A Sketch of the Past

Two days ago—Sunday 16th April 1939 to be precise—Nessa said that if I did not start writing my memoirs I should soon be too old. I should be eighty-five, and should have forgotten—witness the unhappy case of Lady Strachey.* As it happens that I am sick of writing Roger's life, perhaps I will spend two or three mornings making a sketch.† There are several difficulties. In the first place, the enormous number of things I can remember; in the second, the number of different ways in which memoirs can be written. As a great memoir reader, I know many different ways. But if I begin to go through them and to analyse them and their merits and faults, the mornings—I cannot take more than two or three at most—will be gone. So without stopping to choose my way, in the sure and certain knowledge that it will find itself—or if not it will not matter—I begin: the first memory.

This was of red and purple flowers on a black ground—my mother's dress; and she was sitting either in a train or in an omnibus, and I was on her lap. I therefore saw the flowers she was wearing very close; and can still see purple and red and blue, I think, against the black; they must have been anemones, I suppose. Perhaps we were going to St Ives; more probably, for from the light it must have been evening, we were coming back to London. But it is more convenient artistically to suppose that we were going to St Ives, for that will lead to my other memory, which also seems to be my first memory, and in fact it is the most important of all my memories. If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills—then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the

* Lady Strachey, mother of Lytton, died at the age of eighty-nine, in 1928. In old age she wrote "Some Recollections of a Long Life" which were very short—less than a dozen pages in *Nation and Athenaeum*. This may indicate, as Michael Holroyd has suggested, that by the early 1920s she had forgotten more than she remembered.

† VW was at work on *Roger Fry: A Biography* (The Hogarth Press; London, 1940).

blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive.

I could spend hours trying to write that as it should be written, in order to give the feeling which is even at this moment very strong in me. But I should fail (unless I had some wonderful luck); I dare say I should only succeed in having the luck if I had begun by describing Virginia herself.

Here I come to one of the memoir writer's difficulties—one of the reasons why, though I read so many, so many are failures. They leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being. So they say: "This is what happened"; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened. Who was I then? Adeline Virginia Stephen, the second daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, born on 25th January 1882, descended from a great many people, some famous, others obscure; born into a large connection, born not of rich parents, but of well-to-do parents, born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world; so that I could if I liked to take the trouble, write a great deal here not only about my mother and father but about uncles and aunts, cousins and friends. But I do not know how much of this, or what part of this, made me feel what I felt in the nursery at St Ives. I do not know how far I differ from other people. That is another memoir writer's difficulty. Yet to describe oneself truly one must have some standard of comparison; was I clever, stupid, good looking, ugly, passionate, cold—? Owing partly to the fact that I was never at school, never competed in any way with children of my own age, I have never been able to compare my gifts and defects with other people's. But of course there was one external reason for the intensity of this first impression: the impression of the waves and the acorn on the blind; the feeling, as I describe it sometimes to myself, of lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow—it was due partly to the many months we spent in London. The change of nursery was a great change. And there was the long train journey; and the excitement. I remember the dark; the lights; the stir of the going up to bed.

But to fix my mind upon the nursery—it had a balcony; there

was a partition, but it joined the balcony of my father's and mother's bedroom. My mother would come out onto her balcony in a white dressing gown. There were passion flowers growing on the wall; they were great starry blossoms, with purple streaks, and large green buds, part empty, part full.

If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver, and green. There was the pale yellow blind; the green sea; and the silver of the passion flowers. I should make a picture that was globular; semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf—sounds indistinguishable from sights. Sound and sight seem to make equal parts of these first impressions. When I think of the early morning in bed I also hear the caw of rooks falling from a great height. The sound seems to fall through an elastic, gummy air; which holds it up; which prevents it from being sharp and distinct.* The quality of the air above Talland House seemed to suspend sound, to let it sink down slowly, as if it were caught in a blue gummy veil. The rooks cawing is part of the waves breaking—one, two, one, two—and the splash as the wave drew back and then it gathered again, and I lay there half awake, half asleep, drawing in such ecstasy as I cannot describe.

The next memory—all these colour-and-sound memories hang together at St Ives—was much more robust; it was highly sensual. It was later. It still makes me feel warm; as if everything were ripe; humming; sunny; smelling so many smells at once; and all making a whole that even now makes me stop—as I stopped then going down to the beach; I stopped at the top to look down at the gardens. They were sunk beneath the road. The apples were on a level with one's head. The gardens gave off a murmur of bees; the apples were red and gold; there were also pink flowers; and grey and silver leaves. The buzz, the croon, the smell, all seemed to press voluptuously against some membrane; not to burst it; but to hum round one such a complete rapture of pleasure that I stopped, smelt; looked. But again I cannot describe that rapture. It was rapture rather than ecstasy.

* VW has written 'made it seem to fall from a great height' above 'prevents . . . distinct.'

The strength of these pictures—but sight was always then so much mixed with sound that picture is not the right word—the strength anyhow of these impressions makes me again digress. Those moments—in the nursery, on the road to the beach—can still be more real than the present moment. This I have just tested. For I got up and crossed the garden. Percy was digging the asparagus bed; Louie was shaking a mat in front of the bedroom door.* But I was seeing them through the sight I saw here—the nursery and the road to the beach. At times I can go back to St Ives more completely than I can this morning. I can reach a state where I seem to be watching things happen as if I were there. That is, I suppose, that my memory supplies what I had forgotten, so that it seems as if it were happening independently, though I am really making it happen. In certain favourable moods, memories—what one has forgotten—come to the top. Now if this is so, is it not possible—I often wonder—that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? And if so, will it not be possible, in time, that some device will be invented by which we can tap them? I see it—the past—as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. There at the end of the avenue still, are the garden and the nursery. Instead of remembering here a scene and there a sound, I shall fit a plug into the wall; and listen in to the past. I shall turn up August 1890. I feel that strong emotion must leave its trace; and it is only a question of discovering how we can get ourselves again attached to it, so that we shall be able to live our lives through from the start.

But the peculiarity of these two strong memories is that each was very simple. I am hardly aware of myself, but only of the sensation. I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture. Perhaps this is characteristic of all childhood memories; perhaps it accounts for their strength. Later we add to feelings much that makes them more complex; and therefore less strong; or if not less strong, less isolated, less complete. But instead of analysing this, here is an instance of what I mean—my feeling about the looking-glass in the hall.

There was a small looking-glass in the hall at Talland House. It had, I remember, a ledge with a brush on it. By standing on tiptoe I could see my face in the glass. When I was six or seven perhaps, I

* The gardener and daily help, respectively, at Monks House, the country home of the Woolfs in Rodmell, Sussex from 1919.

got into the habit of looking at my face in the glass. But I only did this if I was sure that I was alone. I was ashamed of it. A strong feeling of guilt seemed naturally attached to it. But why was this so? One obvious reason occurs to me—Vanessa and I were both what was called tomboys; that is, we played cricket, scrambled over rocks, climbed trees, were said not to care for clothes and so on. Perhaps therefore to have been found looking in the glass would have been against our tomboy code. But I think that my feeling of shame went a great deal deeper. I am almost inclined to drag in my grandfather—Sir James, who once smoked a cigar, liked it, and so threw away his cigar and never smoked another. I am almost inclined to think that I inherited a streak of the puritan, of the Clapham Sect.* At any rate, the looking-glass shame has lasted all my life, long after the tomboy phase was over. I cannot now powder my nose in public. Everything to do with dress—to be fitted, to come into a room wearing a new dress—still frightens me; at least makes me shy, self-conscious, uncomfortable. "Oh to be able to run, like Julian Morrell, all over the garden in a new dress", I thought not many years ago at Garsington; when Julian undid a parcel and put on a new dress and scampered round and round like a hare.† Yet femininity was very strong in our family. We were famous for our beauty—my mother's beauty, Stella's beauty, gave me as early as I can remember, pride and pleasure. What then gave me this feeling of shame, unless it were that I inherited some opposite instinct? My father was spartan, ascetic, puritanical. He had I think no feeling for pictures; no ear for music; no sense of the sound of words. This leads me to think that my—I would say 'our' if I knew enough about Vanessa, Thoby and Adrian—but how little we know even about brothers and sisters—this leads me to think that my natural love for beauty was checked by some ancestral dread. Yet this did not prevent me from feeling ecstasies and raptures spontaneously and intensely and without any shame or the least sense of guilt, so long as they were disconnected with my own body. I thus detect another element in the shame which I had in being caught looking at myself in the glass in the hall. I must have been ashamed or afraid of my own body. Another memory, also of the hall, may help to explain

* In marrying Jane Catherine Venn, James Stephen had allied himself with the very heart of the Clapham Sect.

† Julian Morrell was the daughter of Ottoline and Philip Morrell; Garsington Manor was their house in Oxfordshire.

this. There was a slab outside the dining room door for standing dishes upon. Once when I was very small Gerald Duckworth lifted me onto this, and as I sat there he began to explore my body. I can remember the feel of his hand going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower. I remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts. But it did not stop. His hand explored my private parts too. I remember resenting, disliking it—what is the word for so dumb and mixed a feeling? It must have been strong, since I still recall it. This seems to show that a feeling about certain parts of the body; how they must not be touched; how it is wrong to allow them to be touched; must be instinctive. It proves that Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and had from the very first to encounter instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past.

And this throws light not merely on my own case, but upon the problem that I touched on the first page; why it is so difficult to give any account of the person to whom things happen. The person is evidently immensely complicated. Witness the incident of the looking-glass. Though I have done my best to explain why I was ashamed of looking at my own face I have only been able to discover some possible reasons; there may be others; I do not suppose that I have got at the truth; yet this is a simple incident; and it happened to me personally; and I have no motive for lying about it. In spite of all this, people write what they call 'lives' of other people; that is, they collect a number of events, and leave the person to whom it happened unknown. Let me add a dream; for it may refer to the incident of the looking-glass. I dreamt that I was looking in a glass when a horrible face—the face of an animal—suddenly showed over my shoulder. I cannot be sure if this was a dream, or if it happened. Was I looking in the glass one day when something in the background moved, and seemed to me alive? I cannot be sure. But I have always remembered the other face in the glass, whether it was a dream or a fact, and that it frightened me.

These then are some of my first memories. But of course as an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important. If I could remember one whole day I should be able to describe, superficially at least, what life was like as a child. Unfortunately, one only remembers what is exceptional. And there seems to be no

reason why one thing is exceptional and another not. Why have I forgotten so many things that must have been, one would have thought, more memorable than what I do remember? Why remember the hum of bees in the garden going down to the beach, and forget completely being thrown naked by father into the sea? (Mrs Swanwick says she saw that happen.)*

This leads to a digression, which perhaps may explain a little of my own psychology; even of other people's. Often when I have been writing one of my so-called novels I have been baffled by this same problem; that is, how to describe what I call in my private shorthand —"non-being". Every day includes much more non-being than being. Yesterday for example, Tuesday the 18th of April, was [as] it happened a good day; above the average in "being". It was fine; I enjoyed writing these first pages; my head was relieved of the pressure of writing about Roger; I walked over Mount Misery† and along the river; and save that the tide was out, the country, which I notice very closely always, was coloured and shaded as I like—there were the willows, I remember, all plumy and soft green and purple against the blue. I also read Chaucer with pleasure; and began a book—the memoirs of Madame de la Fayette—which interested me. These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being. I have already forgotten what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea; although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously. One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding. When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger. I had a slight temperature last week; almost the whole day was non-being. The real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being. I think Jane Austen can; and Trollope; perhaps Thackeray and Dickens and Tolstoy. I have never been able to do both. I tried—in *Night and Day*; and in *The Years*. But I will leave the literary side alone for the moment.

* Mrs Swanwick was the only daughter of Oswald and Eleanor Sickert. In her autobiography, *I Have Been Young* (London, 1935), she recalls having known Leslie Stephen at St Ives: "We watched with delight his naked babies running about the beach or being towed into the sea between his legs, and their beautiful mother."

† Two cottages on the down between Southease and Piddinghoe known locally as Mount Misery.

As a child then, my days, just as they do now, contained a large proportion of this cotton wool, this non-being. Week after week passed at St Ives and nothing made any dint upon me. Then, for no reason that I know about, there was a sudden violent shock; something happened so violently that I have remembered it all my life. I will give a few instances. The first: I was fighting with Thoby on the lawn. We were pommelling each other with our fists. Just as I raised my fist to hit him, I felt: why hurt another person? I dropped my hand instantly, and stood there, and let him beat me. I remember the feeling. It was a feeling of hopeless sadness. It was as if I became aware of something terrible; and of my own powerlessness. I slunk off alone, feeling horribly depressed. The second instance was also in the garden at St Ives. I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole", I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. The third case was also at St Ives. Some people called Valpy had been staying at St Ives, and had left. We were waiting at dinner one night, when somehow I overheard my father or my mother say that Mr Valpy had killed himself. The next thing I remember is being in the garden at night and walking on the path by the apple tree. It seemed to me that the apple tree was connected with the horror of Mr Valpy's suicide. I could not pass it. I stood there looking at the grey-green creases of the bark—it was a moonlit night—in a trance of horror. I seemed to be dragged down, hopelessly, into some pit of absolute despair from which I could not escape. My body seemed paralysed.

These are three instances of exceptional moments. I often tell them over, or rather they come to the surface unexpectedly. But now that for the first time I have written them down, I realise something that I have never realised before. Two of these moments ended in a state of despair. The other ended, on the contrary, in a state of satisfaction. When I said about the flower "That is the whole," I felt that I had made a discovery. I felt that I had put away in my mind something that I should go back [to], to turn over and explore. It strikes me now that this was a profound difference. It was the difference in the first place between despair and satisfaction. This difference I think arose from the fact that I was quite unable to deal

with the pain of discovering that people hurt each other; that a man I had seen had killed himself. The sense of horror held me powerless. But in the case of the flower I found a reason; and was thus able to deal with the sensation. I was not powerless. I was conscious—if only at a distance—that I should in time explain it. I do not know if I was older when I saw the flower than I was when I had the other two experiences. I only know that many of these exceptional moments brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse; they seemed dominant; myself passive. This suggests that as one gets older one has a greater power through reason to provide an explanation; and that this explanation blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow. I think this is true, because though I still have the peculiarity that I receive these sudden shocks, they are now always welcome; after the first surprise, I always feel instantly that they are particularly valuable. And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock.

This intuition of mine—it is so instinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me—has certainly given its scale to my life ever since I saw the flower in the bed by the front door at St Ives. If I

were painting myself I should have to find some—rod, shall I say—something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool. And this conception affects me every day. I prove this, now, by spending the morning writing, when I might be walking, running a shop, or learning to do something that will be useful if war comes. I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else.

All artists I suppose feel something like this. It is one of the obscure elements in life that has never been much discussed. It is left out in almost all biographies and autobiographies, even of artists. Why did Dickens spend his entire life writing stories? What was his conception? I bring in Dickens partly because I am reading *Nicholas Nickleby* at the moment; also partly because it struck me, on my walk yesterday, that these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background; were the invisible and silent part of my life as a child. But in the foreground there were of course people; and these people were very like characters in Dickens. They were caricatures; they were very simple; they were immensely alive. They could be made with three strokes of the pen, if I could do it. Dickens owes his astonishing power to make characters alive to the fact that he saw them as a child sees them; as I saw Mr Wolstenholme; C. B. Clarke, and Mr Gibbs.

I name these three people because they all died when I was a child. Therefore they have never been altered. I see them exactly as I saw them then. Mr Wolstenholme was a very old gentleman who came every summer to stay with us. He was brown; he had a beard and very small eyes in fat cheeks; and he fitted into a brown wicker beehive chair as if it had been his nest. He used to sit in this beehive chair smoking and reading. He had only one characteristic—that when he ate plum tart he spurted the juice through his nose so that it made a purple stain on his grey moustache. This seemed enough to cause us perpetual delight. We called him 'The Woolly One'. By way of shading him a little I remember that we had to be kind to him because he was not happy at home; that he was very poor, yet once gave Thoby half a crown; that he had a son who was drowned in Australia; and I know too that he was a great mathematician. He never said a word all the time I knew him. But he still

seems to me a complete character; and whenever I think of him I begin to laugh.

Mr Gibbs was perhaps less simple. He wore a tie ring; had a bald, benevolent head; was dry; neat; precise; and had folds of skin under his chin. He made father groan—"why can't you go—why can't you go?" And he gave Vanessa and myself two ermine skins, with slits down the middle out of which poured endless wealth—streams of silver. I also remember him lying in bed, dying; husky; in a night shirt; and showing us drawings by Retzsch.* The character of Mr Gibbs also seems to me complete and amuses me very much.

As for C. B. Clarke, he was an old botanist; and he said to my father "All you young botanists like Osmunda." He had an aunt aged eighty who went for a walking tour in the New Forest. That is all—that is all I have to say about these three old gentlemen. But how real they were! How we laughed at them! What an immense part they played in our lives!

