.

"Well, Mr. Brown, what do you do now that you have retired?"

"Oh, I just potter about; can't do any heavy work with this ticker of mine."

"Any other hobbies?"

"No."

"Ever try the pools?"

"I try them sometimes, but they are just a damned waste of money.

"Mr. Brown, what would you do if you won £75,000?"

"Vicar, I'd give half to your church restoration fund." And the Vicar drops down dead.

If one lives to be very old, nature seems to make the passing easy. I find that I have gradually lost interest in things, and to a lesser degree, in people. I see the gardener use the scythe I used to keep so clean and sharp, and it means nothing. I gave all my prized workshop tools to the school workshop. When I get up in the morning, I feel I'm a hundred, and have no interest in anything or anyone; but when I go to bed, I am fifty. The morning mail brings nothing to excite me; the morning papers have little interest. In old age, there is nothing to look forward to. I can think of no promising event that would give me a thrill, not even a check for a million from a rich American, nor an offer of a title—which I would not accept—nor a new honorary degree from a university. Sure I like to see myself praised in the press, but when I do, I leave it to others to preserve the clipping. Nature prepares us for the end. I have not reached the philosophy of Stevenson with his "….gladly die, And I lay me down with a will." But 1 begin to understand why he said it, even though he died long before old age was due.

If the weakness of old age did not come, I wonder how long a man could live happily, how long he could retain his interest in the beauty of flowers and landscapes. Should I say to myself: "Soon you will not see the Summerhill trees and flowers, the happy faces of the kids. Soon you will leave your friends forever. How very sad!" No! I cannot.

My caravansary has rested in many a lovely spot, and I am content not to wish that those experiences be repeated. In youth, everything is permanent. In the old schoolhouse, we children never thought that life would change, that our parents, and our brothers and sisters would die; if anyone had told me then that I would end my life in a small English town that was not on the map, I think I would have laughed at the absurdity of the idea.

Youth is not interested in death unless some evil like Calvinism or Catholicism makes it a terror. My pupils, with no religious fears, think of life, of doing things, of loving, of success. The only function of life is to live; arid since I have had a full life with most of my aims reached, I have no regrets that past joys and successes are gone forever.

When a film magnate stood on the sinking *Lusitania,* someone asked him if he weren't afraid. "No," he said, quoting Peter Pan, "death is the greatest adventure in life." To me death is not such a great adventure because I think, with Hamlet, that "the rest is silence." I can't imagine a silent adventure.

One of my old pupils, a radio operator on a ship during the Second "World War, told me that underlying his fear of being torpedoed was the thought that he had no children to carry on his name. I am glad to have a daughter to carry on mine; but now married, she is no longer a Neill. I think it wrong that women allow their names to be changed in marriage by a patriarchal society, a device that renders them inferior. I shall leave my Zoe, and in time, she too will die. What I leave is my work, which I hope will live for at least some little time.

In one of my books I wrote about some pioneers who discover new lands. Then the prospectors come with their commercial plans. Soon the virgin land is changed into a hideous mass of saloons, skyscraper hotels, and neon advertisements. I hope my pioneering in education will not lead to an undistinguished mass of pseudo-free schools, which practice a benign molding of young character.

One thing annoys me. Because of my age, my insurance company will not reinsure me for driving unless I show an annual certificate of fitness from my doctor. And even then, the company won't give me comprehensive coverage. Statistics show that drivers past sixty have the least number of accidents; I am constantly avoiding collisions with young speed merchants who get full insurance. The fact that my driving license has been clean for forty-five years makes this inequity especially galling. Still, I should not complain; in Japan and Norway, no one past eighty can drive a car at all.

I have no belief in an afterlife, and if there were one, I am sure it would be dreadfully dull. Since I do not fear death consciously, I think it must be my unconscious that gives me a strange feeling when I drive past the gate of the local crematorium.

My doctor brother's deathbed was perfect. He had no pain. "I have had enough of life,'[1] he said, "and I am tired and want to die now. Having no religion, I have no fear of hell and damnation. Good-bye, old man."

But I fear a death with pain; and more than once have I wondered whether I would have the courage to take an overdose, were I dying painfully with cancer.

