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A tele of internment

Livia Laurent

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Contents

You, my friends, who will imagine that you are to be found in these pages, do not feel indignant, outraged or flattered unduly. It may be your face, Teresinnia ; your name, Matilda ; and your wisdom, Mrs. Kessiter.

But unlike facts which have to be presented in their true colours, fancy has changed you a little, adding a touch here, forgetting a feature there.

So you see, Teresinnia, Matilda and Mrs. Kessiter, it is you no longer !

Perhaps a Justification,

" I HATE to see a story wasted" said a journalist friend of mine with whom I was lunching only a few days after my return from the Isle of Man. "You should write down what you have seen, how you felt at various stages, about the people you met, quite simply and honestly, as you are talking to me now." "But who would be interested ?" I protested. "Internment isn't news any more. At this very moment people are dying in Russia, Airmen are returning from night raids over Germany, ships are in danger on the high seas ; in the factories of Britain men and women are working as they have never worked before ; in a situation like this the internment of a few thousand people seems of no importance whatever, except perhaps to themselves and to those closely connected with their lives. What would be the justification of writing about this last year of mine ?"

He said nothing for a while, and we both stirred our coffee. Then he smiled at me : "Still worried about justifying yourself? How completely unchanged you are. Let me ask you a few questions." I looked at him expectantly, wondering what he was leading up to. "You say that this concerns only a small number of people. What do you mean by 'just a few people,' would you mind telling me what exactly we are fighting for ?" "Why, Democracy, Freedom ; everybody knows that!" "Democracy, Freedom—he was obviously mocking me now—and what is the meaning of these big words ? Freedom for whom ? " "Everybody—I was getting cross now—the individual of course." "Ha, the individual!

How many people did you say were in your camp ?" "Four thousand women to start with, about twelve hundred now." "Let's take the twelve hundred, let's take you alone. Twelve hundred individual lives, your own personal life. That's what this war is being fought for, the freedom and liberty of every single person. How can you say : Just a few people. Each one of them is of the utmost importance. Your own story belongs to this war as a battle would belong to it, as an air raid signal belongs to it. All different aspects of one and the same thing. Can't you see that ?" "Yes, I admitted, I can. Actually that's what I've been feeling all along. Only——" and I was beginning to indulge in a long series of objections when he cut me short: "You don't feel bitter about it, do you?" "No, not at all." "Then go ahead! Next time I meet you I want the finished product."

So I am dedicating this to him, hoping he will not be too disappointed in my attempt to describe the time I spent away from war, yet singularly part of it in the exile of internment.

Chapter One

*I am, dangerous,**

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl who was taught at school and she believed (for most little girls believe what they are told) that those who do wrong are punished for it while those who are good need not be afraid of any one. Later on, when the little girl grew bigger, she discovered that there was another category of people so essential for the more colourful pages of history, those who were punished for what they were and not for what they did. With breathless excitement she read and re-read the stories of Mary Stuart, Marie Antoinette, Cleopatra—women who bore great names and great destinies, whose very presence, the fact that they happened to be alive, spelt danger to a great many people who in their turn tried to destroy these bearers of great names and great destinies in order to preserve their small existences.

The little girl shed many tears over the sadness and injustice of this world but she also envied the greatness and splendour of these women which made such injustice possible. In her dreams (for she had many dreams) she proudly walked into the arena as one of the first Christian martyrs ; as St. Joan she delivered a last inspiring speech before dying on the stake ; in dignified composure she was wheeled through the streets of Paris on the way to the guillotine and could never quite make up her mind whether it was more glorious to be Marie Antoinette herself or the little seamstress who was caught by mistake and died by mistake, and in her mistaken death became one of the aristocrats whose privileges she had

never enjoyed in life. The little girl was inclined to deplore the enlightenment of the age in which she found herself born, where such adventures were only presented on the stage in modified and highly inadequate fashion and occupied but a paragraph in history books. In an age where people tried hard to be good and tolerant, believing themselves to be brothers, all equal in their endeavour to create a better and lasting world after the conclusion of the biggest war in history, the war which had been fought to end wars.

Imagine the little girl's surprise when after the years of childhood and adolescence which had taught her to think and live in terms of liberty and the equality of man, a Government stood up in her country pronouncing her and many others like her a danger to the state, to be persecuted as such. After recovering from the shock of finding herself changed from an ordinary human being into an outcast, among other sadder thoughts, regretting this and deploring that, one idea formed in her mind and found voice most persistently. It said : I seem to be more important than I thought I was ; I haven't done anything, I haven't said anything and yet 1 am to be punished simply for what I am, for my parentage, for the blood in my veins, for my name. This puts an entirely new meaning to my existence. Look at this complicated machinery they have invented for watching me, spying on me, for condemning me. I must be somebody after all.