One more caricature comes into my mind; though pity entered into this one. I am thinking of Justine Nonon. She was immensely old. Little hairs sprouted on her long bony chin. She was a hunchback; and walked like a spider, feeling her way with her long dry fingers from one chair to another. Most of the time she sat in the arm-chair beside the fire. I used to sit on her knee; and her knee jogged up and down; and she sang in a hoarse cracked voice "Ron ron ron—et plon plon plon—" and then her knee gave and I was tumbled onto the floor. She was French; she had been with the Thackerays. She only came to us on visits. She lived by herself at Shepherd's Bush; and used to bring Adrian a glass jar of honey. I got the notion that she was extremely poor; and it made me uncomfortable that she brought this honey, because I felt she did it by way of making her visit acceptable. She said too: "I have come in my carriage and pair"—which meant the red omnibus. For this too I pitied her; also because she began to wheeze; and the nurses said she would not live much longer; and soon she died. That is all I know about her; but I remember her as if she were a completely real person, with nothing left out, like the three old men.

* Friedrich Retzsch (1779–1857), a German engraver widely known in Germany and England. The ts has 'Ketsch' which is obviously a typing error.

2nd May . . . I write the date, because I think that I have discovered a possible form for these notes. That is, to make them include the present—at least enough of the present to serve as platform to stand upon. It would be interesting to make the two people, I now, I then, come out in contrast. And further, this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time. But I cannot work this out; it had better be left to chance, as I write by fits and starts by way of a holiday from Roger. I have no energy at the moment to spend upon the horrid labour that it needs to make an orderly and expressed work of art; where one thing follows another and all are swept into a whole. Perhaps one day, relieved from making works of art, I will try to compose this.

But to continue—the three old men and the one old woman are complete, as I was saying, because they died when I was a child. They none of them lived on to be altered as I altered—as others, like the Stillmans or the Lushingtons, lived on and were added to and filled and left finally incomplete. The same thing applies to places. I cannot see Kensington Gardens as I saw it as a child because I saw it only two days ago—on a chill afternoon, all the cherry trees lurid in the cold yellow light of a hail storm. I know that it was very much larger in 1890 when I was seven than it is now. For one thing, it was not connected with Hyde Park. Now I walk from one to the other. We drive in our car; and leave it by the new kiosk. But then there was the Broad Walk, the Round Pond, and the Flower Walk. Then —I will try to get back to then—there were two gates, one opposite Gloucester Road, the other opposite Queen's Gate. At each gate sat an old woman. The Queen's Gate old woman was an elongated, emaciated figure with a goat-like face, yellow and pockmarked. She sold nuts and boot-laces, I think. And Kitty Maxse said of her: "Poor things, it's drink that makes them like that." She always sat, and wore a shawl and had to me a faint, obliterated, debased likeness to Granny; whose face was elongated too, but she wore a very soft shawl, like tapioca pudding, over her head, and it was fastened by an amethyst brooch set in pearls. The other old woman was round and squat. To her was attached a whole wobbling balloon of air-balls. She held this billowing, always moving, most desirable mass by one string. They glowed in my eyes always red and purple, like the flower my mother wore; and they were always billowing in the air. For a penny, she would detach one from the bellying soft mass, and I

would dance away with it. She too wore a shawl and her face was puckered, as the air-balls puckered in the nursery if they survived to be taken home. I think Nurse and Sooney were on speaking terms with her; but I never heard what she said. Anemones, the blue and purple bunches that are now being sold, always bring back that quivering mound of air-balls outside the gate of Kensington Gardens.

Then we went up the Broad Walk. The Broad Walk had a peculiar property—when we took our first walk there after coming back from St Ives, we always abused it; it was not a hill at all, we said. By degrees as the weeks passed the hill became steeper and steeper until by the summer it was a hill again. The swamp—as we called the rather derelict ground behind the Flower Walk—had to Adrian and myself at least the glamour of the past on it. When Nessa and Thoby were very small, that is to say, it had been, they told us, a real swamp; they had found the skeleton of a dog there. And it must have been covered with reeds and full of pools, we thought, for we believed that the dog had been starved and drowned. In our day it had been drained, though it was still muddy. But it had a past always to us. And we compared it, of course, with Halestown bog* near St Ives. Halestown bog where the Osmunda grew; and those thick ferns with bulbous roots that had trees marked on them, if you cut them across. I brought some home every autumn to make into pen holders. It was natural always to compare Kensington Gardens with St Ives, always of course to the disadvantage of London. That was one of the pleasures of scrunching the shells with which now and then the Flower Walk was strewn. They had little ribs on them like the shells on the beach. On the other hand the crocodile tree was itself; and is still there—the tree on the Speke Monument path;† which has a great root exposed; and the root is polished, partly by the friction of our hands, for we used to scramble over it.

As we walked, to beguile the dulness [of] innumerable winter walks we made up stories, long long stories that were taken up at the same place and added to each in turn. There was the Jim Joe and Harry Hoe story; about three brothers who had herds of animals and adventures—I have forgotten what. But there again, the Jim Joe and Harry Hoe story was a London story; and inferior to the Talland House garden story about Beccage and Hollywinks; spirits

* Halse Town bog which the Stephens always called 'Halestown bog'.

† The red granite obelisk in Kensington Gardens dedicated to the memory of the explorer John Hanning Speke.

of evil who lived on the rubbish heap; and disappeared through a hole in the escallonia hedge—as I remember telling my mother and Mr Lowell.* Walks in Kensington Gardens were dull. Non-being made up a great proportion of our time in London. The walks—twice every day in Kensington Gardens—were so monotonous. Speaking for myself, non-being lay thick over those years. Past the thermometer we went—sometimes it was below the little freezing bar but not often save in the great 1894–5 winter when we skated every day; when I dropped my watch and the rough man gave it me; and asked for money; and a kind lady offered three coppers; and he said he would only take silver; and she shook her head and faded away—past the thermometer we went, past the gate-keeper in his green livery and his gold laced hat, up the Flower Walk, round the pond. We sailed boats of course. There was the great day when my Cornish lugger sailed perfectly to the middle of the pond and then with my eyes upon it, amazed, sank suddenly; "Did you see that?" my father cried, coming striding towards me. We had both seen it and both were amazed. To make the wonder complete, many weeks later in the spring, I was walking by the pond and a man in a flat-boat was dredging the pond of duckweed, and to my unspeakable excitement, up he brought my lugger in his dredging net; and I claimed it; and he gave it me, and I ran home with this marvellous story to tell. Then my mother made new sails; and my father rigged it, and I remember seeing him fixing the sails to the yard-arm after dinner; and how interested he became and said, with his little snort, half laughing, something like "Absurd—what fun it is doing this!"

I could collect a great many more floating incidents—scenes in Kensington Gardens; how if we had a penny we went to the white house near the palace and bought sweets from the smooth-faced, pink-cheeked woman in a grey cotton dress who used then to keep a sweet shop there; how on one day of the week we bought *Tit-Bits* and read the jokes—I liked the Correspondence best—sitting on the grass, breaking our chocolate into "Frys" as we called them, for a penny slab was divided into four; how we knocked into a lady racing our go-cart round a steep corner, and her sister scolded us violently; how we tied Shag to a railing, and some children told the Park Keeper that we were cruel—but the stories were not then very

* James Russell Lowell, the poet and critic, American Ambassador to the Court of St James 1880–85, and friend of Leslie Stephen, was Virginia's godfather.

exciting; though they helped to break up the eternal round of Kensington Gardens.

What then has remained interesting? Again those moments of being. Two I always remember. There was the moment of the puddle in the path; when for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal; I was suspended; I could not step across the puddle; I tried to touch something . . . the whole world became unreal. Next, the other moment when the idiot boy sprang up with his hand outstretched mewing, slit-eyed, red-rimmed; and without saying a word, with a sense of the horror in me, I poured into his hand a bag of Russian toffee. But it was not over, for that night in the bath the dumb horror came over me. Again I had that hopeless sadness; that collapse I have described before; as if I were passive under some sledge-hammer blow; exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning that had heaped itself up and discharged itself upon me, unprotected, with nothing to ward it off, so that I huddled up at my end of the bath, motionless. I could not explain it; I said nothing even to Nessa sponging herself at the other end.

Looking back, then, at Kensington Gardens, though I can recover incidents, many more than I have patience to describe, I cannot recover, save by fits and starts, the focus, the proportions of the external world. It seems to me that a child must have a curious focus; it sees an air-ball or a shell with extreme distinctness; I still see the air-balls, blue and purple, and the ribs on the shells; but these points are enclosed in vast empty spaces. How large for instance was the space beneath the nursery table! I see it still as a great black space with the table-cloth hanging down in folds on the outskirts in the distance; and myself roaming about there, and meeting Nessa. "Have black cats got tails?" she asked, and I said "NO", and was proud because she had asked me a question. Then we roamed off again into that vast space. The night nursery was vast too. In winter I would slip in before bed to take a look at the fire. I was very anxious to see that the fire was low, because it frightened me if it burnt after we went to bed. I dreaded that little flickering flame on the walls; but Adrian liked it; and to make a compromise, Nurse folded a towel over the fender; but I could not help opening my eyes, and there often was the flickering flame; and I looked and looked and could not sleep; and in order to have company, said "What did you say, Nessa?" although she was asleep, to wake her and to hear someone's voice. These were early

fears; for later, when Thoby had gone to school, leaving Nessa to take his monkey Jacko to bed with her, no sooner was the door shut than we began story-telling. The story always began thus: "Clémont* dear child, said Mrs Dilke," and it went on to tell wild stories of the Dilke family† and Miss Rosalba the governess; how they dug under the floor and discovered sacks of gold; and held great feasts and ate fried eggs "with plenty of frizzling", for the wealth of the Dilkes in real life compared with our own moderate means impressed us. We noticed how many new clothes Mrs Dilke wore; how seldom my mother bought a new dress.

Many bright colours; many distinct sounds; some human beings, caricatures; comic; several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene which they cut out: and all surrounded by a vast space—that is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child, roaming about, in that space of time which lasted from 1882 to 1895. A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change. Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature; one must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without her being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, than it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which turns a baby, who can just distinguish a great blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt on May 5th 1895—now almost exactly to a day, forty-four years ago—when my mother died.

This shows that among the innumerable things left out in my sketch I have left out the most important—those instincts, affections,

* In a paper written by Vanessa Bell for the Memoir Club ("Notes on Virginia's Childhood, a Memoir", ed. Richard Schaubeck, Jr.: Frank Hallman; New York, 1974) 'Clémont' is spelled 'Clémenté'.

† Next door neighbours.

passions, attachments—there is no single word for them, for they changed month by month—which bound me, I suppose, from the first moment of consciousness to other people. If it were true, as I said above, that the things that ceased in childhood, are easy to describe because they are complete, then it should be easy to say what I felt for my mother, who died when I was thirteen. Thus I should be able to see her completely undisturbed by later impressions, as I saw Mr Gibbs and C. B. Clarke. But the theory, though true of them, breaks down completely with her. It breaks down in a curious way, which I will explain, for perhaps it may help to explain why I find it now so curiously difficult to describe both my feeling for her, and her herself.

Until I was in the forties—I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote *To the Lighthouse*, but am too casual here to bother to do it—the presence of my mother obsessed me.* I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life. This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analysed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially.

Yet it is by such invisible presences that the "subject of this memoir" is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position. Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class; well, if we cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream.

To return to the particular instance which should be more definite and more capable of description than for example the influence on me of the Cambridge Apostles,† or the influence of the

* *To the Lighthouse* was begun in 1925 and published in 1927 when VW was forty-five.

† The popular name for the semi-secret 'Cambridge Conversazione Society' which was founded in the 1820s. All the young men who formed the nucleus of 'old Bloomsbury' belonged to it, except Clive Bell and Thoby Stephen.

Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells school of fiction, or the influence of the Vote, or of the War—that is, the influence of my mother. It is perfectly true that she obsessed me, in spite of the fact that she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush.* One thing burst into another. Blowing bubbles out of a pipe gives the feeling of the rapid crowd of ideas and scenes which blew out of my mind, so that my lips seemed syllabling of their own accord as I walked. What blew the bubbles? Why then? I have no notion. But I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her.

I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest. But what is the meaning of "explained" it? Why, because I described her and my feeling for her in that book, should my vision of her and my feeling for her become so much dimmer and weaker? Perhaps one of these days I shall hit on the reason; and if so, I will give it, but at the moment I will go on, describing what I can remember, for it may be true that what I remember of her now will weaken still further. (This note is made provisionally, in order to explain in part why it is now so difficult to give any clear description of her.)

Certainly there she was, in the very centre of that great Cathedral space which was childhood; there she was from the very first. My first memory is of her lap; the scratch of some beads on her dress comes back to me as I pressed my cheek against it. Then I see her in her white dressing gown on the balcony; and the passion flower with the purple star on its petals. Her voice is still faintly in my ears—decided, quick; and in particular the little drops with which her laugh ended—three diminishing ahs . . . "Ah—ah—ah . . ." I sometimes end a laugh that way myself. And I see her hands, like Adrian's, with the very individual square-tipped fingers, each finger with a waist to it, and the nail broadening out. (My own are the same size all the way, so that I can slip a ring over my thumb.) She had three rings; a diamond ring, an emerald ring, and an opal ring. My eyes used to fix themselves upon the lights in the opal as it moved across the page of the lesson book when she taught us, and I was glad

* 52 Tavistock Square was the London home of the Woolfs from 1924 to 1939.

that she left it to me (I gave it to Leonard). Also I hear the tinkle of her bracelets, made of twisted silver, given her by Mr Lowell, as she went about the house; especially as she came up at night to see if we were asleep, holding a candle shaded; this is a distinct memory, for, like all children, I lay awake sometimes and longed for her to come. Then she told me to think of all the lovely things I could imagine. Rainbows and bells . . . But besides these minute separate details, how did I first become conscious of what was always there—her astonishing beauty? Perhaps I never became conscious of it; I think I accepted her beauty as the natural quality that a mother—she seemed typical, universal, yet our own in particular—had by virtue of being our mother. It was part of her calling. I do not think that I separated her face from that general being; or from her whole body. Certainly I have a vision of her now, as she came up the path by the lawn at St Ives; slight, shapely—she held herself very straight. I was playing. I stopped, about to speak to her. But she half turned from us, and lowered her eyes. From that indescribably sad gesture I knew that Philips, the man who had been crushed on the line and whom she had been visiting, was dead. It's over, she seemed to say. I knew, and was awed by the thought of death. At the same time I felt that her gesture as a whole was lovely. Very early, through nurses or casual visitors, I must have known that she was thought very beautiful. But that pride was snobbish, not a pure and private feeling: it was mixed with pride in other people's admiration. It was related to the more definitely snobbish pride caused in me by the nurses who said one night talking together while we ate our supper: "They're very well connected . . . ."

But apart from her beauty, if the two can be separated, what was she herself like? Very quick; very direct; practical; and amusing, I say at once offhand. She could be sharp, she disliked affectation. "If you put your head on one side like that, you shan't come to the party," I remember she said to me as we drew up in a carriage in front of some house. Severe; with a background of knowledge that made her sad. She had her own sorrow waiting behind her to dip into privately. Once when she had set us to write exercises I looked up from mine and watched her reading—the Bible perhaps; and, struck by the gravity of her face, told myself that her first husband had been a clergyman and that she was thinking, as she read what he had read, of him. This was a fable on my part; but it shows that she looked very sad when she was not talking.

But can I get any closer to her without drawing upon all those descriptions and anecdotes which after she was dead imposed themselves upon my view of her? Very quick; very definite; very upright; and behind the active, the sad, the silent. And of course she was central. I suspect the word "central" gets closest to the general feeling I had of living so completely in her atmosphere that one never got far enough away from her to see her as a person. (That is one reason why I see the Gibbses and the Beadles and the Clarkes so much more distinctly.) She was the whole thing; Talland House was full of her; Hyde Park Gate was full of her. I see now, though the sentence is hasty, feeble and inexpressive, why it was that it was impossible for her to leave a very private and particular impression upon a child. She was keeping what I call in my shorthand the panoply of life—that which we all lived in common—in being. I see now that she was living on such an extended surface that she had not time, nor strength, to concentrate, except for a moment if one were ill or in some child's crisis, upon me, or upon anyone—unless it were Adrian. Him she cherished separately; she called him 'My Joy'. The later view, the understanding that I now have of her position must have its say; and it shows me that a woman of forty with seven children, some of them needing grown-up attention, and four still in the nursery; and an eighth, Laura, an idiot, yet living with us; and a husband fifteen years her elder, difficult, exacting, dependent on her; I see now that a woman who had to keep all this in being and under control must have been a general presence rather than a particular person to a child of seven or eight. Can I remember ever being alone with her for more than a few minutes? Someone was always interrupting. When I think of her spontaneously she is always in a room full of people; Stella, George and Gerald are there; my father, sitting reading with one leg curled round the other, twisting his lock of hair; "Go and take the crumb out of his beard," she whispers to me; and off I trot. There are visitors, young men like Jack Hills who is in love with Stella; many young men, Cambridge friends of George's and Gerald's; old men, sitting round the tea table talking—father's friends, Henry James, Symonds,* (I see him peering up at me on the broad staircase at St Ives with his drawn yellow face and a tie made of a yellow cord

* John Addington Symonds, man of letters, was the father of Katherine who married the artist Charles Furse and Margaret (Madge) who married William Wyamar Vaughan.

with two plush balls on it); Stella's friends—the Lushingtons, the Stillmans; I see her at the head of the table underneath the engraving of Beatrice given her by an old governess and painted blue; I hear jokes; laughter; the clatter of voices; I am teased; I say something funny; she laughs; I am pleased; I blush furiously; she observes; someone laughs at Nessa for saying that Ida Milman is her B.F.; Mother says soothingly, tenderly, "Best friend, that means." I see her going to the town with her basket; and Arthur Davies goes with her; I see her knitting on the hall step while we play cricket; I see her stretching her arms out to Mrs Williams when the bailiffs took possession of their house and the Captain stood at the window bawling and shying jugs, basins, chamber pots onto the gravel—"Come to us, Mrs Williams"; "No, Mrs Stephen," sobbed Mrs Williams, "I will not leave my husband."—I see her writing at her table in London and the silver candlesticks, and the high carved chair with the claws and the pink seat; and the three-cornered brass ink pot; I wait in agony peeping surreptitiously behind the blind for her to come down the street, when she has been out late the lamps are lit and I am sure that she has been run over. (Once my father found me peeping; questioned me; and said rather anxiously but reprovingly, "You shouldn't be so nervous, Jinny.") And there is my last sight of her; she was dying; I came to kiss her and as I crept out of the room she said: "Hold yourself straight, my little Goat." . . . What a jumble of things I can remember, if I let my mind run, about my mother; but they are all of her in company; of her surrounded; of her generalised; dispersed, omnipresent, of her as the creator of that crowded merry world which spun so gaily in the centre of my childhood. It is true that I enclosed that world in another made by my own temperament; it is true that from the beginning I had many adventures outside that world; and often went far from it; and kept much back from it; but there it always was, the common life of the family, very merry, very stirring, crowded with people; and she was the centre; it was herself. This was proved on May 5th 1895. For after that day there was nothing left of it. I leant out of the nursery window the morning she died. It was about six, I suppose. I saw Dr Seton walk away up the street with his head bent and his hands clasped behind his back. I saw the pigeons floating and settling. I got a feeling of calm, sadness, and finality. It was a beautiful blue spring morning, and very still. That brings back the feeling that everything had come to an end.

