

Everyone foregathered in the parlour - mostly kept for the visits of the vicar - and the contrivance was produced, it took quite a bit of winding up, and organising, it seems, but eventually a scratching and scraping preliminary sound was heard. My grandmother, much to the dismay of the family said, "oh, is that the noise it makes?" and stalked our without waiting to hear more. She simply didn't quite know what was going on around her most of the time. Hence Emma I guess. My mother when speaking of her would always end up by saying that her husband adored her and that made her fine with my mum.

For a while my mother's - I think maternal - grandmother lived with them, but by that time she was senile. My mother was one of the few who could manage her. On one occasion the old lady was all dressed up to go out for a walk. As it was either raining or snowing at the time, that walk was most unadvised, so my mum was called and she said "well now Granny, did you have a nice walk, was it raining a bit? Your coat seems damp, can I take it and hang it up and help you off with your other outdoor clothes! It was from this old lady that we inherited the silver tray.

Of the three other girls in the family I know very little, one was called Edith, but I don't know which one. One was consumptive and later died in a sanatorium. While she was still at home she, being particularly sensitive, my naughty mother and her brother would dress up in sheets and rattle clothes pegs and say "oooo" to frighten her, and one day the poor soul fell down the stairs in her terror. One girl married a preacher, went to Australia and later died in childbirth.

The third sister must have been married and around England later, because when grandfather's wife died, my grandfather went to live with them, although my mother said he was unhappy there, so she rescued him and he came to live with her in a flat in London. The time when her father was living with her in London, was, I think, a very happy time for my mother. They would go on holiday in France with friends, and so on, until he died of cancer. I think I have a slight memory of him, but I am not sure.

The only boy in the family was called Walter, and was the apple of everyone's eyes. My mother was apparently a 'tom-boy' and tagged around after him everywhere. I believe she was two years younger than he was, they were the only two dark haired ones, and the others were fair. She proudly tells how when he went off to play with other boys she would be seen 'tagging'. The other boys disapproved of this, but Walter would say, "Oh leave her, she is just like a boy anyway".

One of the favourite games was funerals. The deceased were my mother's dolls and the chief and genuine mourner my mum, because in those days dolls were made of a sort of wax, and if my mother didn't dig them up pretty quick the sun would melt their faces! He also kept mice, or anyway one mouse, and its only home seems to have been about Walter's person, peeping out of his pocket or some such. This mouse was named Arabella. One day Arabella got somewhere where she had no right to be. I think making a nest in my mother's bed or something. Anyway, my mum threw her out of the window. When Walter heard about this he regaled my mother with grim stories of what happens to innocent little tame mice when they find themselves among their wild, savage, cousins! Ever after that she was blackmailed with "remember what you did to Arabella".

Walter was reported missing believed killed during the First World War. The grave of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abby had therefore a very special significance for my mother. My vague grandmother would never believe him killed, and would never even allow the family to have a memorial put up for him in the local church. My mother said she never recovered from the loss of her son.

LONDON in the 1920's

So Mable Gertrude Bishop went to London, unusual in the 1920's. She was not, she said, going to sit around at home like other girls and wait for a husband. She went to work at Selfridges, where