Most of us are not great poets or great musicians. We do our little jobs and live our little lives as happily as we can. We realize dimly that our deaths will be felt only by a few friends and relatives. The wise Bertrand Russell is now a book reference in a library. My little school is but a flea on the elephant of world education. Millions of Russians and Chinese will never know Summerhill existed; and if they did know, they would not be influenced one iota by it. An atomic war would most likely destroy even Beethoven and Shakespeare. But then again, the majority of people on earth have never heard of these two anyway.

Both Hitler and the Communists declared that the individual did not matter—only the state, the *Volk*. They were wrong because their power aims were wrong. But there was a certain truth in their claim that humanity means the masses— the undying masses. I am not contending that the individual should not try to reach the masses. Most leaders and thinkers cannot lead masses, but solitary figures may spark fires that sweep the world. For example, the attack on slavery came from a somewhat unknown Englishman, William Wilberforce.

I think of names that were prominent in the world of psychoanalysis years ago: Rank, Stekel, Abraham, Bernfeld, in Vienna; Flugel, Jones, Eder, in London. How many know their names today? They did their share of work and crept silently to rest, one by one. So it is in education. Bill Curry of Dartington Hall was a good lad, but is now forgotten. Already, younger men are saying that Summerhill is out of date. Time outmodes many things.

I have what might be described as a grouse against death: it kills the body when the spirit wants to live. I think those people err who say that we will our own deaths, yet perhaps in sickness, one can appear to do so. In my old age, my heart does poorly and may kill me, but my head is alive and my interest in all things living is as keen as it ever was. Someone may think up a new arrangement by which one is parked after death, and allowed to revisit the earth every twenty years for a week. The chances are that after the first visit, most of the departed would call off any further visits.

The perfect death is that of John Keats: “To cease upon the midnight with no pain.” It seems as if nature eases death by weakness and resignation. But I cannot accept Freud’s theory of a death instinct. Six million Jews wanted to live. The lucky ones who jumped from windows to escape torture were reacting to a pain instinct. As hate so often becomes the reaction to thwarted love—so a longing for death is the reverse of a love of life. 1 regard the flight into hard drugs which leads to an early death as such a longing.

At the end of a long life, I calmly declare: “I have done a job—a good one, I think. I have helped many a kid to freedom and happiness. My books have reached a few million people—thanks to Harold Hart, my American publisher. I shall die without illusions, without fantasies of grandeur or of fame. And after my demise, I shall be forgotten; the world will not miss me, for the world is of today and tomorrow.

## Women

I never understood women. What man can understand them? In some ways, they are a different species. Had I been reared in a pro-sex atmosphere, I might have had a better understanding of female psychology. For me, women were beings apart, protected by a

rigid sex armor that deceived the male youth. In ray innocence, I thought that when I told a woman she would make a great bedfellow her shocked look was genuine. I did not realize that underneath the reproachful look she took my remark as a wonderful compliment. In my young days, a woman's life consisted of defense; that had to be so in a society that made chastity and modesty the prime virtues. In my student days, some friends censured me because I used the word *shit* in the presence of two women students. Today, I'm quite sure women use the word ***fuck*** as often as men do.

"Women were put on a pedestal, and we did not realize that their feet were of common clay. Having sisters did not help me one bit to understand other women. The family sex taboo blanketed all lassies; they were all untouchable, mysterious, unattainable.

Max Miller, the English comedian, used to tell the story about a girl who went to a shoemaker to have her shoes repaired.

"Do you know what makes shoes wear out?" the cobbler asked her.

"No," she said.

"That's right," he replied.

Many in the theatre roared with laughter, but it took me two days to figure out that the reluctant maiden had to walk herself home from every date.

At eighteen, I fell for a bonny lassie who did not react to my advances. (l learned later that she was a lesbian.) Her sister was plain. I cultivated the sister, insanely thinking that she would convince her beautiful sister what a fine guy I was. I was blind to the fact that she hated her sister like hell.

I used to think that the way to a girl's heart was paved with compliments. It took me a long time to realize that a rival won my girl's heart by telling her what a nasty bitch she was.

I recall a dance, in old days of dance cards and white gloves, when the women stood around and the swains booked dances with them, each writing down the dance appointment in the little book with its silk string. The university beauty was besieged. I was introduced to her, and didn't ask for a dance. Later, she touched my arm. "Our dance," she said. She had cut another dance. "But," I said, "we didn't—"

"I know, damn you. You are the only one who didn't ask me for a dance."