Yet knowing instinctively that it was not good to continue a life of such undeserved glamour, she left the place where she was considered quite a personage and came to the shores of a great. powerful island where people were regarded as human beings and judged according to their individual merits.

During many years of normal peaceful living the little girl learned to love this new country, to absorb its language, its culture, its many sounds and colours; and beginning to regard herself as one of its rightful inhabitants, she gradually

lost her exaggerated sense of self-importance and set about the business of personal achievement.

Then war broke out. The little girl who had grown up in the meantime and was a little girl no longer, knew her place in this war with greater certainty and conviction than many people who by birth and inheritance belonged to the country of her refuge, because to her the evil which was to be stamped out was no tale of horror but actual experience. And she waited for the time when she could play her part.

Then a queer thing happened as many queer things are bound to happen in days of stress. For the second time in her life the little girl was transformed from the individual she knew herself to be to an imaginary creature of certain carefully defined characteristics. Again place of birth, parentage and name began to be excellent substitutes for conviction, personal integrity and good will, and again one of the greatest and most powerful governments in the world considered this little girl (who was a little girl no longer) a danger to the state.

And when towards the end of July, 1940, after a few formal questions had been asked, the following sentence was pronounced : "The tribunal has decided that this young lady is to be interned until further order," amidst the shock of disbelief and astonishment, ghosts of Mary Stuart, Joan of Arc, and the little seamstress rose up in my mind, following me to the sordid prison cell where I was taken, whispering the while : "You see, you too are somebody after all !"

Finding myself in a prison cell for the first time in my life was an adventure of no small importance. It was dark, I could hardly distinguish the wooden bench on which I had automatically sat down ; from the cell next to mine the hoarse drunken voices of some old habitues, evidently enjoying themselves, sounded across the partition, and I just sat and stared at the door which had been locked behind me. So

now I was a prisoner. There was one thought in my mind and one thought only : this had to be carried off with dignity, tears and despair could come later. I wouldn't let them see, "they" being this whole organisation which was going to run my life—that I would have preferred to walk about outside wherever I pleased and take my share in the work and the heartaches of a nation at war. I was in prison now and with certainty I knew at that moment (and this is not imagination) that I was in the clutches of a great wheel which would rotate and rotate, taking me with it, and that time would be needed and effort until I would be able to extricate myself from it—and I knew also that the process would not be entirely painless.

I shrank when a key turned and the door opened. A round jolly-faced wardress came in greeting me cheerfully like a long-lost child. She took hold of my handbag and with surprising swiftness removed from it lipstick, mirror, powder case and lighter. Did she imagine that I'd kill myself with an Elizabeth Arden "primula" lipstick, or set fire to my clothes with a small Dunhill lighter? "Just a matter of routine," she gaily assured me ; I would get it all back on departure. I felt relief at that, for it was hard to be dignified without lipstick and this unforeseen loss would have easily upset all my plans for composed forbearance. "Do I have to stay in this cell indefinitely ?" I asked her. "Oh no, no." The idea evidently amused her : "Good God, no." I was only waiting here for the detectives to take me home so that I could pack my case. After that—her gesture seemed to indicate that all the world would be mine now—"the Isle of Man." This in whispers of greatest reverence. A beautiful place—she had been there on her honeymoon, although only for three days and it *had* been raining all the time, but beautiful, really beautiful. I would enjoy myself. But I must remember to take a bathing suit, whatever I did, a bathing suit would be essential. Sun glasses, no. She didn't remember much sun, when *she* was there it had been raining. She dared say there

might be sun in odd places though. The aliens had the best part of the island to themselves, all the newspapers were full of it. Quite possibly there'd be sun as well, occasionally. On second thoughts she'd advise me to take sun glasses after all.—Did she think I was going there the same evening? I felt quite anxious now to see myself transplanted to the splendours of a sun-bathing holiday. Well, she really couldn't say—her face assumed an expression of deep concern now. It would be possible, just possible of course, it wasn't for her to say really, that I might go to Holloway for a night or two : nothing to worry about, quite a nice place really ; she had a great many friends there and occasionally went there to tea on a Sunday. "There are acres and acres of garden," she told me, "where the aliens lie in the sun and enjoy themselves. Very jolly, very jolly indeed."