May 15th 1939. The drudgery of making a coherent life of Roger has once more become intolerable, and so I turn for a few day's respite to May 1895. The little platform of present time on which I stand is, so far as the weather is concerned, damp and chilly. I look up at my skylight—over the litter of *Athenaeum* articles, Fry letters—all strewn with the sand that comes from the house that is being pulled down next door—I look up and see, as if reflecting it, a sky the colour of dirty water. And the inner landscape is much of a piece. Last night Mark Gertler* dined here and denounced the vulgarity, the inferiority of what he called "literature"; compared with the integrity of painting. "For it always deals with Mr and Mrs Brown,"—he said—with the personal, the trivial, that is; a criticism which has its sting and its chill, like the May sky. Yet if one could give a sense of my mother's personality one would have to be an artist. It would be as difficult to do that, as it should be done, as to paint a Cézanne.

One of the few things that is certain about her is that she married two very different men. If one looks at her not as a child, of seven or eight, but as a woman now older than she was when she died, there is something to take hold of in that fact. She was not so rubbed out and featureless, not so dominated by the beauty of her own face, as she has since become—and inevitably. For what reality can remain real of a person who died forty-four years ago† at the age of forty-nine, without leaving a book, or a picture, or any piece of work—apart from the three children who now survive and the memory of her that remains in their minds? There is the memory; but there is nothing to check that memory by; nothing to bring it to ground with.

There are however these two marriages; and they show that she was capable of falling in love with two very different men; one, to put it in a nutshell, the pink of propriety; the other, the pink of intellectuality. She could span them both. This must serve me by way of foot rule, in trying to measure her character.

The elements of that character, though, are formed in twilight. She was born, I think, in 1848;‡ I think in India; the daughter of Dr Jackson and his half-French wife. Not very much education

* The artist who committed suicide in this same year, 23 June 1939.
† VW mistakenly typed '43 years ago'.
‡ Julia was born in 1846, not in 1848.

came her way. An old governess—was she Mademoiselle Rose? did she give her the picture of Beatrice that hung in the dining room at Talland House?—taught her French, which she spoke with a very good accent; and she could play the piano and was musical. I remember that she kept De Quincey's *Opium Eater* on her table, one of her favourite books; and for a birthday present she chose all the works of Scott which her father gave her in the first edition—some remain; others are lost. For Scott she had a passion. She had an instinctive, not a trained mind. But her instinct, for books at least, seems to me to have been strong, and I liked it, for she gave a jump, I remember, when reading *Hamlet* aloud to her I misread 'sliver' 'silver'—she jumped as my father jumped at a false quantity when we read Virgil with him. She was her mother's favourite daughter of the three; and as her mother was an invalid even as a child she was used to nursing; to waiting on a sick bed. They had a house at Well Walk during the Crimean War; for there was an anecdote about watching the soldiers drill on the Heath. But her beauty at once came to the fore, even as a little girl; for there was another anecdote—how she could never be sent out alone, but must have Mary with her, to protect her from admiring looks: to keep her unconscious of that beauty—and she was, my father said, very little conscious of it. It was due to this beauty, I suspect, that she had that training which was much more important than any she had from governesses—the training of life at Little Holland House. She was a great deal at Little Holland House as a child, partly, I imagine, because she was acceptable to the painters, and the Prinseps—Aunt Sara and Uncle Thoby must have been proud of her.*

Little Holland House was her world then. But what was that world like? I think of it as a summer afternoon world. To my thinking Little Holland House is an old white country house, standing in a large garden. Long windows open onto the lawn. Through them comes a stream of ladies in crinolines and little straw hats; they are attended by gentlemen in peg-top trousers and whiskers. The date is round about 1860. It is a hot summer day. Tea tables with great bowls of strawberries and cream are scattered about the lawn. They

* Julia's Aunt Sara, one of the seven Pattle sisters, married Thoby Prinsep. They settled in Little Holland House, Kensington, where they entertained in a highly eccentric fashion an aristocracy of intellect in which the painters—Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones and above all, G. F. Watts who was long a resident—played a dominant role.

are "presided over" by some of the six lovely sisters;* who do not wear crinolines, but are robed in splendid Venetian draperies; they sit enthroned, and talk with foreign emphatic gestures—my mother too gesticulated, throwing her hands out—to the eminent men (afterwards to be made fun of by Lytton);† rulers of India, statesmen, poets, painters. My mother comes out of the window wearing that striped silk dress buttoned at the throat with a flowing skirt that appears in the photograph.‡ She is of course "a vision" as they used to say; and there she stands, silent, with her plate of strawberries and cream; or perhaps is told to take a party across the garden to Signior's studio.§ The sound of music also comes from those long low rooms where the great Watts pictures hang; Joachim playing the violin; also the sound of a voice reading poetry—Uncle Thoby would read his translations from the Persian poets. How easy it is to fill in the picture with set pieces that I have gathered from memoirs—to bring in Tennyson in his wideawake; Watts in his smock frock; Ellen Terry dressed as a boy; Garibaldi in his red shirt—and Henry Taylor turned from him to my mother—"the face of one fair girl was more to me"—so he says in a poem. But if I turn to my mother, how difficult it is to single her out as she really was; to imagine what she was thinking, to put a single sentence into her mouth! I dream; I make up pictures of a summer's afternoon.

But the dream is based upon one fact. Once when we were children, my mother took us to Melbury Road; and when we came to the street that had been built on the old garden she gave a little spring forward, clapped her hands, and cried "That was where it was!" as if a fairyland had disappeared. Thus I think it is true that Little Holland House was a summer afternoon world to her. As a fact too I know that she adored her Uncle Thoby. His walking stick, with a hole in the top through which a tassel must have hung, a beautiful eighteenth-century looking cane, always stood at the head of her bed at Hyde Park Gate. She was a hero worshipper, simple, uncritical, enthusiastic. She felt for Uncle Thoby, my father said, much more than she felt for her own father—"old Dr Jackson";

* Although there were seven Pattle sisters, no one ever spoke of Julia (Cameron) as beautiful. However, F. W. Maitland in *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London, 1906) makes the same error when referring to Maria Pattle as "one of six sisters" (p. 317n).

† Strachey.

‡ Efforts to trace this photograph have been unsuccessful.

§ The studio of G. F. Watts.

"respectable"; but, for all his good looks and the amazing mane of white hair that stood out like a three-cornered hat round his head, he was a commonplace prosaic old man; boring people with his stories of a famous poison case in Calcutta; excluded from this poetical fairyland; and no doubt out of temper with it. My mother had no romance about him; but she derived from him, I suspect, the practicality, the shrewdness, which were among her qualities.

Little Holland House then was her education. She was taught there to take such part as girls did then in the lives of distinguished men; to pour out tea; to hand them their strawberries and cream; to listen devoutly, reverently to their wisdom; to accept the fact that Watts was the great painter; Tennyson the great poet; and to dance with the Prince of Wales. For the sisters, with the exception of my grandmother who was devout and spiritual, were worldly in the thoroughgoing Victorian way. Aunt Virginia, it is plain, put her own daughters, my mother's first cousins, through tortures compared with which the boot or the Chinese shoe is negligible, in order to marry one to the Duke of Bedford, the other to Lord Henry Somerset. (That is how we came to be, as the nurses said, so "well connected".) But here again I am dipping into memoirs, and leaving Julia Jackson, the real person, on one side. The only certainties I can lay hands on in those early years are that two men proposed to her (or to her parents on her behalf); one was Holman Hunt; the other Woolner, a sculptor.* Both proposals were made and refused when she was scarcely out of the nursery. I know too that she went once wearing a hat with grey feathers to a river party where Anny Thackeray† was; and Nun (that is Aunt Caroline, father's sister) saw her standing alone; and was amazed that she was not the centre of a bevy of admirers; "Where are they?" she asked Anny Thackeray; who said, "Oh they don't happen to be here today"—a little scene which makes me suspect that Julia aged seventeen or eighteen was aloof; and shed a certain silence round her by her very beauty.

That little scene is dated; she cannot have been more than

* Hunt and Thomas Woolner were founder members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

† Anne Thackeray was the elder daughter of the novelist W. M. Thackeray and sister of Leslie Stephen's first wife. She married her cousin, Richmond Ritchie.

eighteen; because she married when she was nineteen.* She was in Venice; met Herbert Duckworth; fell head over ears in love with him, he with her, and so they married. That is all I know, perhaps all that anyone now knows, of the most important thing that ever happened to her. How important it was is proved by the fact that when he died four years later she was "as unhappy as it is possible for a human being to be". That was her own saying; it came to me from Kitty Maxse. "I have been as unhappy and as happy as it is possible for a human being to be." Kitty remembered it, because though she was very intimate with my mother, this was the only time in all their friendship that she ever spoke of what she had felt for Herbert Duckworth.

What my mother was like when she was as happy as anyone can be, I have no notion. Not a sound or a scene has survived from those four years. They were well off; lived in Bryanston Square; he practised not very seriously at the Bar; (once they went on circuit; and a friend said to him, "I spent the whole morning in Court looking at a beautiful face"—Herbert's wife); George was born; then Stella; and Gerald was about to be born when Herbert Duckworth died. They were staying with the Vaughans at Upton;† he stretched to pick a fig for my mother; an abscess burst; and he died in a few hours. Those are the only facts I know about those four happy years.

If it were possible to know what Herbert himself was like, some ray of light might fall from him upon my mother. But, like all very handsome men who die tragically, he left not so much a character behind him as a legend. Youth and death shed a halo through which it is difficult to see a real face—a face one might see today in the street or here in my studio. To Aunt Mary—my mother's sister, likely thus to share some of her feelings—he was "Oh darling, a beam of light . . . like no one I have ever met . . . When Herbert Duckworth smiled . . . when Herbert Duckworth came into the room . . ." here she broke off, shook her head quickly from side to side and screwed her face up, as if he were ineffable; no words could describe him. And in this spasmodic way she gave an echo of what must have been my mother's feeling; only hers was much deeper, and stronger. He must have been to her the perfect man; heroic; handsome;

* She was twenty-one when she married Herbert Duckworth.

† Julia's sister, Adeline, married Henry Halford Vaughan. Upton Castle, in Pembrokeshire, was rented by the Vaughans.

magnanimous; "the great Achilles, whom we knew"—it seems natural to quote Tennyson—and also genial, lovable, simple, and also her husband; and her children's father. It was thus natural to her when she was a girl to love the simple, the genial, the normal ordinary type of man, in preference to the queer, the uncouth artistic, the intellectual, whom she had met and who had wished to marry her. Herbert was the perfect type of public school boy and English gentleman, my father said. She chose him; and how completely he satisfied her is proved by the collapse, the complete collapse into which she fell when he died. All her gaiety, all her sociability left her. She was as unhappy as it is possible for anyone to be. There is very little known of the years that were thus stamped. Only that saying, and Stella once told me that she used to lie upon his grave at Orchardleigh. As she was undemonstrative that seems a superlative expression of her grief.

What is known, and is much more remarkable, is that during those eight years spent, so far as she had time over from her children and house, 'doing good', nursing, visiting the poor, she lost her faith. This hurt her mother, a deeply religious woman, to whom she was devoted, and thus must have been a genuine conviction; something arrived at as the result of solitary and independent thinking. It proves that there was more in her than simplicity; enthusiasm; romance; and thus makes sense of her two incongruous choices: Herbert and my father. There was a complexity in her; great simplicity and directness combined with a sceptical, a serious spirit. Probably it was that combination that accounted for the great impression she made on people; the positive impression. Her character was sharpened by the mixture of simplicity and scepticism. She was sociable yet severe; very amusing; but very serious; extremely practical but with a depth in her . . . "She was a mixture of the Madonna and a woman of the world," is Miss Robins's description.*

The certain fact at any rate is that when at last she was left alone —"Oh the torture of never being left alone!" is a saying of hers, reported I forget by whom, that refers to her widowhood, and the fuss that friends and family made—when she was alone at last in Hyde Park Gate, she began to think out her position; and for this reason perhaps read something my father had written. She liked it (he says in the 'Mausoleum Book'), when she was not sure that she liked him. It is thus permissible to think of her sitting in the creeper-

* Elizabeth Robins, the actress, had been a friend of Julia's.

shaded drawing room at Hyde Park Gate in her widow's dress, alone, when the children had gone to bed, with a copy of the *Fortnightly*, trying to reason out the case for agnosticism. From that she would go on to think of Leslie Stephen, the gaunt bearded man who lived up the street, married to Minny Thackeray. He was in every way the opposite of Herbert Duckworth; but there was something in his mind that interested her. One evening she called on the Leslie Stephens, [and] found them sitting over the fire together; a happy married pair, with one child in the nursery, and another to be born soon. She sat talking; and then went home, envying them their happiness and comparing it with her own loneliness. Next day Minny died suddenly. And about two years later she married the gaunt bearded widower.*

"How did father ask you to marry him?" I once asked her, with my arm slipped in hers as we went down the twisted stairs into the dining room. She gave her little laugh, half surprised, half shocked. She did not answer. He asked her in a letter; and she refused him. Then one night when he had given up all thought of it, and had been dining with her, and asking her advice about a governess for Laura, she followed him to the door and said "I will try to be a good wife to you."

Perhaps there was pity in her love; certainly there was devout admiration for his mind; and so she spanned the two marriages with the two different men; and emerged from that corridor of the eight silent years to live fifteen years more;† to bear four children; and [to] die early on the morning of the 5th of May 1895. George took us down to say goodbye. My father staggered from the bedroom as we came. I stretched out my arms to stop him, but he brushed past me, crying out something I could not catch; distraught. And George led me in to kiss my mother, who had just died.

May 28th 1939. Led by George with towels wrapped round us and given each a drop of brandy in warm milk to drink, we were taken into the bedroom. I think candles were burning; and I think the sun was coming in. At any rate I remember the long looking-glass; with the drawers on either side; and the washstand; and the great bed on

* Minny died in 1875; Leslie Stephen married Julia in 1878.

† After her marriage to Leslie Stephen, Julia lived seventeen years.

which my mother lay. I remember very clearly how even as I was taken to the bedside I noticed that one nurse was sobbing, and a desire to laugh came over me, and I said to myself as I have often done at moments of crisis since, "I feel nothing whatever". Then I stooped and kissed my mother's face. It was still warm. She [had] only died a moment before. Then we went upstairs into the day nursery.

Perhaps it was the next evening that Stella took me into the bedroom to kiss mother for the last time. She had been lying on her side before. Now she was lying straight in the middle of her pillows. Her face looked immeasurably distant, hollow and stern. When I kissed her, it was like kissing cold iron. Whenever I touch cold iron the feeling comes back to me—the feeling of my mother's face, iron cold, and granulated. I started back. Then Stella stroked her cheek, and undid a button on her nightgown. "She always liked to have it like that," she said. When she came up to the nursery later she said to me, "Forgive me. I saw you were afraid." She had noticed that I had started. When Stella asked me to forgive her for having given me that shock, I cried—we had been crying off and on all day—and said, "When I see mother, I see a man sitting with her." Stella looked at me as if I had frightened her. Did I say that in order to attract attention to myself? Or was it true? I cannot be sure, for certainly I had a great wish to draw attention to myself. But certainly it was true that when she said: "Forgive me," and thus made me visualize my mother, I seemed to see a man sitting bent on the edge of the bed.