It was when I first saw Shaw's *Man and Superman* that I began to doubt the time-honored theory that man is the pursuer and woman the pursued. I began to see the bag of female wiles: dropping a handkerchief, borrowing a book, crossing the legs. I did not appreciate that the driving force of sex was as cogent in women as it is in men. At nineteen when I read in some French novel that a woman's main interest was in her vagina, I was shocked. That is not true, yet it is partly true. Cosmetics and fancy pins and dresses mean: I am desirable sexually; feast your eyes on me and take me. And yet many a woman has said that she dresses for other women and not for men. That cannot basically be true.

A man can never understand the enormous importance a woman attaches to dress and appearance. I find this feminine concern with outer appearance slightly depressing.

Does feminine preoccupation with outward show have anything to do with the inferior status of women in a patriarchal society? Maybe. In a man-made world in which women are second-class citizens, there are only a few female J.P.'s. The business executives, doctors, and lawyers are overwhelmingly men; the only department in which women are equal is in teaching and nursing. So to counteract male dominance, women stress their importance by being ornamental. One of the most cheering trends in modern life is the rebellion of many women against this inferior role. On the other hand, it is depressing that the women of Switzerland do not want the vote.

A woman may vote for a handsome film star, but I doubt if many men would vote for a beautiful female star if she stood for election. It is the difference of values that makes it impossible for a man to understand a woman or for that matter for a woman to understand a man. Sixty years ago, I had an affair with an upper-class woman in London, a woman who always dressed in the height of fashion. When we went dining, she insisted that I come in my frayed Norfolk jacket and my un-creased baggy flannel trousers. "They look at the pair of us," she explained, "and then look again because of the incongruity of the partnership."

"Meaning," said I, "that they look at you."

"Naturally," she smiled.

Men are afraid of women. Every woman, especially a wife, is a mother substitute. Many married men in England address their wives as Mum. The hen-pecked man is more than a music-hall joke. The man rationalizes his' fear by pretending that he gives in for peace.

When I was a boy, I knew two village schoolmasters who were not allowed to smoke in the house; they sat out in their sheds on bitter nights. My father was a non-smoker; but had he been a smoker, I fancy my mother would have said: "George, your tobacco gives me a sore throat." Maybe not, but he often gave way for peace.

I sigh regretfully when 1 see the modern girl with her independence, her frankness about sex, her carelessness in dress with her blue jeans and blouse. I sigh and wish that women had been as sincere and honest in my youth. Real companionship with a woman was almost impossible then. Maybe it was possible between two bluestockings of opposite sex.

Many men fear the intellectual female. I never did. My old platonic friend Willa Muir was a very clever woman, a match for her poet husband Edwin. But she was never un-feminine; and her sense of humor saved her from being an intellectual prig. She was a Scot.

I have found that Scottish women are sharper of tongue, more given to incisive criticism than their English sisters. They seem to want to take men down a peg, to assert their equality, or maybe their superiority. The most aggressive questioners I have met in a life of lecturing were the women of Scotland, mostly teachers, I guess. Scotland has never had the equivalent of that American sentimental abomination—Mothers' Day, a day that suggests that American men have never grown up beyond age ten.

My mother complex always made me have a tender feeling for older women, and I have seen a similar attitude among homosexuals. Many who show no interest in young women seem to love fussing around mother figures, thus giving some support to the

theory that the male homo has had an unsatisfactory father, and was too attached to his mother. Owing to the incest taboo, his mother is sacrosanct, and so every other woman too, becomes taboo.

So many women seem to prattle about trite things: their neighbors and their doings, their little gardens, their knitting. It is easy to sneer at the emptiness of so much of womanly talk, but I fail to see that men are any more elevated in their conversation. Relativity and psychology are not exactly pub subjects; men will jaw endlessly about football games.

A very clever actor buys his clever wife a necklace, the price of which would support a hundred poor families for weeks. It puzzles me. To stage people, the joy in life should be the creative art, the applause after a part well played. How an actress can value a stone bauble so much I just cannot understand. Surely she does not need so dull a status symbol. This is not meant to be a criticism of a worthy couple of world-wide deserved fame; I use the illustration only to show how ignorant I am of the depth psychology of womankind. I can understand the Hollywood dumb blonde who is said to have had gold faucets in her bathroom. Poor kid that was her Cinderella idea of success. Yet, in a way, is she any worse than the man who looks on a knighthood as a token of success? All is vanity. If offered a title, I would refuse it without any hesitation. That can be interpreted as inverse snobbery. Woman parades her vanity, but man hides his by pretending he has none.