This was the second time I had heard that word "Aliens" from her. I supposed that that was the term to use, even "Enemy Aliens." To me, who had long ago begun to identify my own life with that of England, this word pronouncing me an outside element caused me acute pain somewhere in the pit of my stomach. The danger of labels, the futility of catchwords! My wardress in the meantime had been carried by her train of thought to the one logical conclusion which comes to every English person all over the Commonwealth at just about that time of the afternoon. "What about a nice cup of tea ?" she suggested; if I gave her the money she could send over to the canteen for a sandwich—ham or tongue. If ham, would I like mustard with it ? I thought that it was an admirable idea and said so. In no time the sandwiches arrived and as she also seemed to prefer mustard with her ham we shared them most conscientiously, while she enlarged on her highly-coloured conception of the comparative merits of Holloway and the Isle of Man. By the time we had finished tea I was pleasurably excited at the prospect before me, which by a hair's breadth I might have missed altogether. That this

was not so seemed now cause for rejoicing rather than regret. The detective's arrival interrupted our happy anticipations, and after my belongings had been restored to me I took my leave of this new friend, the wardress, who was as sorry to see me go as I was sorry to leave her.

Would I prefer to go home by tube, to be paid for by the State, or take a taxi payable by myself? the detective enquired carefully. As I am always extravagant while travelling and the holiday spirit had completely taken possession of me, I thought a taxi would meet the occasion more adequately.

Arriving at my home the door was opened by a frightened maid, whose lust for sensation, I hope, was not left entirely dissatisfied by my tearless arrival in the company of two complete strangers. (There was a policewoman with us, and both she and the officer were in plain clothes.) The news of my detention had spread and timid heads peeped at me from the staircase and (as I imagined) out of dark corners. The next few hours passed in a haze of impressions. I spoke to a few friends who all assured me that it was a mistake and would be cleared up in no time ; I changed my clothes so as to be more fittingly attired for an internment camp and I packed as quickly as I could. Here the detective, a very pleasant young man, proved quite invaluable. With miraculous swiftness and thoroughness (I suppose very important qualities in his profession) he had opened and searched all my cupboards and drawers, extracting from them what I would need, only saying perfunctorily, "You want this, Madam," or "You had better take that mackintosh," all the time wrapping things into tissue paper and packing for me in that scientific fashion which only men have mastered. (They are either very good or very bad-packers). It afterwards proved a constant source of amazement as to how he had managed to pack all those things ikito one small suitcase, whereas I, repacking them later, needed exactly double that space.

After a few well-chosen words to my friends, a last kiss for my mother who sat on a chair, pale and absolutely speechless, firmly clutching her umbrella, which only leaves her in rare and very sunny moments (I recall seeing her without one once after weeks of continuous sunshine and drought, but I was small at the time and it might have been a hallucination). After kissing her for the last time, I left in dignified composure and entered the waiting taxicab as Marie Antoinette might have done, had her revolutionary age achieved the invention of such magnificent means of transport.

Chapter Two

I arrive at Holloway

WE soon reached a building looking like a castle and I was informed, 'This is Holloway." We drove up to a side entrance where a lady in white overalls seemed overjoyed to welcome me. "This way dear"—I had hardly time to say good-bye to my guardians who waved and nodded as if I were off to a children's party. The door slammed behind me and now I really was in prison. The adventure could start, I was ready for it. The lady was a kind lady and did not think it beneath her dignity to lend a hand with an alien's suitcase up and down several stairs and corridors. When we arrived at the portion of the building entitled "Reception," I realised that so far I had not been received ; the social part was yet to come. I was told to sit down in a box-like wooden cell and the door shut in my face. I did not think too much of my reception. I shouldn't have come ; this seemed to be one of the duller parties. My cell was one of those "sit down" ones in which you can neither stand, turn round nor shake your head. There were some intriguing inscriptions on the walls obviously put there by my new colleagues, the jail-birds. "Off to Borstal now, he! he!" said one. Another "See you again chums ; so long!" "I love Tom Taylor, you old hag," and others which cannot be repeated but suggested entirely new possibilities. I was meditating on the richness of expression in the English language and decided that I had much to learn. The door flew open. A short little woman doctor complete with stethoscope confronted me: "Undo your blouse." This was not to be misunderstood and with gusto

I began unbuttoning. "That will do, that will do." She was surprised at such vigour, and pushing her stethoscope on to nowhere in particular she commanded, "Breathe." I strained my lungs in an effort to satisfy her curiosity. She seemed to have got out of bed on the wrong side that morning, for her temper was definitely soured, not to say rotten. "Any diseases ? Pregnant ?" she snapped. I sadly shook my head. I had nothing to offer her in the way of interesting complaints. She left me as abruptly as she had arrived and secretly wishing her better hunting elsewhere I did some buttoning up. This was wasted labour, as the events of the next half-hour proved only too clearly.

The official receptionist was ready for me now; I said it then and I am prepared to repeat it again : it was the queerest reception I had ever been to. Without preliminaries I was told, "Undress." There is a time and place for everything and I didn't consider this occasion a particularly suitable one for undressing. It was chilly and I saw no-one else taking off their clothes.