"It's nice that she shouldn't be alone", Stella said after a moment's pause.

Of course the atmosphere of those three or four days before the funeral was so melodramatic, histrionic and unreal that any hallucination was possible. We lived through them in hush, in artificial light. Rooms were shut. People were creeping in and out. People were coming to the door all the time. We were all sitting in the drawing room round father's chair sobbing. The hall reeked of flowers. They were piled on the hall table. The scent still brings back those days of astonishing intensity. But I have one memory of great beauty. A telegram had been sent to Thoby at Clifton. He was to arrive in the evening at Paddington. George and Stella whispered together in the hall, about who was to go and meet him. To my relief, Stella overcame some objection on George's part, and said,

"But I think it would do her good to go"; and so I was taken in a cab with George and Nessa to meet Thoby at Paddington. It was sunset, and the great glass dome at the end of the station was blazing with light. It was glowing yellow and red and the iron girders made a pattern across it. I walked along the platform gazing with rapture at this magnificent blaze of colour, and the train slowly steamed into the station. It impressed and exalted me. It was so vast and so fiery red. The contrast of that blaze of magnificent light with the shrouded and curtained rooms at Hyde Park Gate was so intense. Also it was partly that my mother's death unveiled and intensified; made me suddenly develop perceptions, as if a burning glass had been laid over what was shaded and dormant. Of course this quickening was spasmodic. But it was surprising—as if something were becoming visible without any effort. To take another instance—I remember going into Kensington Gardens about that time. It was a hot spring evening, and we lay down—Nessa and I—in the long grass behind the Flower Walk. I had taken *The Golden Treasury* with me. I opened it and began to read some poem. And instantly and for the first time I understood the poem (which it was I forget). It was as if it became altogether intelligible; I had a feeling of transparency in words when they cease to be words and become so intensified that one seems to experience them; to foretell them as if they developed what one is already feeling. I was so astonished that I tried to explain the feeling. "One seems to understand what it's about", I said awkwardly. I suppose Nessa has forgotten; no one could have understood from what I said the queer feeling I had in the hot grass, that poetry was coming true. Nor does that give the feeling. It matches what I have sometimes felt when I write. The pen gets on the scent.

But though I remember so distinctly those two moments—the arch of glass burning at the end of Paddington Station and the poem I read in Kensington Gardens, those two clear moments are almost the only clear moments in the muffled dulness that then closed over us. With mother's death the merry, various family life which she had held in being shut for ever. In its place a dark cloud settled over us; we seemed to sit all together cooped up, sad, solemn, unreal, under a haze of heavy emotion. It seemed impossible to break through. It was not merely dull; it was unreal. A finger seemed laid on one's lips.

I see us now, all dressed in unbroken black, George and Gerald in

black trousers, Stella with real crape deep on her dress, Nessa and myself with slightly modified crape, my father black from head to foot—even the notepaper was so black bordered that only a little space for writing remained—I see us emerging from Hyde Park Gate on a fine summer afternoon and walking in procession hand in hand, for we were always taking hands—I see us walking—I rather proud of the solemn blackness and the impression it must make—into Kensington Gardens; and how golden the laburnum shone. And then we sat silent under the trees. The silence was stifling. A finger was laid on our lips. One had always to think whether what one was about to say was the right thing to say. It ought to be a help. But how could one help? Father used to sit sunk in gloom. If he could be got to talk—and that was part of our duty—it was about the past. It was about "the old days". And when he talked, he ended with a groan. He was getting deaf, and his groans were louder than he knew. Indoors he would walk up and down the room, gesticulating, crying that he had never told mother how he loved her. Then Stella would fling her arms round him and protest. Often one would break in upon a scene of this kind. And he would open his arms and call one to him. We were his only hope, his only comfort, he would say. And there kneeling on the floor one would try—perhaps only to cry.

Stella of course bore the brunt. She grew whiter and whiter in her unbroken black dress. She would sit at her table with the black-edged notepaper before her writing, answering letters of sympathy. There was a photograph of mother in front of her; and sometimes she would cry, as she wrote. As the summer wore on, visitors came, sympathetic women, old friends. They were admitted to the back drawing room, where father sat like the Queen in Shakespeare—"here I and sorrow sit"—with the Virginia Creeper hanging a curtain of green over the window, so that the room was like a green cave. We in the front room sat crouched, hearing muffled voices, ready for the visitor to emerge with tears on tear-stained cheeks. The shrouded, cautious, dulled life took the place of all the chatter and laughter of the summer. There were no more parties; no more young men and women laughing. No more flashing visions of white summer dresses and hansoms dashing off to private views and dinner parties, none of that natural life and gaiety which my mother had created. The grown-up world into which I would dash for a moment and pick off some joke or little scene and dash back again upstairs to the nursery was ended. There were none of those snatched moments

that were so amusing and for some reason so soothing and yet exciting when one ran downstairs to dinner arm in arm with mother; or chose the jewels she was to wear. There was none of that pride when one said something that amused her, or that she thought very remarkable. How excited I used to be when the 'Hyde Park Gate News' was laid on her plate on Monday morning, and she liked something I had written!* Never shall I forget my extremity of pleasure—it was like being a violin and being played upon—when I found that she had sent a story of mine to Madge Symonds; it was so imaginative, she said; it was about souls flying round and choosing bodies to be born into.

The tragedy of her death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal; and us solemn, and self-conscious. We were made to act parts that we did not feel; to fumble for words that we did not know. It obscured, it dulled. It made one hypocritical and immeshed in the conventions of sorrow. Many foolish and sentimental ideas came into being. Yet there was a struggle, for soon we revived, and there was a conflict between what we ought to be and what we were. Thoby put this into words. One day before he went back to school, he said: "It's silly going on like this . . . ", sobbing, sitting shrouded, he meant. I was shocked at his heartlessness; yet he was right, I know; and yet how could we escape?

It was Stella who lifted the canopy again. A little light crept in.

June 20th 1939. I was thinking as I crossed the Channel last night of Stella; in a very jerky disconnected way, with people quarrelling outside the door; the boat train arriving; chains clanking; and the steamer giving those sudden stertorous snorts. And as the first morning after a broken night is distracted and broken, 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

* The 'Hyde Park Gate News' appeared weekly, as far as is known, from 9 February 1891 until April 1895. The paper was at first the joint venture of Virginia and Thoby but gradually it became almost entirely Virginia's responsibility. See QB, I, pp. 28–32.

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 dependence.

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 posthumously 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 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 honest, and in some way individual—so she made her own impression on people. Friends, like Kitty Maxse, the brilliant, 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

* Sophie Farrell was the Stephens' cook at 22 Hyde Park Gate and at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. After Vanessa's marriage she went with Virginia and Adrian to 29 Fitzroy Square and later to George Duckworth.

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—elder-blossom, 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 Dolmetsch 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 herself. She remains quite distinct in my mind. What is odd is that I cannot compare her either in character or face with anyone 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 mother. 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 memory 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 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 swordstick and at one time we were told to go out by the back door and if we met Jim we were to say that Stella was away.

19th July 1939. I was forced to break off again, and rather suspect that these breaks will be the end of this memoir.

I was thinking about Stella as we crossed the Channel a month ago. I have not given her a thought since. The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye. But to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary. The present must be smooth, habitual. For this reason—that it destroys the fullness of life—any break—like that of house moving—causes me extreme distress; it breaks; it shallows; it turns the depth into hard thin splinters. As I say to L[eonard]: "What's there real about this? Shall we ever live a real life again?" "At Monks House," he says. So I write this, taking a morning off from the word filing and fitting that my life of Roger means—I write this partly in order to recover my sense of the present by getting the past to shadow this broken surface. Let me then, like a child advancing with bare feet into a cold river, descend again into that stream.

. . . Jim Stephen was in love with Stella. He was mad then. He

* James Kenneth Stephen, second son of James Fitzjames Stephen, brother of Leslie.

was in the exalted stage of his madness. He would dash up in a hansom; leave my father to pay it. The hansom had been driving him about London all day. The man wanted perhaps a sovereign. It was paid. For 'dear Jim' was a great favourite. Once, as I say, he dashed up [to] the nursery and speared the bread. Another time, off we went to his room in De Vere Gardens and he painted me on a small bit of wood. He was a great painter for a time. I suppose madness made him believe he was all powerful. Once he came in at breakfast, "Savage* has just told me I'm in danger of dying or going mad", he laughed. And soon he ran naked through Cambridge; was taken to an asylum; and died. This great mad figure with his broad shoulders and very clean cut mouth, and the deep voice and the powerful face—and the very blue eyes—this mad man would recite poetry to us; "The Burial of Sir John Moore", I remember; and he always brings to mind some tormented bull; and also Achilles—Achilles on his pressed bed lolling roars out a deep applause. He was in love with Stella—incongruously enough. And we had orders to tell him, if we met him in the street, that she was away, staying with the Lushingtons at Pyports. There was a great mystery about love then.

Jim was one of her lovers. The other—that is, the most important—was Jack Hills. It was at St Ives that she refused him; late one night we heard her sobbing through the attic wall. He had gone at once. A refusal in those days was catastrophic. It meant a complete breach. Human relations, at least between the sexes, were carried on as relations between countries are now—with ambassadors, and treaties. The parties concerned met on the great occasion of the proposal. If this were refused, a state of war was declared. That explains why she cried so bitterly. For she had done something of great practical as well as emotional importance. He went off at once—to Norway to fish; later perhaps they met in a completely formal way at parties. Negotiations were kept faintly alive through my mother; an interpreter was necessary. All this procedure gave love its solemnity. Feelings were banked up; silence interposed; there was in every family a code, a religious code, that penetrated, somehow or other, to the children. It was secret; but we guessed.

Thus, when my mother died, Stella was left without any negotiator, for my father did not fill the part. He must have come back—it

* Dr George Savage, later Sir George, was an old friend of the Stephen family. He was also Virginia's specialist.

proves how deep the feeling was to admit such a return—the night before my mother died. It was desperate but not hopeless.*

June 8th 1940. I have just found this sheaf of notes, thrown away into my waste-paper basket. I had been tidying up; and had cast all my life of Roger into that large basket, and with it, these sheets too. Now I am correcting the final page proofs of Roger; and it was to refresh myself from that antlike meticulous labour that I determined to look for these pages. Shall I ever finish these notes—let alone make a book from them? The battle is at its crisis; every night the Germans fly over England; it comes closer to this house daily. If we are beaten then—however we solve that problem, and one solution is apparently suicide (so it was decided three nights ago in London among us)—book writing becomes doubtful. But I wish to go on, not to settle down in that dismal puddle.

Jack Hills, I was saying, came back the night before my mother died, which shows that though the negotiations had been broken off, there must have been a connection, or how could he have come that night of great crisis? We were in the back drawing room, and there was the tea tray, for we had a curious habit of drinking tea about nine o'clock. The silver hot water jug which I still possess—but it has a hole in it—had a handle that grew hot. Aunt Mary, summoned from Brighton, picked it up and put it down quickly.† "Only Mrs Stephen and Stella can manage that", said Jack Hills with the queer sad little smile that went with the little joke. And I remember that he said 'Stella'. And since he was there, that last night, the affair must have been in being—sufficiently so to make it possible for him to be with us in intimacy. That was the 4th May, 1895.

The next thing I remember is the night at Hindhead (August 22nd 1896)—the black and silver night of mysterious voices, the night when father packed us off to bed early; and we heard voices in

* The source of the ambiguity of this passage can be traced to an earlier ms version (A.5c, p. 4, l.22–p. 5, l.3) which reads: "Thus, when my mother died, Stella was left without any negotiator in this affair of marriage; & Jack Hills came to the house on a very queer footing. He must have come the night my mother died. For I remember the doctors had gone; it was desperate but not hopeless; it was after dinner; & Aunt Mary poured out coffee. (Stella being in the bedroom.)"

† Aunt Mary (née Jackson), Julia's elder sister who married Herbert Fisher and had seven sons and four daughters.

the garden; and saw Stella and Jack passing; and disappearing; and the tramp came; and Thoby countered him; and Nessa and I sat up in our bedroom waiting; and Stella never came; and at last in the early morning she came and told us that she was engaged; and I whispered, "Did mother know?" and she murmured, "Yes".

And next morning at breakfast there was excitement and emotion and gloom. Adrian cried; and Jack kissed him; and father said gently but seriously: "We must all be happy, because Stella is happy"—a command which, poor man, he could not himself obey.

But Jack Hills? He had been at Eton with George. He stands in my mind's picture gallery for a type—and a desirable type; the English country gentleman type, I might call it, by way of running a line round it; and I add, it is a type I have seldom been intimate with; perhaps no one is ever intimate with the country gentleman type; yet for nine years I was intimate with Jack Hills; a reason perhaps why we became so completely separate later; it was impossible to begin again formally after that intimacy. And the country gentleman came to the surface and separated us.

Can I quickly fill in that outline? To begin then, he was the son of a commonplace little round man—Judge Hills—'Buzzy' he was called in the family—and like a bluebottle, buzzing, I still remember him; short, jocular, in knickerbockers, giving us Russian toffee up at Corby. Buzzy had once written a sonnet that had been taken for Shakespeare's, and liked to make little facetious jokes with young ladies—I remember Susan Lushington "didn't know which way to look", she said, when he chaffed her about a husband—"I seemed to be sitting on a tripod and looking into the future", Buzzy said, having archly used the word husband when it should have been father—Buzzy lived chiefly in Egypt, and Mrs Hills—Anna her name was—lived mostly alone at Corby. She was a hard, worldly woman, tightly dressed in black satin in London; up at Corby, a county lady, collecting Chelsea enamel snuff boxes, with ambitions to be the friend of intellectual men. She detested women; she got on very well with Andrew Lang. He stayed there often; and she described a party when the local dentist came in a frock coat—"all the other men looking so picturesque in knickerbockers." And she said: "I was in mourning for nine people at Easter"; also, looking at horses in the paddock, "That makes the second pair"; also she stressed "under housemaid" to impress us that she had several; and dwelt on the noble descent of the Curwens, to whom they were

related; and went weekly to Naworth with a wreath to lay on Christopher Howard's grave. It was handed in at the carriage; like a picnic basket—the weekly wreath. And I still see her in shiny black satin and feathered Victorian hat bending over the grave in Naworth burial ground; and Susan whispering in agitation "Suppose Lady Carlisle or one of them should come out and catch us!" These recollections spring from that dreary and terrifying week at Corby after Stella's death in the autumn of 1897. They leased Corby from the Howards; the lion stood with his tail perfectly straight on top of the roof. The river dashed through the grounds; and there I saw Jack catch a salmon; for the first time after those desperate months he looked triumphant; and worn as he [had] come to look, I was struck by his sudden exultation as the line tautened and he held the fish there in the river. We saw it afterwards in the game larder; and Mrs Hills asked: "Has he those little creatures on him?" It was a proof of freshness, I think, if you found lice on a salmon. Tuddenham, the keeper, who stood by us on the bank, said: "He's hooked him."

To return to Anna Hills. She hated women. But I doubt that she was sexually ambitious. I think all she wanted was to rule a little court of well brushed, mildly well-known males; in the decorous, snobbish Victorian manner. She was thankful, I remember she told us, that she had no daughters; and it was plain she detested having us two rather gawky girls to stay. "Your hair's parted awry", she said, fixing me with her little black eyes. Fortunately she had three sons; and they were sent to Eton and Oxford. She liked the soft sweet voiced Eustace with his drawl, and his pleasant manners, and his gentle ways, far the best. Jack and she were on very distant terms. Thus it was natural that when he was living alone in Ebury Street, very hard up, very hard worked, stammering, and lonely, that he came to my mother for sympathy. They were very intimate. Indeed Kitty Maxse said, discussing my mother and her masterful ways once: "For instance, how could Mrs Hills have liked it—Jack treating your mother as if she were his?" He was, roughly speaking, affectionate, honest, domestic, and a perfect gentleman. He was a real [countryman] too; not a fake; a passionate countryman. He rode very well; he fished very well; and there was too a vein of poetry in him. Once when we met years later he told me he read every book of new poetry that came out; and thought the young poets (then Siegfried Sassoon; Robert Graves; and de la Mare)

every bit as good as the old. He read philosophy too; Nettleship, the Oxford philosopher, had been a kind of god to him. "He was like Christ", I remember his saying, in his emphatic sententious way, as he tried very laboriously to explain Nettleship's philosophy; he lent us the book; it was at Warboys that I remember him explaining Plato to me and Nessa and Marny Vaughan.* Gerald, who sat beneath the window, sneered later: "Well, how did the Sunday prayer meeting go off?" But he was not, compared with my own friends, anything but a simple, primitive-minded man. Unlike them, however—was it for this I liked him, yet could never be altogether at my ease with him?—he was an all-round man; without any gift that dominated, he did a great many different things. He was a Gunner. "I have heard of him standing on one foot, driving three horses", Ethel Dilke wrote when the engagement was public, "and I've no doubt he does other things as well." He was a good solicitor. Doggedly he worked his way high up into the firm of Roper and Whateley; of Whateley he used to tell many stories: "a disgusting man, but in some ways the ablest man I have ever known. He was a great fisherman—so they say. And I like his fishing books." Politics came later. He was also very deft with his hands. But as I heard my mother tell my father once, he was 'nothing out of the way' intellectually. His appearance was in keeping with this rough sketch. He had beautiful brown eyes, a nose with an obstinate knob at the end of it; curious wrinkles, like a dachshund's, round his retreating chin. (He was of course very fond of dogs.) He stammered, and his stammer made his very positive statements—"A duck must have water"—all the more positive when at last he got them out. We laughed at him and could imitate him as time went on. He was scrupulously clean; he washed all over ever so many times a day, and was scrupulously well dressed, as a Victorian city solicitor; also as a countryman. The word 'scrupulous' suggests itself when I think of Jack Hills. He was scrupulously honest, honourable, in the Eton and Balliol sense, but there was more to his scrupulosity than that. He it was who first spoke to me openly and deliberately about sex—in Fitzroy Square, with the green carpet and the red Chinese curtains.† He opened my eyes on purpose, as I think, to the part

* Margaret, one of the Vaughan cousins whom the young Stephens saw frequently.