Woman's tragedy is that she ages more quickly than a man. Her worry about her appearance betrays her frantic attempt to make the most of her sex attraction before the dark night of wrinkles and grey hair descends upon her. I hate to imagine the later life of Hollywood stars who had nothing but their figures and faces to be proud of.

Ah, me! I am old now and cannot recapture the enthusiasms and ecstasies of youth, the dreams of youth, the ambitions of youth. A pretty lass is now an object of academic interest; but I still enjoy looking.

## Humor

The greatest insult one can offer a man is to say he has no sense of humor, almost as great an insult as saying he is a bad driver. Such verdicts are unforgivable.

One of the most humorless men I know often sums up other men by saying: "What is wrong with that guy is that he has no sense of humor."

There can be a criterion of good driving, but not one for good humor. Anyway, humor varies with the times. In my boyhood, we all laughed at the funny stories in *Three Men in a Boat;* but today, no young person would see humor in Jacobs or in Jerome. Some of my pupils cannot even laugh at Charlie Chaplin; they prefer Laurel and Hardy or Danny Kaye.

Like all others, I like to think that I have a good sense of humor, which includes a good sense of wit. I have always disliked sadistic humor, like when King Edward VII and Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, played infantile and cruel practical jokes on guests. In my boyhood, McGonagall, the worst poet who ever achieved immortality, was a simple scatter-brained man. The Dundee wits and wags treated him most cruelly, even sending

him a letter signed by Queen Victoria making him a Knight of the White Elephant of Burma. The decoration, the letter said, was coming by ship, and the poor man went to the docks daily to meet the ship, until finally he got a wire from the Queen saying the award had been washed overboard. That kind of gallows humor is barbaric. Luckily, it is seldom in evidence these days.

I do not appreciate the humor of the average wisecracker. A man like Bob Hope leaves me cold. A good comedian does not need a script written for him. Chaplin did his own scripts, and I guess so did Buster Keaton.

My favorite story appears in the *Autobiography of Lord Beresford.* During the first Great War, a distinguished American came over to England. Lord Charles gave a dinner party in his honor. When the guest's health was proposed, he rose.

"Gentlemen, before I speak about the war situation, I want to apologize for appearing to-night in morning dress. I came over on war business, and did not expect to dine out, so I did not bring my evening clothes. When I got Lord Charles's invitation, I went to a Savile Row tailor and asked if he could make me an evening suit.

'Very sorry, sir, but I have no material and my men are all called up.'

"I tried several tailors and got the same reply. Then someone advised me to go to Willie Clarkson the theatrical costumier and hire one, so I went to Clarkson. 'Could I hire a suit of evening dress for tomorrow night?'

"Willie held up his hands. 'Sorry, sir, but it can't be done; all my suits are out; Lord Charles Beresford is giving a dinner party,' "

I told this story to a journalist friend in Scotland who was the chief guest at a Burns Supper. He had not had time to dress. He told the story, making it local.

"God," he said, "it was received in dead silence, and I had to conclude that every bloody man had hired his suit."

When Mother told a story, we all sighed. . . . "There was a man in Glasgow ... or was it Edinburgh ... no, Glasgow. . . ."

My father had a sense of fun rather than a sense of humor. He had to explain the point of a story.

When I first lectured in the U.S.A. in 1947, I discovered that the humor that appealed to Americans was different from the humor that appealed to the English, A joke I made that would have raised laughter in London fell flat in New York; and more than once, laughter arose when 1 could not see why.

Every nation has its own kind of humor which is therefore apt to become hackneyed, like the typical story of Scottish meanness.

One thing has puzzled me for years—who invents the funny story? I have never once met anyone who claimed to originate a story. Like the border ballads, all jokes are written by anon. "That man writes a lot," said the old lady.

Every man has his own bias. My favorite golf story is the one about the man who rushed into the pro shop.

"Mac, something awful has happened. I sliced my drive on the ninth tee, hit a motorcyclist on the road; he crashed into a car that was just corning round the corner. Mac, what the hell can I do? There are about six people lying dead on the road."