"Hurry up." There seemed no choice ; I was the victim ; a screen was provided and every piece I reluctantly took off was snatched from the other side of the screen and closely examined. I pictured the faces disappointed at finding nothing, not even a small time bomb, no tear gas, no wireless set, no parachute. At last when I stood there shivering, small and deprived of all my clothes, my dressing gown was handed gingerly from the other side, and more certain of myself in light blue crepe de chine, I went to see what was going on.

My suitcase had been opened in the meantime and every article in it taken out, felt, shaken, inspected from all sides and finally put away. I suppose in their secret hearts they called it "a bad show." Bottles of medicine were taken away ; I would have to ask the doctor for them in the morning. The variety of living! Hardly there for an hour and already something to look forward to. Another encounter with the

charming lady doctor would be entertaining, if nothing else.

I was measured and weighed ; what little money I had was taken away and entered into an account book ; my papers disappeared mysteriously, and with grave apprehension I regarded a young prisoner next door who was given a bath, scrub, shampoo and haircut by an all-too-efficient-looking nurse. I saw myself undergoing similar treatment and trembled in my slippers. I had been to the hairdressers only the same morning—how long ago that seemed—and I thought the result was quite satisfactory. Yet this danger passed, I was only asked, "Do you want a bath ?" and putting myself into the worst possible light by refusing such refinement, the point was pressed no further.

Having been thoroughly received and beginning to get rather tired of the procedure, I was to be shown to my room now, which, as I gathered from the conversation, was situated in C wing. Well, C wing would suit me as well as any other wing, and after politely wishing goodnight I followed the officer who was to show me up. She strode ahead of me carrying two small grey linen squares which were to serve me as sheets. I was left to follow her as best as I could. It wasn't easy. My insufficiently repacked case losing something at each step, my progress was slow and painful. In one hand I dragged the case, my discarded clothes were clutched under both arms and somehow I contrived to hold up my trailing dressing-gown so that I wouldn't fall on the stairs. I must have looked a comic sight, yet never did anyone feel less comic than I did at that particular moment. How on earth I managed to carry the case, which ordinarily I couldn't even lift, along endless, deserted, ghostlike corridors and up four flights of stairs, will always be a miracle to me. Yet when I reached the cell which was to be my own I felt I had achieved something. The officer, anxious to be off for the night, quickly brought me drinking water and slammed the door behind me. For the last time that day I was locked in.

I looked round. This cell wasn't so bad, quite spacious, almost a room. Stone floor, stone walls, window high up and a bare electric light bulb dangling from the ceiling. As for furniture, there was a plank bed, wooden chair, table, wash-stand in the corner with pails and basin most imposingly initialled, reminding me that now I was one of His Majesty's guests. Some hooks in the wall made me decide to use what little daylight was left and do some unpacking. I put the sheets on the bed and, after I had done what I could with scarves, books, boxes, tins and some little china animals I had brought, I thought my cell looked quite cosy. I discovered a packet of chocolate a thoughtful friend had given me with the memorable words : "I hope you won't need it." Although a seasoned chocolate eater, never have I been quite so grateful for chocolate as I was that night. I was ravenous.

There was a little peephole in my door which later on I filled in with paper, for who wants to be watched while washing ? Yet that night I looked out and seeing many round peepholes with electric light streaming through them, 1 knew that a great many people were in a position similar to mine. Comforted by this realisation, I put on pyjamas, washed a little, decided what I was going to wear in the morning, and crept into bed.

It was a lovely warm summer night and I soon began to feel drowsy and peaceful. I ate some chocolate and was glad there would be another day in which to think out things. There would be many days and at the moment there was no need to think at all. Someone played the flute in a cell far below mine, a single star looked in through the open window, and knowing the day was over, I went to sleep.

Chapter Three

I am guite all right, thank you

THE rattling of keys, a bang and a voice woke me : "All right ?" Suddenly wide awake, I turned in my bed meaning to answer this kind enquiry when the same voice sounded already two cells away, "All right ?" I jumped to the door and looked out. Along my corridor, on the one opposite and on all the floors below wardresses in dark blue dresses were hurrying, unlocking doors with huge keys and a great deal of noise, exclaiming each time "All right?" while rushing on to the next one.

From the open doors strange figures appeared almost immediately in all stages of dress and undress, carrying jugs, and judging from the determined expression on faces still swollen from sleep and garnished with curlers and hair nets, I gathered that this was important. Grabbing my own jug, I followed the procession and soon found myself at a sink where the hot water tap produced boiling water for those who came first, and luke warm or sometimes cold water for others less fortunate. Cautiously carrying my jug back to the cell, I was conscious that my appearance had not passed unnoticed. People were staring, whispering, pushing each other. I didn't care, I would stare at them later.