† 29 Fitzroy Square, Bloomsbury, where Virginia and Adrian moved after Vanessa's marriage to Clive Bell in 1907.

played by sex in the life of the ordinary man. He shocked me a little, wholesomely. He told me that young men talked incessantly of women; and 'had' them incessantly. "But are they—" I hesitated for a word and then ventured "honourable?" He laughed, "of course—of course", he assured me. Sexual relations had nothing to do with honour. Having women was a mere trifle in a man's life, he explained, and made not a jot of difference to their honourableness—to their reputation with other men. I was incredibly, but only partially, innocent. I knew nothing about ordinary men's lives, and thought all men, like my father, loved one woman only, and were 'dishonourable' if unchaste, as much as women; yet, at the same time I had known since I was sixteen or so, all about sodomy, through reading Plato. That was Jack's honesty; and it differed from George's or Gerald's. Neither of them would have spoken to any girl as cleanly, humorously, openly, about sex. That quality penetrated to us as children, and he brought too, country life into our distinguished literary, book-loving world. He taught us to sugar trees; he gave us his copy of Morris's *Butterflies and Moths*,* over which I spent many hours, hunting up our catches among all those pictures of hearts and darts and setaceous Hebrew characters.† For I had the post of name finder in our Entomological Society; and was scolded severely by Thoby, I remember, for slackness. At dinner one night Gerald disclosed, with his teasing and treacherous laughter, how we had a store of dying insects in old tooth-powder jars at the bottom of the well. Greatly to our relief instead of scolding and forbidding, mother and, I think, father recognised our mania; and put it on a legal basis; bought us nets and setting boards; and indeed she went with Walter Headlam‡ down to the St Ives public house and bought us rum. How strange a scene—my mother buying rum. She would go round the sugar after we were in bed.

But to return to Jack—when Stella accepted him, we approved,

* Francis Orpen Morris (1810–93) wrote popular books on natural history. He published *A History of British Butterflies* (London, 1853) and *A History of British Moths* in four volumes (1859–70) but no book with the title *Butterflies and Moths*.

† These are the vernacular names of common British moths. VW's ts has 'harts and darts and sequacious Hebrew characters'.

‡ Walter Headlam, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, distinguished Hellenist and minor poet, was an old friend of the Stephen family with whom Virginia carried on a flirtation after the marriage of Vanessa. He died in 1908.

in our republic, which, though rapidly losing shape, was still in being after mother's death. The marriage would have been, I think, a very happy marriage. It should have borne many children. And still she might have been alive. Certainly he was passionately in love; she at first passively. And it was through that engagement that I had my first vision—so intense, so exciting, so rapturous was it that the word vision applies—my first vision then of love between man and woman. It was to me like a ruby; the love I detected that winter of their engagement, glowing, red, clear, intense. It gave me a conception of love; a standard of love; a sense that nothing in the whole world is so lyrical, so musical, as a young man and a young woman in their first love for each other. I connect it with respectable engagements; unofficial love never gives me the same feeling. "My Love's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June"—that was the feeling they gave; the feeling that has always come back, when I hear of 'an engagement'; not when I hear of 'an affair'. It derives from Stella and Jack. It springs from the ecstasy I felt, in my covert, behind the folding doors of the Hyde Park Gate drawing room. I sat there, shielded, being half insane with shyness and nervousness; reading Fanny Burney's diary; and feeling come over me intermittent waves of very strong emotion—rage sometimes; how often I was enraged by father then!—love, or the reflection of love, too. It was bodiless; a light; an ecstasy. But also extraordinarily enduring. Once I came on a letter from him which she had slipped between the blotting paper—a sign of the lack of privacy in which we lived—and read it. "There is nothing sweeter in the whole world than our love", he wrote. I put the page down, not so much guiltily, at having pried; but in a quiver of ecstasy at the revelation. Still I cannot read words that give me that quiver twice over. If I get a letter that pleases me intensely, I never read it again. Why I wonder? For fear lest it shall dwindle? This colour, this incandescence, was in Stella's whole body. Her pallor became lit up, her eyes bluer. She had something of moonlight about her that winter, as she went about the house. "There's never been anything like it in the world", I said—or something like it—when she found me awake one night. And she laughed, tenderly, very gently, and kissed me and said, "Oh lots of people are in love as we are. You and Nessa will be one day", she said. Once she told me, "You must expect people to look at you both".

"Nessa", she said, "is much more beautiful than I ever was"—at

twenty-six she spoke of her beauty as a thing of the past. She told Aunt Mary—I think I read this too, nefariously, in some letter in a blotting book, she could only be neat and tidy now; she was to float us on the life of love; to launch us out on the ordinary woman's life that promised such treasures. At some party, perhaps Nessa's first party, a party where she wore white and amethysts perhaps, a party where Desmond* remarked her 'like a Greek slave', she was certain that George Booth† had fallen in love, and feared, tenderly foreboding, yet proudly, and gladly, how the Booths would mind if Nessa rejected him. Had Stella lived, the recollection makes me reflect, how different 'coming out' and those Greek slave years and all their drudgery and tyranny and rebellion would have been!

For some reason Stella and Jack's engagement lasted all the months from July till April. It was a clumsy, cruel, unnecessary trial for them both. Looking back, it seems everything was done without care or consideration, clumsily, wantonly. I conceive that as the months of that long waiting time passed she slowly roused herself out of the numb, frozen state in which mother's death had left her. At first she found in Jack rest and support; a refuge from all the worries and responsibilities of 'the family', relief too from those glooms which father never controlled, and spent on her. Slowly she became more positive, less passive; and asserted Jack's rights; her desire too for her own house; her own husband; a life, a home of their own. At last the promise, apparently exacted by father, and tacitly accepted, that they were to live on with us after their marriage, an arrangement now incredible but then accepted, became intolerable; and she went up to father one night in his study; and told him so; and there was 'an explosion'.

As the engagement went on, father became indeed increasingly tyrannical. He didn't like the name 'Jack', I remember his saying; it sounded like the smack of a whip. He was jealous clearly. But in those days nothing was clear. He had his traditional pose; he was the lonely; the deserted; the old unhappy man. In fact he was possessive; hurt; a man jealous of the young man. There was every excuse, he would have said, had he been asked, for his explosions. And as by

* Desmond MacCarthy, who belonged to the inner circle of Bloomsbury from its earliest days.

† George Booth was the son of Charles Booth, author of *Life and Labour of the People in London*. The Booths were 'Hyde Park Gaters', as Adrian was later to call them.

this time he had entrenched himself away from all truth, in a world which it is almost impossible to describe, for I know no one now who could inhabit such a world—the engagement was incredibly involved, frustrated, and impeded. At last in April 1897 the marriage took place—conventionally, ceremoniously, with bells ringing, and company collected, and silver engraved wedding invitations, at St Mary Abbots. Nessa and I handed flowers to the guests; father marched up the aisle with Stella on his arm.

"He took it for granted that he was to give her away", George and Gerald grumbled. He ignored the fact that they had any claim. No one would have dared to take that privilege from him. It was somehow typical—his assumption; and his enjoyment of the attitude. They went to Italy; we to Brighton. One fortnight was the length of their honeymoon. And directly she came back she was taken ill. It was appendicitis; she was going to have a baby. And that was mismanaged too; and so, after three months of intermittent illness, she died—at 24 Hyde Park Gate, on July 27th, 1897.*

By the time I had that room,† when I was fifteen that is, "we four"—"us four" as we called ourselves—had become separate. That was symbolized by our separate rooms. Thoby was at Clifton, Adrian at Evelyns. Yet we were not so separate as brothers and sisters become at that age. Mother's death and Stella's death kept us, I suppose, together. We never spoke of either of them; I can remember the awkwardness with which Thoby avoided saying "Stella" when a ship called *Stella* sank. (I remember when Thoby died, that Adrian and I agreed to talk about him. "There are so many people that are dead now", we said.) But this silence was known to cover something. And if I were to describe myself, at fifteen, I should have to describe Nessa and Thoby; both in great detail; for they [were] as much my life as anything. Thoby was two years (about) older than I was.‡ He dominated us four. He was a clumsy little boy, very fat, bursting through his Norfolk jacket. He was not a fawning or ingratiating child, I imagine: Napoleonic, one of the Aunts described him as a baby, sitting on a rock with a fishing net, staring contemplatively.

* The A. 5a typescript ends here. The text now follows the A. 5d manuscript from p. 10.

† See above, p. 105: 'my covert, behind the folding doors of the Hyde Park Gate drawing room'. See also the Editor's Note.

‡ The material from p. 10, l. 21 (ms) to the end of p. 11 has been omitted.

"Those far away eyes"—someone said. He grew very quickly out of nursery ways. I cannot remember him, as I can Adrian, appealing, childish. Florence* called him her Blue Mouse: mother called him her Benjamin. Thoby was a determined, resolute little boy: whose rages were very thorough and formidable. I see him struggling with Gerald; or so truculent with the nurses that father had to be sent for. He was powerful in mind, mastering things rather than guessing at them; not clever, but gifted. He had a natural, easy gift for drawing. He would take a sheet of paper, hold it at an odd angle and begin drawing a bird, at some queer place, so that I could not guess how the bird would become a bird. He was not precocious: now and then he won a prize, but failed to win an Eton scholarship. His Latin and Greek were rough, the masters said; his essays showed great intelligence. I remember his easy, vigorous, slovenly handwriting. School I think suited him; he went through what he went through silently. Was he unhappy, bullied? He never said so. I suspect he held his own, fairly easily, and would rather be among boys than at home. Yet, there was his sensibility—though rough and slovenly, according to reports, he it was who first told me—handing it on as something worth knowing—about the Greeks. The day after he came back from Evelyns the first time he was very shy; unfamiliar; yet affectionate, glad, in his queer speechless way, to be home; and we went walking up and down stairs together, and he told me the story of the Greeks: about Hector and Troy. I felt he was shy of telling it; and so must keep walking up and down; and so we kept on going upstairs and then downstairs, and he told me about the Greeks, fitfully, excitedly. To do that, he had to break through the schoolboy convention about 'work'. There was no such convention about friends. He told me stories about the boys at Evelyns: then about the Clifton boys: and in the same way about his Cambridge friends. These stories went on and on every holidays. That was very characteristic. He had a great power for admiring his friends, for liking them. That I suppose was why he found school tolerable. Yet he held his own. He was not easy to put upon. He did not expect to win things, or care very much. I felt he had taken stock of his own power; dominated his friends in his own way; and was sure he would come into possession of his gifts all in good time. He could enjoy their gifts to the full. He was always amused by them; admired them; saw a great deal in them; and yet I think felt himself

* Probably Florence Fisher, his cousin, who married F. W. Maitland.

in his own way their equal. And would not let himself be put upon. This blend of mastery and sensibility, of friendliness and composure, gave him a great deal of character. He was amazingly reserved. Not a word of feeling was allowed to escape him. And yet under that strange awkward silence there would creep out a curious sympathy, a pride in us.*

I continue (22nd September 1940) on this wet day; and we think of the weather now as it affects invasion, as it affects raids on London—not as weather that we like or dislike privately. I continue, for I am at a twist in my novel.† I was writing about Thoby when I left off. And last night I tried to soothe myself to sleep (being in a pucker, as Clive would say, about the Anreps coming here) by thinking of St Ives.‡ I will write about St Ives; and so, fittingly though indirectly, lead up to Thoby again.

Father, I think, was on one of his walking tours, in 1881 it must have been, when he discovered St Ives. He must have seen Talland House, which belonged to the G.W.R.;§ and have found it to let. He must have seen the town, almost as it had been in the sixteenth century; and the bay as it had been since time began. It was the first year, I think I have heard, that the line from St Erth to St Ives was open. Until then St Ives was about eight miles from any railway. And I suppose, munching his sandwich perhaps up at Tregenna, he had thought this might do for a summer place for us—and worked out, with [his] usual caution, ways and means. I was about to be born; and though they wished to limit their family, my conception (birth 1882) showed that they were not going to succeed. Adrian was to follow (1883)—also against their intention. It proves the ease and amplitude of those days that a man to whom money was an obscene nightmare, yet thought it feasible to take a house on the very toenail, as he said, of England—so that every summer he would be

* p. 13 of the ms ends in mid-sentence about three-quarters of the way down the page: " . . . a pride in us, & a".

† She was now at work on *Between the Acts* which at this period is referred to as 'P.H.' in *A Writer's Diary*, for 'Poyntzet Hall' or 'Poyntz Hall'.

‡ VW was upset because she feared—mistakenly as it turned out—that Helen Anrep, the companion of Roger Fry until his death, was planning to move permanently to Rodmell with her son and daughter. 'Clive' is, of course, Clive Bell.

§ Great Western Railway.

faced with the expense of moving family, nurses, servants, from one end of England to the other. Yet he did it. The distance was a drawback; for it meant that we could only go to St Ives in the summer. Our country was canalised into two or two months and a half. Yet that made the country more intense. And, in retrospect, probably nothing that we had as children was quite so important to us as our summer in Cornwall. To go away to the end of England; to have our own house, our own garden—to have that bay, that sea, and the mount: Clodgy and Halestown bog; Carbis Bay; Lelant; Zennor, Trevail, the Gurnard's Head; to hear the waves breaking that first night behind the yellow blind; to sail in the lugger; to dig in the sands; to scramble over the rocks and see the anemones flourishing their antennae in the pools; now and then to find a small fish flapping there; to look up over the lesson book in the dining room and see the lights changing on the waves; to go down to the town and buy penny boxes of tintacks or whatever it might be at Lanham's: Mrs Lanham wore false curls all round her face: the servants said Mr Lanham had married her 'from an advertisement'; to smell all the fishy smells in the steep little streets; and see the innumerable cats; and the women on the raised steps outside the houses pouring pails of dirty water down the gutters; every day to have a great dish of Cornish cream, skinned with a yellow skin, handed round with plenty of brown sugar . . . I could fill pages remembering one thing after another that made the summer at St Ives the best beginning to a life conceivable. When they took Talland House, my father and mother gave me, at any rate, something I think invaluable. Suppose I had only Surrey or Sussex or the Isle of Wight to think about when I think about my childhood.

The town was then much as it must have been in the sixteenth century: a scramble, a pyramid, of whitewashed granite houses, crusting the slope made in the hollow under the Island. It was built there for shelter—built for a few fishermen, when Cornwall was a country more remote from England than Spain is now. It was a steep little town. Many houses had stairs running up from the pavement to the door. The walls were thick blocks of granite, to stand the sea and gale, I suppose. They were splashed with a wash the colour of Cornish cream. There was nothing mellow about them. There was no red brick: there was no thatch; the eighteenth century had left no mark, as it has in the south. St Ives might have been built yesterday; or in the time of the Conqueror. It had no architecture; no conscious

arrangement. The market place was a jagged cobbled open place; the Church was a granite church—of what age, I do not know.* It was a windy, noisy, fishy, vociferous, narrow-streeted town; the colour of a mussel or a limpet; like a bunch of rough shell fish, oysters or mussels, all crowded together.

Our house, Talland House, was outside the town; on the hill. [When it was built, for] whom it was built by the G.W.R., I do not know; some time in the forties [or] fifties I suppose; a square house, like a child's drawing of a house; remarkable only for its flat roof, and the railing with crossed bars of wood that ran round the roof. It had, when we came there, a perfect view—right across the Bay to Godrevy Lighthouse. It had, running down the hill, little lawns, surrounded by thick escallonia bushes, whose leaves one picked and pressed and smelt: it had so many corners and lawns that each was named: the coffee garden; the fountain; the cricket ground; the love corner, under the greenhouse; jackmanii grew there; on the seat under the jackmanii, Leo Maxse became engaged to Kitty Lushington (I thought I heard Paddy talking to his son, Thoby announced); the strawberry bed; the kitchen garden; the pond; and the big tree. All different places were crowded together in that one garden; for it was a large garden—two or three acres at most, I suppose.† You entered Talland House by a large wooden gate, the sound of whose latch clicking comes back: you went up the carriage drive, with its steep wall scattered with mesembryanthemums; and then came to the Lookout place on the right. This was a mound, grassy, unplanted, that jutted out over the garden wall. There one stood to look if the signal was down. If it were down, it was time to start for the station to meet the train from St Erth—the train that brought Mr Lowell, Mr Gibbs, the Stillmans, the Symondses, the Lushingtons. But that was entirely a grown-up affair—receiving friends. We never had friends to stay with us. Did we want them? I think 'us four' were completely self-sufficing. When once a girl called Elsie was brought over by Mrs Westlake from Zennor I "broomed her round the garden", the grown ups laughing and approving. They liked us to be independent.