Mac thought for a moment. "Aye," he said, "you've got to get your right hand under the club like this. . . ."

A sense of humor helped me to face life, or was humor sometimes used as an escape from facing raw reality? I do not know, but I do know that humor must have its own special time and environment. A man on his way to the gallows would not relish the best joke ever concocted; yet old Oscar could remark when faced with expensive medical treatment that he was dying beyond his means. Of course, we know that laughter is a release, and that people who cannot relax cannot laugh. Who can imagine Calvin or Knox or Hitler laughing out loud? Maybe what ails the Bible is that there isn't a joke in all its thousands of pages. Maybe politicians are guys who cannot laugh.

Many teachers can laugh but dare not lest their children discover they are human. Too often I have seen sadistic-teachers whose humor took the form of tormenting frightened little boys.

It is likely that most schoolboy howlers are invented by teachers. I doubt if any schoolboy ever said that the pope lives in a vacuum (some unconscious truth here), or that a polygon is a dead parrot.

I think that humor has been of great assistance to me in my work. I speak to every child lightly unless he or she seeks my help. Joking with a child connotes to the child friendliness, equality, brotherhood. When someone asked me who would run Summerhill after my death, I replied: "No idea, but if he or she has no humor, the school will go fut." A school that is not a fun fair is a bad school. Alas, the dignity of teachers kills all the fun.

## The Future: Summerhill and the World

I am often asked: "What will happen to Summerhill when you *die?"* I have no idea. Ena, my wife, will carry on but because she is not qualified as a teacher, she will need to appoint a headmaster who is. And I doubt that any successor will care to be a slavish follower: he would be a poor specimen, if he were.

No man is indispensable; others will carry the torch. I cannot imagine much more freedom than Summerhill already has given; maybe only in the area of sex. In fifty more years perhaps the freedom schools, with the approval of parents and society, will permit adolescents to have a full love-life.

The Labour Party is against private enterprise in business and in schools; and when again in power, it may well set about abolishing private schools altogether. One result would be the end of pioneering in education. A teacher in a State school can experiment with methods of teaching history or maths, but he cannot experiment with methods of living. A State school head could not abolish religious instruction, nor could he make lessons optional, and I doubt if he could abolish the abominated homework. Can one imagine a Summerhill in Russia or China? Can one see a U.S. Senate voting for free schools as the norm in America?

It is ironic to say that Summerhill is safer under a Tory government than under a Labour government. So, in my own interests, I should really vote Tory; for as long as Eton and Harrow exist, Summerhill is safe. How safe though? The question troubles me. My wife Ena is determined to continue Summerhill without compromise, but how much freedom will a future government allow?

I can hear some future educational officer say: "We tolerated this Bolshy school as long as the old man was alive, but now that he has gone, my Ministry cannot allow a school where children play all day and get no education." It would 'be a waste of breath to answer such a person with the fact that, in fifty years, just about every old pupil we know about has become a success in work and life. Dead officials have deaf ears. I am not boasting when I claim that Summerhill is possibly better known than any other pioneer school, a fact stemming from the accident that I was a teacher who wrote books. The school never has been "recognised as efficient" by the British Ministry, although it is recognized as efficient in a dozen other countries.

I don't want the Sumrnerhill idea to die with me. Movements should not rely on personalities; persons die, but a movement should live and develop. I wonder what the great educators would think of the schools now running in their names—Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Friedrith Froebel.

Someone has suggested that after my death the old Summerhillians should form a Summerhill trust with a constitution to guard against any fundamental changes from outside. My fear would be a creeping bureaucracy that looked backward: "Neill did it that way, and we must follow." Anyway, committees cannot pioneer, for their pace is that of the reactionary majority.

A recently published article stated that pioneering had now left the private sector and gone over to the State schools. Certainly, many primary schools are showing the new way toward freedom, bless them, but *real* freedom cannot exist in a system whose primary function is to condition children to the established rules and mores. A visitor asked me to explain the difference between Summerhill and a Montessori school. My reply: "A kid can say *jack* in Sumrnerhill, but not in a Montessori school." As long as parents and teachers insist on forming a child's character, all the free activity in the world will not produce free people.