For all I knew, here I had landed among the most satisfactory selection of spies and doubtful elements it would ever be my good fortune to set eyes on. I would use my eyes. Admittedly they didn't look like spies. But that's just it. Everybody is aware of that fact these days. One must not go by appearances. Was I not an old cinema-goer of many

years' standing ? For instance, that small blonde with huge blue innocent eyes who had passed me just now. She looked such a child, no more than eighteen. I was willing to bet anything that she was "hot stuff," just the type to lure secrets out of big silent service men. On the other hand, the strong brown-haired peasant girl with the bun bang on top of her head who was shouting "Good morning" across the banisters to someone I couldn't see, didn't look as if her life had been spent in night clubs. But that might be disguise, the bun didn't look genuine to me ; it was such an absurd bun.

Humming to myself, I washed and dressed, put my cell straight and was just wondering what the next move would be when two sinister looking characters appeared in my doorway, asking : "Porridge, tea, bread ?" It all looked rather unappetising and I thought I might make do with chocolate instead, when the older one of the two, realising my doubts, decided, "You had better have it, you'll feel hungry later on!" got hold of my tin plate and tin mug and filled them with the above mentioned delicacies. I thought she looked rather kind as she smiled at me, but that might be all put on. They were probably going to spy on me or were trying to rope me in on some dangerous enterprise. I thanked her coldly and suddenly felt very depressed, looking at my plate and mug on the wooden table, when a tall fair girl came in introducing herself: "I am Elsa, what's your name?" "Livia." I wondered what she was up to. An inner voice warned me : "Be careful." Elsa took one good look at the bare table : "Would you like to come over and have breakfast with us ? We saw you on the landing just now. It's a bit strange the first morning." Against my better judgment I felt grateful to her and when, without additional argument she carried my uninviting meal a few cells further, I meekly followed her.

The cell I entered looked very different from my own. Several small tables had been pushed together to make a

large one ; it was covered with a blue and white check cloth ; and butter, jam, honey, several kinds of bread and all sorts of nice things made the prospect of my breakfast less dreary. Three faces looked at me expectantly. "This is Livia, our latest arrival, is there room for her on the bed? You see (Elsa explained to me) we all have to bring our own chairs, there's one chair for each person. Are you quite comfortable ?" I could only nod, feeling rather overwhelmed and not quite sure what to think. These four girls didn't look dangerous at all. Elsa giggled at me, my face seemed to tell her more than I had meant to show. "Don't worry, we've all had your symptoms. You needn't blush. We are as little criminal as you are." "How do you know ?" My pride rose. "For all you know I might be Mata Hari herself." They all laughed. "If you were you wouldn't be here, my innocent," a dark girl told me. "There's a special place for people like that, and what's more they don't seem to get caught, judging from what one meets here. My name is Roma, 1 am half Italian and half English and the oldest inmate at this present gathering. This is Matilda, the hostess as you might say, for we are in her cell. She's been here a week, felt very tragic about it at first but she is recovering now, aren't you, Matilda?" The blonde motherly looking woman laughed. "One must make the best of it. There are always people worse off than one's-self and at least one can help those in need." She put some butter and honey on my plate, at the same time cutting my big chunk of bread into small slices. "Here, you must eat," she said in her warm deep voice. "But I can't accept this," I protested, "I have nothing to offer in return." "You'll get parcels once your friends know where you are," said the little brunette who so far had been busily engaged eating. She stopped for a minute and grinned at me. "You can also order things if you have money. Don't worry, we'll get it out of you again. Share and share alike, that's the motto." She went on chewing and between bites told me that she

was Lotte, Austrian, had been nursing, hoped to get back to it, and in the meantime was glad to meet me. Elsa was a nurse, too, and both of them talked shop most of the time.

