

June 20th 1939

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I was Thinking as I crossed the ~~Canal~~ Channell last night of Stella; in a very jerky disconected way, with people quarreling outside the door; the boat train arriving; chains clanking; and the steamer giving those sudden stertorous snorts. And ^{as} on the first morning after a broken night is distracted and berken, instead of beginning Roger again, as I ought, I will write down some of my distracted and disconnected thoughts; to serve, should the time come, for notes.

How many people are there still able to think about Stella on the 20th June 1939? Very few. Jack died last Christmas; George and Gerald a year or two ago; Kitty Maxse and Margaret Massingberd have been dead many years now. Susan Lushington and Lisa Stillman are still alive; but how they live and where I know not. Perhaps thus I think of her less disconnectedly and more truly than anyone now living, save for Vanessa and Adrian; and perhaps old Sophie Farrell. Of her childhood I know practically nothing. She was the only daughter of the handsome barrister Herbert Duckworth, but as he died when she was three or four, she did not remember him, or those years when her mother was as happy as anyone can be. I think, from stray anecdotes and from what I noticed myself, that when she came to consciousness as a child, the unhappy years were at their height. That would account for some qualities in Stella. Her first memories were of a very sad widowed mother, who "went about doing good"--Stella wished to have that on the tombstone-- visiting the slums, visiting too the Cancer Hospital in the Brompton Road. Our Quaker Aunt told me that

this was her habit; for she said how one case there had "shocked her". Thus Stella as a child lived in the shade of that widowhood; saw that beautiful crape veiled figure daily; and perhaps took then the ply that was so marked--that attitude of devotion, almost canine in its touching adoration to her mother; that passive, suffering affection; and also that complete unquestioning dependance.

They were sun and moon to each other; my mother the positive and definite; Stella the reflecting and satellite. My mother was stern to her. All her devotion ^{was} given to George who was like his father; and ^{her} care was for Gerald, born posth-umously and very delicate. Stella she treated severely;

so much so that before their marriage my father ventured a protest. She replied that it might be true; she was ^{hard on Stella} ~~severe~~, because she felt Stella "part of myself." A pale silent child I imagine her; sensitive; modest; uncomplaining;

adoring her mother, thinking only how she could help her, and without any ambition or even character of her own. And yet she had character. Very gentle, very ~~modest~~ honest,

and in some way individual-- so she made her own impression on people. Friends, like Kitty Maxze, the brilliant ^{isn't} the sparkling loved her with a real laughing tenderness for her own sake. Her charm was great; it came partly from this modesty, from this honesty, from this perfectly simple unostentatious unselfishness; it came too from her lack of pose, ~~her~~ lack of snobbery; and from the genuineness from something that was--could I put my finger on it-- perfectly herself, individual. This unnamed quality-- the sensitiveness to real things-- was queer in the sister

of George and Gerald, who were so opaque and conventional; who had so innate a respect for the conventions and respectabilities. By some odd fling in her birth, she had escaped all taint of Duckworth Philistinism; She had none of their shrewd middle class complacency. Instead of their little brown eyes that were so greedy and twinkling, hers were very large and rather a pale blue. They were dreamy candid eyes. She was without their instinctive worldliness. She was lovely too, in a far vaguer, less perfect way than my mother. She reminded me always of those large white flowers -- elderblossom, cow parsley, that one sees in the fields in June. Perhaps my mother's laughing nickname--Old Cow-- suggests the cow parsley. Or again a white faint moon in a blue sky suggests her. Or those large white roses that have many petals and are semi-transparent. She had beautiful fair hair, growing in horns over her forehead; and no colour in her face at all. As for teaching-- she had perhaps a governess; went to classes; was taught the violin by Arnold Dolmetch and played in Mrs Marshall's orchestra. But there was a stoppage in her mind, a gentle impassivity about books and learning. As Jack told me after her death, she thought herself so stupid as to be almost wanting; and said that the rheumatic fever she had as a child had (I remember the word) 'touched' her. But again, what was remarkable, considering the Duckworth strain --so boorish, so rustic, so Philistine-- is that however simple she was in brain, she was not, as George's sister might so well have been, a cheery ordinary English upper middle class girl with rosy cheeks and bright brown eyes. She was ~~distinctly~~ herself. She remains quite distinct in my mind.

What is odd is that I cannot compare her either in character or face with any one else. What she would have looked like now in a room full of other people I cannot imagine; or how she would have talked. I have never seen anyone who reminded me of her; and that is true too of my kother. They do not blend in the world of the living at all.

She was nineteen when I was six or seven; and as a girl could not then go about London alone, I used as a small child to be sent with her, as chaperone. Among my earliest memories is the ⁶memory of going out with her perhaps to shop, or to pay some call; and, the errand done, she would take me to a shop and give me a glass of milk and biscuits ⁶ sprinkled with sugar on a marble table. And sometimes we went in hansoms. But she lived, of course, downstairs in the drawing room; pouring out tea; and there were many young men, it seemed when one dashed in for a second, sitting round her. Vaguely we knew that Arthur Studd was in love with her; and Ted Sanderson; and I think Richard Norton; and Jim Stephen. That great figure with the deep voice and the wild eyes would come to the house looking for her, with his madness on him; and would burst into the nursery and spear the bread on his sword stick; and at one time we were told to go out by the back door, and if we met Jim we were ⁸⁰⁹ to ~~say~~ that Stella was away.