If Sumrnerhill goes on after me, it must change, just as it has changed in many ways since 1921. The Summerhill pupil of today is different from the pupil of the thirties; his environment has changed. The mass media have brought kitsch to the young. And preoccupation with mindlessness has increased greatly: long hair, pop festivals, the deification of pop and football stars. Mass hysteria is reported in the paper; so is Vietnam, Ulster, the Near East, and the insane armaments race. I don't say that the young are always conscious of this anti-life environment, but the young are unconsciously made to accept the belief that the world is sick and dangerous "so let us have a fine time as long as we can."

I have often said that our schools ignore the emotional life engendered by our commercial, brainless mass media. Millions who have never learned or have long forgotten the names of Milton and Gladstone know and venerate the name of Elvis Presley. The mass media has flourished because the schools have failed in education, just as God is dead because the Church cannot adapt religion to modern thought.

So in thinking of the future of Summerhill, I am wondering what kind of freedom the new world will accept. The most probable outcome will be a compromise, paying lip service to freedom but subtly continuing to worship traditional molds. I would rather have Summerhill die than lose its freedom; but as long as Ena lives, I have confidence that the school will remain true to its own basic principle. I wish I could live for another fifty years to try keeping the freedom flag unsoiled by the life haters and the bureaucrats. The minority is always right, said Ibsen. A half-truth maybe, but in the matter of freedom for children, I know that the majority is always wrong. Long after I am gone, the minority who believe in freedom will be muzzled and hated by that silent majority.

I am greatly encouraged by the fact that my books are read by millions in the U.S.A., in Germany, in Brazil, in Japan, in Israel, and in many other countries. I am gratified by my enormous mail from the young all over the Western world. Only when I sent the German translation of *Summerhill* to a friend in East Germany did it come back stamped *Verboten.*

I visualize the coming world with pessimism. Automation will give millions little or no work to do. The landscape will become more hideous as skyscrapers and neon signs increase; the beautiful countryside will be ruined by electric towers and highways. The handworker will almost certainly disappear. Poverty and homelessness will mark the world for a long time. Even today, the cost of a meal in London's West End far exceeds the weekly pension of the aged. It is a world of kitsch that gets more so every day. Ugliness grows. The dear old town of Frankfurt-am-Main is now a conglomeration of ugly blockhouses. The streets of New York and Washington are not safe after dark, and London is fast becoming a place of fear. Gangsterdom and violence seem to be replacing the crimes of the past.

The snag about optimism is that it can so easily become wishful thinking. Martin Luther King said he had a dream; but since his assassination, the race problem in the United States has become more sinister, more terrifying. Yet when I think of the crooks Summerhill had in its beginning, how freedom and approval changed antisocial boys and girls into good citizens, I feel a certain amount of optimism. I am convinced that if all children were free, crime would be reduced to a minimum. Not abolished perhaps, for a high percentage of criminals are deranged or, at least, subnormal. I like to think that the new generation challenging authority now will someday become the new Establishment. It is they, I hope, who will politically control the elections, even though I am sure that many a challenging youth of eighteen will be a conservative at fifty.

Barring wholesale destruction by nuclear bombs, I feel that life triumphs in the end, though one can argue that history is but the story of evolution from slavery to slums, from the stone age to the pollution age. In my youth, we proudly imagined that mankind had evolved from the primitive savage to Homo sapiens, the honest, law-abiding citizen with his humane laws about people and animals. Then we were shocked to find that modern man could be as barbarous as the most savage tribes in history.

For many years, I have preached the gospel of original goodness, a belief strengthened by seeing hateful kids become loving kids when allowed to be free. And now, nearing the end of my long life, I ask questions I cannot answer. If we are born in sin, why are we not all criminals and torturers? Why is the criminal sector always a minority one? But, to be honest, I see the world with a jaundiced eye, for my early world had trees and flowers

and comely village pleasures; it was not the vulgar world of today. Our village shoemaker made shoes, the blacksmith shod horses, the mason carved stones. The atmosphere was one of peace. True, there are peaceful villages today, but the cars whizz by, the supermarkets creep in, the young tend to seek life in the cities. My old world is dead, and the new one scares me.

We cannot put the clock back. Most of the young people of today accept this new world without thinking, without criticism. But I have spoken of the challengers among them. My great regret is that I cannot live to see how much these pioneers will triumph in their fight for life. If I were not a pagan, I'd say to them, "Bless you, my children." So I end with the pious hope that the young will refuse to have Summerhill and its message squashed by unbelievers.

**End**