"Do come whenever you like and have your meals with us," Matilda told me. "Of course if you would rather be by yourself, we don't want to intrude. But you are welcome any time." "How do you know what kind of person I am, that you can talk freely in front of me," I insisted. "You don't know anything about me." "We know a lot," Elsa said, "and you will too, after you have been here for a while. Unless you prove that you cannot be trusted we'll trust you." That had to satisfy me for the time being. A shout came from the landing : "Carriers, carriers, hurry up, come along!" Lotte jumped. "Gosh, that's me." She collected a few dishes and rushed out. "What does that mean ?" I asked Matilda. "We take it in turns to carry the food from the kitchen upstairs. Actually, it will be you to-morrow. You just do it for a day and then you are off for three or four days. That depends on how many old and sick people you have on your landing. *They* don't carry of course." She gave me a critical glance : "You don't look too strong. See that you get hold of the bread basket, that's the lightest thing to carry. Four stairs up is no joke, you might hurt yourself." 1 was indignant, did she think I was a shirker ? "No, not at all, I am just giving you advice. By the way, are you quite well?" I reluctantly admitted that I had been meant to have my tonsils removed within that week. My throat did hurt rather, and the stuff which I used to paint it with had been taken away. "You must book for the doctor," Matilda exclaimed—"wait, I'll do it for you." She went out and spoke to a young officer. "It's all right, I gave your name ; don't go down when they call "exercise," wait for the doctor and join us afterwards." She went to the sink to wash her plate and mug and I did the same. Roma and Elsa disappeared to their respective cells saying that they would meet me at Exercise. I had

visions of goosestep and similar exertions but Matilda assured me that it was only a walk in the courtyard. As she had been a teacher of gymnastics she gave lessons to those who liked their recreation to be a little more strenuous, and I was cordially invited to take part. I didn't commit myself but said that I would think it over. Going back to my cell, I discovered with great joy that Elsa lived next to me and that she too would be waiting for the doctor. She showed me how $he did her cleaning and I imitated her as best as I could.

"Exercise, Exercise, come along you people!" The call came from the ground floor and was repeated on each floor by the officer on duty. Falsetto, soprano, alto, and plain cockney : "Come along you people, come along." I went to lean over the banisters. There they were streaming from their cells, trying to get to the stairs as quickly as possible, hundreds of women of all ages, shapes and sizes. Old ones and young ones, fat ones and slim ones, dark ones and fair ones, some laughing and joking, others glum and sullen, here a couple of friends arm in arm, there a very beautiful girl walking all by herself, careful not to touch or be touched by anyone, and in the babel of voices I could distinguish English, French, Italian, German in all dialects, including Austrian, Czech, Polish, Dutch and Yorkshire. I almost fell over the railings in my attempt to take it all in. A gate was opened somewhere deep down and soon the crowd had passed through it and could be heard chattering from outside. It was suddenly very still in the big building which so much resembled a gigantic swimming pool, with just a step re-sounding from a distance and the eternal clattering of keys.

I knocked at Elsa's door. "May I come in ?" She stood on her chair peeping out of the window so fittingly decorated with iron bars. "Come here quickly" she signed to me. I climbed onto the chair with her wondering what there was to see. There was our Matilda, now only a blob in blue seen from so high, teaching a circle of eager old ladies how

to jump up and down. It was a gratifying sight. "But they are so old ! Why are they here ?" Elsa shrugged her shoulders. "Why are any of us here ? Some of them can hardly walk." She pointed to a very old lady sitting listlessly on a chair, wrapped in rugs and staring right in front of her. "See for yourself." So this was the garden which had been painted to me in such exciting colours by the kind wardress of yesterday. How long ago that was! This bare courtyard with its few trees, its trodden-down lawn and several odd garden chairs. Why, you could walk round it in five minutes at the most. Actually, that's what people did. They walked round and round and round.

Something else occurred to me which I had completely forgotten. Descending from our chair, I asked Elsa : "When are we going to the Isle of Man ? I was told I'd only stay here for one night." "The last transport went about a week ago." Elsa suddenly had tears in her eyes : "I was meant to go on that. I had packed and was quite ready, but for some reason my name was missing from the list. So they left me behind. God knows when I am going now. It may be weeks before the next transport, the same thing may happen again ; and there's nothing one can do, nothing at all, one is just a number here." She was sobbing helplessly now. I sat do\yn next to her on the bed and put my arms round her shoulders trying to quieten her. She was the last person from whom I would have expected such an outburst. "But why is it so important ?" I tried to hide my own shock which her words had given me : weeks, perhaps months in a prison! "Why is it so important ? you all seem to be quite happy together." Then she told me her story. She had been married only a year and was passionately devoted to her husband, who had been interned several weeks before her and was now on the Isle of Man. She missed him terribly, and her one and only object in life was to meet him again as soon as possible. On the Isle of Man, even if she couldn't be with him, at

least she could see him at the monthly meetings which were being arranged for husbands and wives. That was the moment she lived for. And there was also the fear that he might be sent to Canada or Australia. That had happened to the husbands and sons of many women here, who were quite frantic with worry, not knowing where they were, and if they were dead or alive.