* P. 16 of the ms continues: "There were ~~none~~ of those rows of respectable ~~professional houses~~, with carved doors, & ~~brass window~~ long window panes with brass lined blinds."

† Lines 3–8 (to 'St Erth') of the ms have been omitted; VW partially deleted lines 3–4.

From the Lookout place one had then a perfectly open view of the Bay. Mr Symonds said it reminded him of the Bay of Naples. The bay was a large lap, many-curved, sand-edged, silver green with sandhills, flowing to the Lighthouse rocks at one end, which made two black stops, one of them with the black and white Lighthouse tower on it. At the other end, the Hayle river made a bar, like a vein across the sand, with the stakes marking the channel, on which the seagulls sat. This great flowing scoop of sea was always changing colour: deep blue; emerald; green; purple; silver. Ships were always steaming in or out: the Haines line, for the most part small steamers going to Cardiff for coal. In rough weather all sorts of tramp steamers came in for shelter—low ships, with a dip in the middle, painted a rusty red. Sometimes a great three-funnelled ship would anchor; and once some famous white yacht. Then there was a perpetual sailing of fishing boats from the Harbour—the luggers, with their sails rigged half across the mast; the rather heavy clumsy boats that went far out, deep sea fishing, and the lighter mackerel boats, that came racing back in the evening, rounding the Island and dropping their sails. Early in September we would cry one morning, "The pilchard boats are out!" The pilchard boats lay up on the beach most of the year. But regularly in early autumn they were hauled down by horses and lay at anchor near the shore, looking like black shoes, for each had a hood at one end, and a great coil of net at the other. There they lay week after week; waiting for the Huer up in the little white watch house at Carbis Bay to sight the pilchards, and sound his horn. Then they would shoot the seine. But year after year the boats lay waiting. The pilchards it was said had been disturbed by the steam trawlers; they never came to St Ives Bay. Once though we heard the Huer—a long clear wail sounded. All the seines were shot. We could see the dotted circles of cork and the dark net beneath. But the great shoal of pilchards, visible under the water to the Huer on his height, passed out of the bay; and the seines were drawn in again. (It was only in 1905 when, after father's death, we four took a little lodging house at Carbis Bay, that the pilchards came; and we rowed out early one morning and the sea bubbled and spat with silver. I remember some stranger in the next boat shovelling an armful out of that bubbling mass into our boat. I remember writing an article, rejected I suppose, describing it.) All the years we were at St Ives the pilchards never came; and the pilchard boats drowsed in the bay and we used to swim out and hang

onto the edge; and see some old man lying under the brown tarpaulin tent. It was a sight that made father gloomy. He had a great respect for fishermen. He minded their poverty; and mother, of course, went about, down in St Ives, starting her nursing association —The Julia Prinsep Stephen Nursing Association was founded after she died; and I think, Ka A.F.* told me, still exists.

Every year the Regatta took place in the bay. There was the Judges' boat, with lines of little flags going from mast to mast. The St Ives notables went on board. Then all the little boats came out. A band played. We went onto the Malakoff and stood in the crowd and listened to the blare of music wafted across the water; and then a gun was fired and off went the boats, racing round the bay; or the swimmers plunged. And we could see the little heads bobbing in the water and the arms flashing. One year the beautiful curly headed postman was second. "I let the other man win", he said, "because it was his last chance." There were races for men, for boys; races for luggers, for pleasure boats. It was very gay, with the flags flying and the gun firing and the music of the St Ives Band coming from the Regatta boat across the water. A crowd collected in the Malakoff—that octagonal space at the end of the terrace, which had been built, presumably, in the Crimean War, and was the only attempt that the town made at being a watering place. It had no pier; no parade; only this angular piece of ground with a few stone benches, upon which retired fishermen would sit in their blue jerseys, smoking and talking. Regatta Day—always a fine day—remains in my mind, and makes me think, what with its little flags and its little boats and its movement and the people dotted on the sand and on the water and the music coming over the water, of a French picture.

In those days St Ives, save for a few painters, had no visitors. Its customs were its own customs: in August there was the Regatta. Once in every twelve years† the old men and women danced round Knills Steeple and the couple who danced longest was given—a shilling? half a crown? I forget—by the Mayor—Dr Nicholls, on that occasion, wearing a fur trimmed cloak. The town crier every now and then walked along the front, swinging a muffin man's bell and crying "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" What he cried, I do not know; except

* Ka Arnold-Forster *née* Katherine Cox, a 'Neo-Pagan', Fabian and Newnhamite, who was involved in a rather stormy love affair with Rupert Brooke.

† This ceremony takes place every five, not every twelve, years.

on one occasion, when a visitor of ours had lost a brooch, and old Charlie Pearce cried it. He was blind, with a long, wasted face, grey eyes, like the eyes of a fish that has been boiled, and he wore a very battered top hat and a frock coat tightly buttoned round his thin body, and he shambled along, swinging his bell and crying "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" We knew him, as we knew so many St Ives characters, through the servants, through Sophie* for the most part. I remember Alice Curnow, who brought the laundry in a great covered basket; and Mrs Adams, the fishwoman, who brought the fish. The lobsters were alive, still blue, hobbling about in [the] basket, and she would put them on the kitchen table, and the great claws would open and close and pinch. Can I be remembering a fact when I remember a long thick fish wriggling on a hook in the larder, and Gerald beating it to death with a broom handle?

The kitchen, Sophie's kitchen, was directly beneath our night nursery. We would let down a basket on a string and dangle it over the kitchen window, at night while dinner was going on. If she were in a good temper, the basket would be drawn in and laden with something left from the grown-ups' dinner; but if she were in a bad temper, the basket would be jerked in and the string cut. I can remember the different sensations: drawing up the heavy basket; and feeling the jerk; and the lightness of the string.

Every afternoon we went for a walk. Later these walks became a penance—father must have one of us to walk with him—mother, too much obsessed with his health, his pleasure, was too willing, I think now, to offer us up for sacrifice on that altar, leaving thus a legacy of dependence on his side which became a terrible imposition after her death. In spite of that, St Ives was the country. How much better it would have been for him and for us if she had left him to walk alone; to overwork if he chose. His health was her fetish; she died of overwork easily at forty-nine: he found it very difficult to die of cancer at seventy-two.

But, after making that parenthesis, St Ives gave us all the same the pure delight which is before my eyes even at this moment. The lemon-coloured leaves on the elm trees, the round apples glowing red in the orchard and the rustle of the leaves make me pause to think how many other than human forces affect us. While I am writing this, the light changes; an apple becomes a vivid green. I respond—how? And then the little owl [makes] a chattering noise.

* Farrell.

Another response. St Ives, to cut short an obscure train of thought, about the other voice or voices and their connection with art, with religion: figuratively, I could snapshot what I mean by fancying myself afloat, [in an element] which is all the time responding to things we have no words for—exposed to some invisible ray: but instead of labouring here to express this, to analyse the third voice, to discover whether 'pure delights' are connected with art, or religion: whether I am telling the truth when I see myself perpetually taking the breath of these voices in my sails, and tacking this way and that, in daily life as I yield to them—instead of that, I note only this influence, suspect it to be of great importance, cannot find how to check its power on other people; and so erect a finger here, by way of signalling that here is a vein to work out later.

To return to St Ives. Tren Crom,* as father liked to call it, Trick Robin as we called it, was the regular Sunday walk. You could see both seas from it—on one side, St Michael's Mount, on the other, St Ives Bay. Like all the Cornish hills it was scattered with blocks of granite and in some holes were driven, as for gate posts. Others were piled up and logged. There was a Loggan rock on Tren Crom; onto which we scrambled; and a hollow in the rough lichened surface had been made, so they said, to hold the blood of victims. Little paths led between heather and ling to the top. Our legs were pricked and scratched as we climbed; and the gorse was yellow, sweet smelling, nutty. In Fairyland, as we called a wood, [with a wall round it], and great ferns growing higher than our heads.† I think of oak apples and acorns. It was very dark and silent: we walked on the wall, looking down into the great ferns, smelling acorns and oak apples. All the granite walls were tufted with moss, and little flowers. At Halestown bog, one jumped from hay to hay; and went squelching in. There the Osmunda grew, and the rare maidenhair fern; and one would pitch down, above one's knee, in the brown bog water. Perhaps every ten days we would go sailing. Thoby would be allowed to steer. He had to keep the sail filled with wind, and father said, "Show them you can bring her in, my boy", and setting his face, flushing with the effort, he sat there, bringing us round the point. Once the sea was full of pale jelly fish; differently coloured; like lamps, only with streaming tentacles. They stung if you touched them. We would be given fishing lines, baited

* Usually spelled as one word—Trencrom.

† This is a rare example in the memoirs of an incomplete sentence.

with gobbets cut from fish; and the line thrilled in one's fingers in the water; and then there was a tug; a curious exciting throb; one hauled in; up through the water came the white twisting fish; and it was a gurnard, or a mackerel. There it lay flapping its tail in the water on the floor. Once father said to me: "I don't like to see fish caught; so I shan't come; but you can go if you like." I think it was very admirably done. Not a rebuke, not a forbidding; simply a statement; about which I could think and decide for myself. It made me decide that I disliked fishing; though the passion I had for it—for the thrill and the tug—had been beyond words. The desire to fish faded, leaving no grudge. And from the memory of my own passion I am still able to construct the sporting passion. It is one of those invaluable seeds—for as it is impossible to have every experience, one must make do with seeds—germs of what might have been. I pigeon-hole 'fishing' thus with other momentary glimpses, like those glances I cast into basements when I walk in London streets.

Oak apples, ferns with little clusters of seeds on their backs, the Regatta, Charlie Pearce, the click of the garden gate, the ants swarming on the step, buying tintacks, sailing, the smell of Halestown bog, splits for tea in the farmhouse at Trevail, the floor of the sea changing. Mr Wolstenholme in his beehive chair, the spotted elm leaves on the lawn, the rooks cawing as they flew over the house in the morning, the escallonia leaves changing from green to grey, the arc in the air when the powder magazine exploded at Hayle, the boom of the buoy; these are for some reason uppermost in my mind, thinking of St Ives: an incongruous miscellaneous catalogue—little corks that mark a sunken net. And to pull that net, leaving its contents unsorted, to shore, I add: two or three years before mother's death (1892–3–4) we heard ominous hints that we might leave St Ives. The distance had become a drawback. George and Gerald had work in London. Expense, always threatening, became more pressing. Thoby's school bills. Education . . . * And then, just opposite the Lookout place, a board appeared. The ground was for sale. Next summer an hotel had risen in the middle of our view. My mother complained, the view was spoilt. A great square building, the colour of oatcake, stood there. And so, one October, a house

* "[And so, one October, a board with To Let upon it, appeared;]" which follows in the ms (p. 25) has been deleted because the thought is expanded in the next sentences. The brackets are VW's.

agent's board appeared on our lawn. For some reason it required painting. I was allowed to fill in some of the letters from a pot of paint. No tenants came. The danger was averted. And then mother died. And perhaps a month later, Gerald went down to St Ives: some people called Millie Dow wanted to take the house. Our lease was sold to them; and St Ives vanished for ever.

I recover then today (October 12th 1940: a milky* autumn day; London is being battered nightly) from these rapid notes only one actual picture of Thoby: steering us in round the point without letting the sail flap. I recover the picture of a schoolboy whose jacket was rather tight; whose arms were too long for their sleeves; whose eyes became bluer when he was thus on his mettle; his face flushed a little. He was feeling, rather earlier than most boys, the responsibility laid on him by father's pride in him; the burden, the glory of being a man. Why do I shirk the task, not so very hard to a professional like myself, of wafting this boy from the boat into my bed sitting room at Hyde Park Gate? Because I want to think of St Ives; because I have left out many other pictures of him there; because always round him like the dew that collects on a rough coat in autumn hangs the country; butterflies; birds; mud; horses; and finally, because I do not want to go into my room at Hyde Park Gate again. I shrink from the years 1897–1904—the seven unhappy years. So many lives were free from our burden. Why should our lives have been so tortured and fretted? by two unnecessary blunders—the lash of a random unheeding flail that pointlessly and brutally killed the two people who should, normally and naturally, have made those years, not perhaps happy but normal and natural. Mother's death: Stella's death. I am not thinking of them. I am thinking of the stupid damage that their deaths inflicted. That is why I do not wish to bring Thoby out of the boat into my room.

Without their deaths, to hark back to an earlier train of thought, he would not have been so dumbly, yet genuinely, bound to us. If there is any good (I doubt it) in this mutilation [of] natural feelings, it is that it sensitizes—if to be aware of the insecurity of life; [to] remember something gone; to feel, now and then, as I felt for father when he made no claim, an odd fumbling fellowship—if it is a good thing to be at fifteen or sixteen or seventeen aware of this; to feel, by

* Doubtful reading.

fits and starts, this sort of profound feeling, this unchildish feeling—if, if, if—. But was it good? Would it not have been better (if there is any sense in using good and better when there is no possible judge) to go on feeling at St Ives the rush and tumble of things? to go on exploring and adventuring privately, while all the while the family as a whole continued its solid rumbling progress, from year to year? To be so surrounded would have given one perhaps a greater scope, more variety. But at fifteen to have that protection removed, to be tumbled out of the family shelter, to see cracks and gashes in that fabric, to be cut by them, to see beyond them—was that good? Did it give one an experience that even if it was painful, yet meant that the gods (as I used to phrase it) were taking one seriously; and giving one a job which they would not think it worthwhile giving, say to Meg and Imogen Booth, say to Ida and Sylvia Milman? I had my visual way of putting it. I would see (after Thoby's death) two great grindstones (as I walked round Goode Tye*) and myself between them. I would typify a contest between myself and "them"—some invisible giant. I would reason, or fancy, that if life were thus made to rear and kick, it was at any rate, the real thing. Nobody could say I had been fobbed off with an unmeaning slip of the precious matter. So I came to think of life as something of extreme reality. And this, of course, increased my feeling of my own importance. Not in relation to human beings: in relation to the force which had respected me sufficiently to make me feel what was real.†

It seems to me therefore that our relation (mine and Thoby's) was more serious than it would have been without those deaths. The unspoken thought—something like what I have visualized—was there, in him, in me; when he came into my back room at Hyde Park Gate. It was behind our arguments. We were of course naturally attracted to each other. Besides his brother's feeling, he had, I think, an amused, surprised, questioning attitude towards me. I was a year and a half younger than he. I was a girl. And he found me reading Greek, writing an essay—the first, the only essay I ever showed father, upon the Elizabethan voyagers—when he was writing one for a prize at Trinity. A shell-less little creature, I think he thought me; so sequestered, in the room at Hyde Park Gate, com-

* Goode Tye is a doubtful reading.

† The marginal note in the ms reads: "to make me wince: spin; ground between grindstones".

pared with himself; a very simple, eager recipient of his school stories; without any experience of my own with which to cap his; but all the same, not passive; rather, on the contrary, bubbling, inquisitive, restless, carrying on my own contradicting, at any rate questioning. We had each branched out, after those early ramblings up and down stairs; to read on our own. He had consumed Shakespeare, somehow or other, by himself. He had possessed himself of it, in his large clumsy way, and our first arguments—about books, that is—were heated; because out he would come with his sweeping assertion that everything was in Shakespeare: somehow I felt he had it all in his grasp; at which I revolted. He swept down on me. How could I oppose that? Rather feebly I suppose; but still it was then my genuine feeling. A play was antipathetic. How did they begin? With some dull speech; about a hundred miles from anything that interested me. I opened [*Twelfth Night*] to prove this; I opened at "If music be the food of love, play on. . . ."* I was downed that time. That was, I had to admit, a good beginning. And I remember his pride, for it seemed like a pride he took in a friend, at Shakespeare's shuffling Falstaff off without a sign of sympathy. That large impartial sweep in Shakespeare delighted him. I mean the impartiality of a tree that sheds leaves; and so on. On the other hand, when Desdemona wakes again, he thought possibly Shakespeare was 'sentimental'. These are the only particular criticisms I remember—for he was not, as I was, a breaker off of single words or sentences—not a notetaker—he was much more casual and rough and ready and comprehensive. And so I felt that Shakespeare was to him his other world; the place where he got the measure of his daily world: where he took his bearings; in which he took his way freely from Shakespeare, upon what happened. I wonder if I am right in thinking that [Shakespeare] had worked itself into his mind, so that he was half thinking of Falstaff and Hal and Cordelia and the rest—in the third-class smoker on the Underground when there was some squabble between drunken men: and Thoby with his pipe in his mouth sat in the corner, surveyed it over the edge of a paper, motionless, with a look that stuck in my memory; a look of one equipped, unperturbed, knowing his place, relishing his inheritance and his part in life, aware of his competence, scenting the battle; already, in anticipation, a law maker; proud of being a man and playing his part among Shakespeare's men. Had he been put on, he

* The ms leaves a blank space for the title.

would have played his part most royally. The words Walter Lamb used of him were very fitting.*

So we argued. But how reserved we were! Brothers and sisters today talk quite freely about—oh everything. We never talked about ourselves even, so far as I can remember. I can recall no confidences; no compliments; no kisses; no emotional scenes. As for sex, he passed from childhood to boyhood and from boyhood to manhood under our eyes, without saying a single thing that could have shown us, by word of mouth, what he was feeling. Did other boys fall in love with him? Not he with them, I suspect. From Clive I learned later that Lytton's sodomy was to him one of the jokes: one of 'the Strache's' amiable absurdities, eccentricities. Yet beneath that silence—it may be kept cool and sweet, it may be given a depth, a seriousness, an emotional quality that speech destroys—dwelt, as I felt, great susceptibility; great sensibility; great pride and love; and all the beliefs and desires which had he been put on would have made him privately a lover, a husband, a father; and publicly a Judge for sure: Mr Justice Stephen he would have been today; with several books to his credit, I suppose: some on law; one or two on birds; and for a side line there would have been something about pictures; perhaps the Hogarth Press would have published a history of birds with illustrations; some essays on literature; and history; public matters; some attacks on abuses; and by this time he would have been a figure much liked, a typical Englishman? No, not that, for he was melancholy; original; not able to take the ordinary ambitions seriously. I suppose he would have been more a figure than a success.