1 began to realise that my own trouble, which only concerned myself, was nothing compared with the mental suffering many of these women were going through. "However"—Elsa borrowed my handkerchief and blew her nose with great determination—"that's nothing. I feel quite ashamed of myself when I look at the refugees from Belgium, Holland and France. They none of them know where their relatives are and if they will ever see them again. They have no-one in this country to send them food, and the clothes they are wearing are all they possess in this world. The horrors they have gone through—you have no idea that such things are humanly possible. And they smile, they are kind and they haven't lost their interest in others." "But Elsa, why are they here? surely they wouldn't harm anyone?" "Would you harm anyone? would I? would Matilda? that's not the way to look at it. Some lost all their papers on their horrible flight, others had no references. It will all be cleared up in time, but it does take time." "And all that time they sit here with their terrible memories, in their frightful uncertainty. Oh, Elsa!" She was consoling me now. "They take it quite well, really, you will see for yourself. It's amazing what women can stand. A man under the same circumstances would go crazy. But they just sit and talk about food and babies and help others with their knitting, and they'll probably be most intrigued by the nice clothes you are wearing. Women have deeper resources, that's why I am ashamed of being so weak. Please forgive me." What did I have to forgive. Feeling very small and unimportant, I went back to my cell

to tell the young doctor, a man this time, and hardly more than a student, that I must, absolutely must, have that stuff to paint my throat with, and that it was imperative that the bottle with surgical spirit should be returned to me. He could take my word that I would not drink it, but I needed it to wash my face.

Chapter Four

Cabbages and Chruch-going

COMING back from exercise amidst shouts of "hurry up you people" and the renewed call for "carriers, carriers," I supposed that meant dinner, although it wasn't even noon yet, I slowly climbed the endless stairs, feeling very tired. I had seen so much, spoken to so many people during these last two hours, that the crowd of impressions whirled around in my head. I was only conscious of my profound astonishment at finding such extraordinary comradeship among so many women of different types, classes and countries. Was it the prison routine which served as leveller of vastly opposed temperaments, habits and opinions ? Was it something deeper, a sense for the preservation of the best in one which evened out inequalities, jealousies and many of the lesser feminine characteristics ? I didn't dare to give the answer. But I began to understand why men who had spent four years in the trenches of the last war, later on spoke of this time of horror as of the happiest and most satisfying period of their lives. It must have been a similar sense of comradeship.

I stretched out on my bed trying to go to sleep for a minute when loud and violent sobs from next door brought me to my feet. What was that, where did it come from, was someone being ill-treated ? This was a prison after all, anything might happen. It didn't come from Elsa's side ; my other neighbour, whom I hadn't seen yet, must have suddenly met with some terrible misfortune. Should I go and find out ? Slipping along

to the next door, I courageously pushed it open, fearful of what I might see. Yet no medieval flogging scene presented itself. All I saw was a girl in a bath robe lying face downwards on an unmade bed, sobbing so much that the whole frame was vibrating beneath her. "What's the matter ?" She didn't hear me ; stronger measures were indicated. I shook her : "Hey you, sit up. Don't cry so much." She heaved herself round, stopping a second in surprise and began to howl louder than before. I sat down on the bed. "How long have you been here ?" The sobs died down a little and a voice hoarse with crying moaned : "Yesterday." "I came yesterday too, look at me, I'm not crying," I boasted. She raised herself onto one elbow and her swollen eyes looked at me in pity and condescension. "You haven't fought for freedom all your life as I have." Ah, a political case. Was she well-known ? One did meet interesting people in a place like this. "How did you fight for freedom ?" I wanted to know a little more, after all even opinions on freedom vary considerably. But this shook her more than she could stand and crumbling into herself her vocal efforts surpassed all earlier noises. I poked her again after a bit. "Get up and dress, you must feel rotten." She allowed herself to be persuaded and, after re-arranging the cord of her bath robe and smoothing down the crumpled sheets, a firm line round her mouth assured me that this was all the dressing she proposed to do. The old opening question: "What's your name ?" "Teresinnia," she said, as if it were one of the most common names in the world. "What?" "Teresinnia." "What else did you do except fighting for freedom?" She drew her robe closer round herself: "I've always done creative work." Ah, a writer, an artist. 1 told her that I hoped to be a writer myself one day. Oh that, no, no, she didn't write, she grew cabbages, many cabbages, big ones, small ones, medium ones. With her own hands she had cultivated a plot of land all by herself. Others would reap

what she had planted. The vision proved too much for her, all her dear cabbages, hoo hoo hoo! It was clear that nothing I could do would answer her creative impulses for the time being; later on perhaps something might be done in the way of window boxes or a small flower pot in which she could grow at least one cabbage.