The knell of those words of course comes in; and affects my memory of a time when we had no idea that our relationship was to end when he was twenty-six and I was twenty-four. This is one of the falsifications that one cannot guard against; save by noting it. At the time, when he argued with me in my room at Hyde Park Gate, I never saw him as I now see him, with all his promise ended. I thought, if I thought, simply of the moment: it was a moment in which we were both emerging from childhood; and every day, certainly every time he came back from Clifton or from Cambridge, more of him, more of me, had emerged. Those were days of dis-

* From the final speech of Fortinbras in *Hamlet*: "Let four captains/ Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,/For he was likely, had he been put on,/To have proved most royal . . . ."

covery. Very exciting our discoveries were. I remember discovering one October day, when he was about to go to Cambridge for the first time, his beauty. He wore a Hill suit for the first time. That summer, I discovered that he smoked a pipe. I discovered Bell, 'the Strache', and Sydney-Turner.* But I am going too far ahead of myself in Hyde Park Gate. I will return to the year Stella died—1897.

I could sum it all up in one scene. I always see when I think of the month after her death the certain leafless bush; a skeleton tree in the dark of a summer night. This tree stands outside a garden house. Inside I am sitting with Jack Hills. He grips my hand in his. He groans. "It tears one asunder" he groaned. He was in agony. He gripped my hand to make his agony endurable; as if he were in physical torture. "But you can't understand" he broke off. "Yes, I can", I murmured. Subconsciously I knew that he meant that his sexual desires tore him asunder, together with his anguish at her loss. Both were torturing him. And the tree, outside in the dark garden, was to me the emblem, the symbol, of the skeleton agony to which her death had reduced him; and us; everything. Either Vanessa or I would go off alone with Jack after dinner. He would come down every week-end—it was to Painswick. Every day one or other of us had a letter. "Poor boy, he looks very bad", father once muttered audibly. And Jack, overhearing, stammered some awkward sentence to prevent him from saying more. The leafless tree and Jack's agony—I always see them as if they were one and the same, when I think of that summer.

The leafless tree was a very painful element in our life. Trees don't remain leafless. They begin to have little red chill buds. By that image I would convey the discomfort and misery and the quarrels, the suppressed irritations, the sharp words, the insinuations—which as soon as family life started again in Hyde Park Gate began to cover over the fact that Stella's death had left us all to take up new relationships.

Another garden scene—this time at Fritham—comes back to me. George had taken my arm in his. Indoors father was playing whist with the others. George singled me out; and walked me off round the lawn. I cannot remember any phrase exactly. A mumbling comes back—his emotional pressure on my arm; as he—with much

* Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Saxon Sydney-Turner, Thoby's Trinity College friends who were to form part of the nucleus of Bloomsbury.

circumlocution and more emotion and some vague threat about its being against the law and as Stella was her sister, marriage was illegal—told me that people were saying that Vanessa was in love with Jack; and asked me to do what I could (this flattered me) to make her give up seeing him alone.* It was a pity that people should say such things. And I could tell her—I could persuade her. What I said to her I do not remember—only her rather bitter answer: "So you take their side too."

Then I realised that she had her side: if that were so, of course I was on her side, as I said, very confusedly. I wobbled at once from George's side to her side. But my vagueness and confusion show that I knew very little of the exact state of things. Presumably George had not asked my help till he had tried other means—for one thing, as Nessa told me later, [he] had spoken his fears to father who, much to his credit, said that she was to do as she liked: he would not interfere.

These scenes, by the way, are not altogether a literary device—a means of summing up and making innumerable details visible in one concrete picture. Details there were; still, if I stopped to think, I could collect a number. But, whatever the reason may be, I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. Always a scene has arranged itself: representative; enduring. This confirms me in my instinctive notion: (it will not bear arguing about; it is irrational) the sensation that we are sealed vessels afloat on what it is convenient to call reality; and at some moments, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is, these scenes—for why do they survive undamaged year after year unless they are made of something comparatively permanent? Is this liability to scenes the origin of my writing impulse? Are other people also scene makers? These are questions to which I have no answer. Perhaps sometime I will consider it more carefully. Obviously I have developed the faculty, because, in all the writing I have done, I have almost always had to make a scene, either when I am writing about a person; I must find a representative scene in their lives; or when I am writing about a book, I must find their poem, novel . . . But this may not be the same faculty.

So that was one of the little red buds, or thorns, on the skeleton

* The phrase 'with much circumlocution . . . illegal' is a marginal addition; a reworking of 'very emotionally and circuitously and ambiguously' which has been omitted from the text.

tree: Vanessa was in love with Jack; Jack was behaving selfishly; people were talking; and George and Gerald (to a lesser degree) were getting their hackles up. That is one of the aspects of death which is left out when people talk of the message of sorrow: they never mention its unbecoming side: its legacy of bitterness, bad temper, ill adjustment.

For some months that winter (1897–8) Jack stayed with us, until he took a house—* 14 Victoria Grove. It "had associations." I believe one of our Great Aunts—Aunt Louisa Bayley?—had lived there. Kitty and Leo† had lived there. There Jack went to live with the Scotchers—Mr and Mrs Scotchbrook. He came to grief through drink and she, as Flora Baker used to hint—for the ladies of the family adopted Jack and his interests as if he were an orphan—threatened to have another baby.

(November 17th.) But we never spoke, during those unhappy years, of these scenes. Thoby, I imagine, may have had some vague conception that something, as I think he would have put it, was up between Jack and Vanessa. But his general attitude was aloof, judicial, conventional. From his remote station, as a schoolboy, as an undergraduate, he felt generally‡ we should accept our place: if George wanted us to go to parties, why not? If father wanted us to walk with him, why not? Once, at Salisbury, when the Fishers were our neighbours, and Vanessa, detesting Aunt Mary, who had most viciously intervened, writing surreptitious letters addressed to Copes School, in the chronic warfare between Vanessa and Jack and Vanessa and George, refused to visit them and cut them in the street, he made one of his rare impressive statements: gruffly he said it was not right to treat Aunt Mary like that.

It thus came about that Nessa and I formed together a very close conspiracy. In that world of many men, coming and going, we formed our private nucleus. There we were, alone, with father all day. In the evening Adrian would come back from Westminster; then Jack from Lincoln's Inn; then Gerald from Dent's or Henrietta

* p. 34, ll.23–4 (ms) have been omitted.
† Maxse.
‡ In the ms 'allied by old ties' follows 'felt generally'—which is an interlinear insertion—and a partial deletion. It has been omitted here because it confuses the sense.

Street; then George from the Post Office or the Treasury; and Thoby would be at Clifton or at Cambridge. The staple day would be a day spent together. And therefore we made together a small world inside the big world. We had an alliance that was so knit together that everything (with the exception of Jack perhaps) was seen from the same angle; and took its shape from our own vantage point. Very soon after Stella's death we saw life as a struggle to get some kind of standing place for ourselves in this [illegible].* We were always battling for that which was always being interfered with, muffled up, snatched away. The most imminent obstacle and burden was of course father. How could we, to take a concrete case, arrange that he should be out when perhaps Kitty Maxse, perhaps Katie Thynne, came to tea?† How could we escape Mr Bryce?‡ Must I spend the afternoon walking round Kensington Gardens? Could we possibly arrange to take our friends straight up to the Studio (the day nursery)? Then, what could one talk about at luncheon? Could we avoid Brighton at Easter? Must we be in because Aunt Mary was coming?

Over the whole week of these evasions and propitiations brooded the horror of Wednesday. On that day the weekly books were shown him. If they were over eleven pounds, that lunch was a torture. The books were presented. Silence. He was putting on his glasses.§ He had read the figures. Down came his fist on the account book. There was a roar. His vein filled. His face flushed. Then he shouted "I am ruined." Then he beat his breast. He went through an extraordinary dramatization of self-pity, anger and despair. He was ruined—dying . . . tortured by the wanton extravagance of Vanessa and Sophie. "And you stand there like a block of stone. Don't you pity me? Haven't you a word to say to me?" and so on. Vanessa stood by his side absolutely dumb. He flung at her all the phrases—about shooting Niagara and so on—that came handy. She remained static. Another attitude was adopted. With a deep groan he picked up his pen and with ostentatiously trembling fingers wrote out the cheque. This was wearily tossed to Vanessa. Slowly and with many

* One illegible word followed by a full stop (ms, p. 36); then two illegible words, one above the other, followed by a full stop.

† Lady Katherine Thynne who married Lord Cromer.

‡ 'Bryce', a doubtful reading.

§ Deletion of material from "A roar." at bottom of ms, p. 36 to the end of p. 37.

groans the pen, the account book were put away. Then he sank into his chair and sat with his head on his breast. And then at last, after glancing at a book, he would look up and say half plaintively, "And what are you doing this afternoon, Ginny?"

Never have I felt such rage and such frustration. For not a word of my feeling could be expressed.

This, as far as I can describe it, is an unexaggerated account of a bad Wednesday. Even now I can find nothing to say of his behaviour save that it was brutal. If, instead of words, he had used a whip the brutality would have been no greater. How can one explain it? He had been indulged of course ever since he broke the flower pot and threw the fragments at his mother (whatever the truth of that story, it ran something like that). Delicacy excused that. Then as he grew older there was the genius legend to which I have already referred.* Men of genius are very ill to live with . . . But there are certain qualifications to be noted. These scenes were never indulged in before men. Fred Maitland† for example resolutely refused to believe in them when Caroline Emelia (the Quaker sister) tried to insinuate that Leslie had a temper. If Thoby had presented those books or George, the explosion would have been suppressed. Why had he no shame in front of women? Partly of course because the woman was his slave—being the most typical of Victorians. But that does not explain the self-dramatization, the attitudinizing, the histrionic element, the breast beating, the groaning, which played so large a part, so disgusting a part in these scenes. His dependence upon women perhaps explains that. He needed always a woman to sympathize, to flatter, to console. Why? Because he was conscious of his failure as a philosopher, as a writer. But his creed made him ashamed to confess this need of sympathy to men. The attitude that his intellect made him adopt with men, made him the most modest, the most reasonable of men.‡ [illegible] Vanessa, on Wednesdays, was the recipient of much discontent that he had suppressed; and her refusal to accept her role, part slave, part angel of sympathy, exacerbated him so that he was probably unconscious of his own barbarous violence: and would have been horrified had anyone

* There is no such reference in the Monks House Papers.

† Frederic William Maitland wrote the authorized 'Life' of Leslie Stephen. He married Florence Fisher, one of Aunt Mary's daughters.

‡ Thus to Fred Maitland or to Herbert Fisher he was entirely without vanity, without conceit' was deleted by VW.

said straight out "You are a blackguard to treat a girl like that." I cannot conceive how he would have taken an honest expression of opinion. And the reason for that is to be found in the disparity, so obvious in his books, between his critical and his creative powers. Give him a thought to analyse, the thought of Mill, Bentham, Hobbes; and his is (so Maynard* has told me) acute, clear, concise: an admirable model of the Cambridge analy[tical spirit]. But give him life, a character, and he is so crude, so elementary, so conventional, that a child with a box of coloured chalks is as subtle a portrait painter as he is. To explain this, one would have to discuss the crippling effect of Cambridge; and its one-sided education; and to follow that by a discussion of the professional writer, in the nineteenth century; and the crippling effect of intensive brain work; and to illustrate that by his lack of any distracting interests—music, art, the theatre, travel; and one would have to discover how much of this intensification and narrowness was natural; how much imposed by circumstances. But the fact does seem to be that at the age of sixty-five he was almost completely isolated, imprisoned. Whole tracts of his sensibility had atrophied. He had so ignored, or refused to face, or disguised his own feelings, that not only had he no conception of what he himself did and said; he had no idea what other people felt. Hence the horror and the terror of these violent displays of rage. These were sinister, blind, animal, savage. He did not realise what he did. No one could enlighten him. He suffered. We suffered. There was no possibility of communication. Vanessa stood silent. He shouted.†

Here of course, from my distance of time, I perceive what one could not then see—the difference of age. Two different ages confronted each other in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate: the Victorian age; and the Edwardian age. We were not his children, but his grandchildren. When we both felt that he was not only terrifying but also ridiculous we were looking at him with eyes that saw ahead of us something—something so easily seen now by every boy and girl of sixteen and eighteen that the sight is perfectly familiar. The cruel thing was that while we could see the future, we were completely in the power of the past. That bred a violent struggle. By nature, both Vanessa and I were explorers, revolutionists,

* John Maynard Keynes. 'analytical spirit' was partially deleted by VW but must be restored for the sense.

† 'shouted' is only partially legible.

reformers. But our surroundings were at least fifty years behind the times. Father himself was a typical Victorian: George and Gerald were unspeakably* conventional. So that while we fought against them as individuals we also fought against them in their public capacity. We were living say in 1910: they were living in 1860.

In 22 Hyde Park Gate round about 1900 there was to be found a complete model of Victorian society. If I had the power to lift out a month of life as we lived it about 1900 I could extract a section of Victorian life, like one of those cases with glass covers in which one is shown ants or bees going about their affairs. Our day would begin with family breakfast at 8.30. Adrian bolted his; and whichever of us, Vanessa or myself, was down, would see him off. Standing at the front door we would wave a hand till he disappeared round the Martins' bulging wall. This was a relic left us by Stella—a flutter of the dead hand which lay beneath the surface of family life. Father would eat his breakfast sighing and snorting. If no letters, "Everyone has forgotten me", he would groan. A long envelope from Barkers would mean of course a sudden roar. George and Gerald came down. Vanessa disappeared behind the curtain. Dinner ordered, she would dash for the red bus to take her to the Academy. If Gerald coincided, he would give her a lift in his daily hansom—the same hansom, generally; the cabman in summer wore a carnation. George having breakfasted more deliberately—sometimes he would persuade me to sit on, on the three-cornered chair, and tell me gossip from last night's party—he too would button on his frock coat and give his top hat a promise with the velvet glove and disappear—smart and debonair, in his ribbed socks and very small well polished shoes, to the Treasury. Left alone in the great house, with Father shut in his study at the top, the housemaid polishing brass rods, Shag asleep on his mat, and some maid doing bedrooms while Sophie I suppose took in joints and milk from tradespeople at the back door, I mounted to my room and spread my Liddell and Scott upon my table and sat down to make out Euripides or Sophocles for my bi-weekly lesson with Janet Case.†

From ten to one we escaped the pressure of Victorian society.

* Doubtful reading.

† In the margin is written 'Clara Pater', the sister of Walter Pater, who taught Virginia Greek and Latin before Miss Case. Miss Case, in addition to being a severe and thorough teacher, became a lifelong friend of Virginia's.

Vanessa, I suppose, under the eye of Val Prinsep* or Ouless† or occasionally Sargent, painted from the life—she would bring home now and then very careful pencil drawings of Hermes perhaps, and spray them with fixative; or an oil head of a very histrionic looking male nude. And for the same three hours I would be reading perhaps Plato's *Republic*, or spelling out a Greek chorus. Our minds would escape to the world which on this November morning of 1940 she inhabits at Charleston and I in my garden room at Monks House. Our clothes would not be much different. She wore a blue painting smock; I perhaps a blouse and skirt. If our skirts were longer, that would be the only difference. Forty years ago she was rather tidier, rather better dressed than I. The change would come in the afternoon. About 4.30 Victorian society exerted its pressure. Then we must be 'in'. For at 5 father must be given his tea. And we must be better dressed and tidier, for Mrs Green was coming; Mrs H. Ward was coming; or Florence Bishop; or C. B. Clarke; or . . . We would have to sit at that table, either she or I, decently dressed, having nothing better to do, ready to talk.

The pressure of society was now very strong. It created that "manner" which we both still use. It is the manner in which when the front door bell rang we used to receive whoever it might be—say it was Ronny Norman. Suppose that Elsa Bell and Florence Bishop and Mr Gibbs arrived at ten minute intervals. We would have to be ready with small talk; ready to take father's trumpet and convey whatever was likely to help; ready to take our part—in what? Not argument; nor gossip. I suppose a very exacting—'not gossip' exactly. The older visitor would be sacrificed to father: given a chair beside him; entrusted with the end of the trumpet. Then Ronny Norman would be boyish, hearty: Elsa Bell would be worldly; Florence Bishop a little flighty. The conversation would be lighter than now; more mannered; jokes would be laughed at; Sir Leslie would give a groan; his health would be discussed; Ronny Norman would say (if Florence Bishop got going with father) something about an awfully jolly play or picture: I would plunge rather recklessly, say with Eveline Godley, into talk about the Navy: Elsa Bell would say that she expected her brothers to take off their hats if they met her in the street; father would be irritated: Florence Bishop would too and [would] withdraw her unlucky remark—that he

* Julia Stephen's cousin, son of Sarah and Thoby Prinsep.

† Walter William Ouless, R.A. (1848–1933).

looked well; Ronny Norman would ask him if he remembered Mill; he would unbend—for he liked Ronny Norman—and say how he had met Mill with his father in Chelsea.* "Oh dear, these old stories . . . " he would say. Well, the talk had its little steeps and waterfalls—its dangers: but it went something like that; and the whole was enclosed in the Victorian manner. It may have been natural for Ronny Norman, for Eveline Godley, for Miss Bishop. It was not natural for Vanessa or myself. We learned it. We learned it partly from memory: and mother had that manner: it was imposed on us partly by the other side—if Ronny Norman said that, one had to reply in the same style. Nobody ever broke the convention. If you listened, as I did, it was like watching a game. One had to know the rules.†

We both learned the rules of the Victorian game of manners so thoroughly that we have never forgotten them. We still play the game. It is useful; it has its beauty, for it is founded upon restraint, sympathy, unselfishness—all civilised qualities. It is helpful in making something seemly and human out of raw odds and ends. But the Victorian manner is perhaps—I am not sure—a disadvantage in writing. When I re-read my old *Common Reader* articles I detect it there. I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training. I see myself handing plates of buns to shy young men and asking them, not directly and simply about their poems and their novels, but whether they like cream as well as sugar. On the other hand, this surface manner allows one to say a great many things which would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out. It was when the lights went up in the evening that society came into force. During daylight one could wear overalls; work. There was the Academy for

* In the ms, VW refers to the guests around the tea-table by their initials, but not consistently which would suggest that convenience rather than a stylistic effect was her motive. Thus, the full names have been restored in the text. P. 49 of the ms booklet which does not appear to belong to the version of the text used here provides a fuller context for Miss Bishop's remark. The first half-dozen lines read: "Florence Bishop had said that she thought him looking remarkably well. This was an insult—a breach of the code: it was essential that he shd receive sympathy. And so we must brush up our talk with that."

† Omission of approximately 20 lines (from p. 45, l.5 of the ms) which are reworked in the following paragraph. One sentence was not included in the reworking, however. "The Victorian manner is useful now on meeting strangers: on going to meetings in the village."

Nessa; my Liddell and Scott and the Greek choruses for me. But in the evening society had it all its own way. At 7.30 we went upstairs to dress. However cold or foggy it might be, we slipped off our day clothes and stood shivering in front of washing basins. Neck and arms had to be scrubbed, for we had to come into the drawing room at 8 o'clock in evening dress: arms and neck bare. Dress and hairdoing became far more important than pictures and Greek. I would stand in front of George's Chippendale glass trying to make myself not only tidy but presentable. On an allowance of fifty pounds it was difficult, even for the skilful, to be well dressed of an evening. For though a house dress could be made by Jane Bride, at a cost of a pound or two, a party dress cost perhaps fifteen guineas if made by Mrs Young. The house dress therefore might be, as on this particular night, made of a green stuff bought erratically at a furniture shop—Story's—because it was cheaper than dress stuff; also more adventurous. Down I came: in my green evening dress; all the lights were up in the drawing room; and there was George, in his black tie and evening jacket, in the chair by the fire. He fixed on me that extraordinary observant [illegible] gaze with which he always inspected clothes. He looked me up and down as if [I] were a horse turned into the ring. Then the sullen look came over him; a look in which one traced not merely aesthetic disapproval; but something that went deeper; morally, socially, he scented some kind of insurrection; of defiance of social standards. I was condemned from many more points of view than I can analyse as I stood there, conscious of those criticisms; and conscious too of fear, of shame and of despair—"Go and tear it up", he said at last, in that curiously rasping and peevish voice which expressed his serious displeasure at this infringement of a code that meant more to him than he would admit.

For he accepted Victorian society so implicitly that an archaeologist would find him of the greatest interest. Like a fossil he had taken every crease and wrinkle of the conventions of 1890–1900. He was made presumably of precisely the right material. He flowed into the mould without a doubt to mar the pattern. If father had graved on him certain large marks of the age—his belief that women must be pure and men strong—his hatred of impropriety—"Damn!" Gerald exclaimed once, and up flew his hands in protest—Rezia* smoked a cigarette after tea—"I won't have my drawing room

* Rasponi.

turned into a bar parlour!" he exclaimed. He smoothed out the petty details of the Victorian code with his admirable intellect, his respect for reason—no one was less snobbish than he was—no one cared less for rank and luxury. George filled in the large marks with a criss-cross, a spider's web, of the most minute details. No more perfect fossil of Victorian society could exist. And so, while father preserved the framework of 1860, George filled in the framework with all kinds of minutely teethed saws; and the machine into which we were inserted in 1900* therefore held us tight; and brought innumerable teeth into play.

What kind of material was George made of? What can he have been made of to take the pattern so completely? He had very little brain, in the first place, and he had an abundance of emotion. He was poured into a perfectly adapted body. He was extremely handsome, perfectly healthy; and as well set up as a young man could be. Thus whenever he appeared, society opened its arms. It welcomed him. It embraced him. He can never have met with any opposition, either at Eton, or at Cambridge, or in London, from society: if society is taken to mean the upper middle class world in a drawing room in the evening. He was so without brains that he never strayed beyond that circle. He was never rebuffed or criticized because he never put himself into a position where he encountered criticism. In addition he had something like a thousand a year. He could play his part so far as clothes, guns, horses were needed. And as the world accepted him, praised him and gave him all he wanted, he found it impossible to imagine any defiance: he found defiance silly, foolish, unwise, in fact, immoral. My green dress was no doubt obscurely a criticism of himself. Gerald, I remember with gratitude, said good-naturedly: "I don't agree. I like it." George was silent. Dinner was a torture. And, to my discredit, I never wore that dress if George was at home.†

He was thirty-six when I was twenty. He had a thousand pounds a year and I had fifty. Those were reasons that made it difficult to defy George that night. But there was another element in our relationship which affected me as I stood there that winter's night exposed to his criticism in my green dress. I was not wholly conscious of it then. But besides feeling his age and his power, I felt too another

* The first version of the latter half of this sentence—after '1900'—was not deleted. It reads: 'was about as complete a specimen as could exist.'

† Ms pp. 50–51 have been omitted.

feeling which I later called the outsider's feeling. When exposed to George's scowling, I felt as a tramp or a gipsy must feel who stands at the flap of a tent and sees the circus going on inside. Victorian society was in full swing; George was the acrobat who jumped through hoops, and Vanessa and I beheld the spectacle. We had good seats at the show, but we were not allowed to take part in it. We applauded, we obeyed—that was all.

All our male relations were adepts at the game. They knew the rules and attached immense importance to them. Father laid enormous stress upon schoolmasters' reports, upon scholarships, triposes and fellowships. The Fishers, the male Fishers, took every prize, honour, degree. What, I asked myself the other day, would Herbert Fisher have been without Winchester, New College and the Cabinet? What would have been his shape had he not been stamped and moulded by the patriarchal machinery? Every one of our male relations was shot into that machine and came out at the other end, at the age of sixty or so, a Headmaster, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, a Judge. It is as impossible to think of them as natural human beings as it is to think of a plough horse galloping wild and unshod in the street.

George of course had failed to get admittance to that particular machine. He failed again and again to enter the diplomatic service. But there was another machine—society. He learned the rules of that game so well, he played it so cunningly, that he emerged at the age of sixty with a knighthood, with an aristocratic wife, with a sinecure, a country house and three sons. Somehow, in ways so indefinite that one cannot name them, I felt, at twenty, that George no less than Herbert Fisher was obeying the laws of patriarchal society. He was in the swim; going through hoops; doing the required act. I could feel his adherence; he accepted the convention; he believed. A belief which is commonly accepted, as his was by all his friends, has an atmosphere of authority: it impresses even the outsider. It seems right, natural, taken for granted. When on [Sunday night, the BBC plays] "God Save the King", I feel a current [of] belief; but I criticise my own instinctive emotion. George never questioned his belief in the old tune that society played. He rose and took his hat off, not only without questioning; but with complete acceptance and approval.

These perceptions gave my attitude to George a queer twist. I must obey, because he had force, of age, of wealth, of tradition,

behind him. But even while I obeyed I asked, "How could anyone believe what he believed?" There was a spectator in me who, while I squirmed at his criticism and deferred to it, yet remained cool, critical, observant. It fascinated me—the spectacle of George flying through those invisible hoops, so seriously, with such unquestioning belief. In a satirical moment I wrote a sketch of his career which his career followed almost to the letter.*

But unfortunately though we could sit passive and watch the Victorian males go through their intellectual hoops, George's hoops—his social triumphs—needed our help. Here of course his motives were—indeed they always were—mixed. We had to be brought out: to go into society. And he naturally played the part that mother would have played in taking us. But also we had to go where he wished us to go, to accept the invitations he thought desirable. Here the other motive came in—his desire to make us accept his views: his desire to make us pay our tribute to his own faith. And so, when the London season began, several times a week we would go upstairs after dinner, after the post had come, tea had been drunk and father had gone up to his study—and change into those long satin dresses for which Sally Young would charge fifteen guineas. We added white gloves, white slippers and a row of pearls or [an] amethyst round our necks. The cab would be called; and off we would drive along the silver paved streets, for wood pavement became silver in the dry summer nights, to the house where there was an awning, perhaps a strip of red carpet, and a little cluster of gaping passers by.

Now society exerted its full pressure, about 11 o'clock say, on a June night in 1900. I remember the dazed, elated, frozen feeling: as the lights beat on me, going upstairs; the unreality; the excitement; the paralysis. Can I recover anything further? At the Savoy I remember a dinner before the opera. It was *The Ring* and we were dining in full daylight. George had placed Mrs J. Chamberlain opposite the window, a failure in tact for which he reproached himself afterwards. For she had just passed her prime. I sat next a youth whom I now identify as Eddie Marsh. On that occasion I thought he was Richard Marsh; I vaguely connected him with novel writing. I recover only: "What is your father writing now?" he asked, and then I floundered, struck out wildly this way and that like a beginner on the ice.

* Ms pp. 55 (from l.3) and 56 have been omitted.

At Mrs Chamberlain's* I sat next a chubby official youth. We discussed oratory. "Our host", he said, "is generally supposed to be a good speaker." And then I see myself floundering again—stressing a theory that the crime of merrymaking is worse than theft. Silence falls. I felt myself struggling like a fly in glue. I felt that if one said things one thought, anything beyond the usual patter, glue stuck to one's feet. On the threshold of a ballroom, I remember Geoffrey Young primly telling me: "It is very good of you to come." Had I asserted that I hated dancing? He left me. At Trinity Ball, I remember galloping round the room with—I have forgotten the name. At Lady Sligo's I remember pressing some youth to tell me facts about the Garter. Meanwhile George was proposing to Flora Russell.† At the Lyulph Stanleys I remember failing to secure a partner. Elena Rathbone‡ introduced me to a girl. I remember the humiliation of standing, unasked, against a wall. I remember of these parties humiliation—I could not dance; frustration—I could not get young men to talk; and also, for happily that good friend has never deserted me—the scene as a spectacle to be described later. And some moments of elation: some moments of lyrical ecstasy. But the pressure of society in 1900 almost forbade any natural feeling. Perhaps I was too young. Perhaps I was wrongly adjusted. At any rate I never met a man or a woman with whom I struck up any real relationship. All the same there was the excitement of clothes, of lights, of society, in short; and the queerness, the strangeness of being alone, on my own, for a moment, with some complete stranger: he in white waistcoat and gloves, I in white satin and gloves. A more unreal relationship cannot be imagined; but there was a thrill in the unreality. For when I was once more in my own room I would see it small and untidy: I would ride the waves of the party still: I would lie in bed, tossing up and down on the things I had said, heard and done. And next morning I would still be thinking, as I read my Sophocles, of the party.

If that had been all, these parties would have slid off us easily enough. But there was George. To him a party was a very serious matter. We were not merely enjoying ourselves. We were made to

* VW has written 'Mrs C^{n}'.

† Flora Russell was a niece of the Duke of Bedford. The engagement was brief. She died unmarried.

‡ Elena Rathbone who later married Bruce Richmond, editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

feel that every party was an examination, a test: a matter of the greatest importance; it led to success; it led to failure. What did success lead to? The only success he valued—social success. Failure led to the only failure—dowdiness, eccentricity. He held these beliefs implicitly. But he held them confusedly. You could never challenge him directly. "But if I hate parties why should I go to them?" He would wrinkle all those lines piteously. "You're too young to have an opinion. Besides, I love you. I hate going alone. I must have you with me." Here he would snatch Vanessa in his arms. Duty and emotion were indistinguishably mixed. And the ghosts of Stella and Mother presided over these scenes.

Hence these parties became wrangles, became efforts, became often humiliations. Vaguely, he felt that we criticised the whole conception. This angered him. In his anger he upbraided us with selfishness, with narrowness. He complained to his circle of enamoured dowagers. He invoked their help. He lavished clothes, jewels. He acted, in public, the role of the good brother. He acted with success. How could we resist his wishes—how could we cherish other desires? Society in those days was a very competent machine. It was convinced that girls must be changed into married women. It had no doubts, no mercy; no understanding of any other wish; of any other gift. Nothing was taken seriously. Even Beatrice Thynne* would say to me, when I told her I wished to write, "I'll ask Alice to invite you to meet Andrew Lang."† I protested, I did not mean that. She snapped I was silly. That was the way to get on. How strange it was to think that somewhere, there was a world where people did not go to parties—where they perhaps discussed pictures—books—philosophy—But it was not our world.‡

The division in our life was curious. Downstairs there was pure convention: upstairs pure intellect. But there was no connection between them. Father's deafness had cut off any ties that he would have had, naturally, with the younger generation of writers. Yet he kept his own attitude perfectly distinct. No one cared less for convention. No one respected intellect more. Thus I would go from the

* Lady Beatrice Thynne, daughter of the Marchioness of Bath and sister of Katherine and Alice.

† Andrew Lang (1844–1912) was a journalist and man of letters who wrote on an immense variety of subjects. He was a poet, novelist, historian, Greek scholar, anthropologist and the author of well-known collections of fairy tales.

‡ Ms p. 61, from l.9, has been omitted.

drawing room and George's gossip—"Mrs William Grenfell asked me to stay . . . And I said, on the whole I thought I couldn't. She was taken by surprise "—to father's study to fetch a [new book]. There I would find him, swinging in his rocking chair, pipe in mouth. Slowly he would realise my presence. Rising, he would go to the shelves, put the book back and very kindly ask me what had I made of it? Perhaps I was reading Johnson. For some time we would talk and then, feeling soothed, stimulated, full of love for this unworldly, very distinguished, lonely man, I would go down to the drawing room again and hear George's patter. There was no connection.

Nor indeed was there any close connection between ourselves and the world of intellect. The great figures were of course on the horizon: Meredith, Henry James, Henry Sidgwick, Symonds, Haldane, Watts, Burne-Jones: they were figures in the background. But the kind of memory I have of them is of figures only, looming very large, but very far away.

I remember looking down at J. A. Symonds from the landing at Talland House; and noting his nerve-drawn white face; and the tie that was a cord with two yellow blobs of plush. I remember Watts, in his frilled shirt and grey dressing gown: and Meredith, invoking a damsel in a purple petticoat—a flower. I remember Meredith's voice; and the irony with which he said "a book of mine". I remember not what they said, but the atmosphere surrounding them. I remember the ceremony of being taken to see them and the way in which both father and mother conveyed that a visit to Meredith was something altogether out of the way. Both shared a reverence for genius. The reverence impressed me. And the eccentricity, the individuality: how Meredith dropped rounds of lemon into his tea. How Watts had bowls of whipped cream and minced meat; how Lowell had a long knitted purse, with rings round it, and sixpences always came from the slit. What I received was some general impress of strength, of oddity. What they said I have forgotten. But I remember the roll of Meredith's voice. I remember the hesitation and qualification, the humming and hawing of Henry James' voice. So that no doubt I was supplied very early with a vision of greatness and great men. Greatness still seems to me booming, eccentric, set apart; something that we are led up to by our parents and is now entirely extinct.

There they were, on the verge of the drawing room, these great

men: while, round the tea table, George and Gerald and Jack talked of the Post Office, the publishing office, and the Law Courts. And I, sitting by the table, was quite unable to make any connection. There were so many different worlds: but they were distant from me. I could not make them cohere; nor feel myself in touch with them. And I spent many hours of my youth restlessly comparing them. No doubt the distraction and the differences were of use; as a means of education; as a way of showing one the contraries. For no sooner had I settled down to my Greek than I would be called off to hear George's case; then from that I would be told to come up to the study to read German; and then the gay world of Kitty Maxse would impinge.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Moments of Being

UNPUBLISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

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