I tiptoed out and was received by Elsa : "Where on earth have you been? Luncheon is being served now. Come quickly and bring your chair." Everybody was grumbling when I came in. "Uneatable again." Lotte was in tears over it. I looked at my own tin basin. Greasy liquid with hard beans and a few carrots swimming in it, no suggestion of meat, the whole thing cold. "We can't eat it," Matilda decided. " Let's use the few good potatoes we can find and have them as salad. It won't take a minute." Feverish activity on all sides and a little later we sat down to quite a satisfying meal. "I must write for food at once! How can the prisoners live and even work on that ?" They all shrugged their shoulders. Apparently this question had been raised again and again.

"You brought us luck," Roma said to me, "this is the first morning in weeks we haven't been locked in." "Do you mean to say you were locked in during day time ?" "At first all day long, we were only unlocked to fetch water and for meals. No parcels, no letters, nothing at all." "But what did you do ?" "You get quite good books here ; one could read, or walk up and down in one's cell, or look out of the window or sleep. There are endless possibilities." I looked at this slim dark girl in her grey slacks and red turban. During the morning I had heard that she was one of the wives who had good reason to believe that her husband was dead until only the day before, when she had been informed that he was alive and in hospital. Her composure was admirable.

"Laurent, Laurent." Was that my name being called outside? "It's you!" Elsa got quite excited. "Perhaps I am

released." I couldn't move from my chair, and looked helplessly at the four faces around me. "That would be a let down, just when I am beginning to like it here." "Probably a parcel." Lotte the placid one was right. It was a parcel. A long green sausage with feathers flying from it. "What on earth is that?" The officer who unrolled it for me in order to find if knives, explosives or similar objects had been sewn into the seams looked at it in blank amazement. Some of her colleagues collected round it, wondering, until one who was a girl guide in her spare time had a brainwave : "Surely it's a sleeping bag! You see, you creep in here, your head goes there and it ties up at the sides. You'll look like a babe in arms." It was one of the most brilliant ideas my mother had ever had and I was to bless her for it every night I slept in it, tied up, snug and warm, although it was quite a job in the mornings disentangling myself from the feathers it kept losing constantly in undiminishing quantities. Very proudly I showed it to everyone, and for the remainder of the day the sleeping bag proved the main topic of conversation.

Days passed, all alike in their routine, only interrupted by such excitements as parcels, food sent in, letters and the weekly visits. Those visits were the greatest strain of our sheltered lives. One knew they would be coming, but one did not know when. So for days one was listening for one's name to be called. When Matilda's deep voice sounded from outside, "Swing your right arm, Mrs. Muller, not the leg ; the arm, Mrs. Van Houten," I thought I heard "Laurent, Laurent," when two excitable ladies on the other side of the landing had their daily row, which usually occurred at about 11 a.m., calling each other names, I jumped from my cell, thinking it was "Laurent, Laurent." The birds sang "Laurent," the stairs creaked "Laurent," the keys clattered "Laurent." When it actually did happen I was either just in the process of washing my hair or sound asleep in the sun outside. The shock invariably sent me trembling like a leaf

and all through the fifteen minutes weekly visit with a wardress on one side and my mother looking sadly at her peculiar offspring from the other, I trembled from head to foot. The moment it was over, the trembling stopped completely, and boisterously I went back to the others, giving them a highly coloured account of my contact with the outer world.

Sundays were distinguished by even worse food than usual, and Church in the mornings. Not being a Churchgoer I had meant to stay in my cell and read a book, when Elsa appeared : "You must come, it's a change if nothing else." I protested: "My dear, one doesn't go to Church for a change." "Don't you want to see the other people?" "What other people ? I'm seeing them all the time ; to tell you a secret, I'm getting rather tired of seeing them"—Sundays being always my worst tempered days. "The Fascists, the 18b's, the prisoners, Anna de Freeze the big spy, Mrs. C. who's just killed those three women. It's definitely worth while." Elsa insisted. I stared at her: "Why didn't you say so at once, of course I'll come, I hadn't realised we'd all be together, this is the chance of a lifetime!" I hurriedly combed my hair and we went to catch up with the others who were already queuing at the centre, where all the different wings of the building met. Elsa grinned. "There's the singing, too, we all sing as loud as we can, it's an outlet, does you no end of good." I grinned back ; how human she was. I wished at that moment I could have her for a real friend, not just a chance acquaintance of internment.

Our wing began to file in now and we were told to sit all together on the back benches. "Who are the people in front ?" "British Fascists, they always have the best seats, the best wing too. After all they're English." Some of these English ladies were dressed in dirndls with long blonde plaits wound round their heads, German fashion, clearly showing by their dress and behaviour where their sympathies were to be found. Realising more clearly than the prison authorities

that we, the Internees, were mostly to be classified as "mistakes" and definitely opposed to their ideas, they ignored us completely as the poor democrats we were. There were others in rich fox furs and small flower- and fruit-laden hats, carrying handbags and faultless white gloves, giving the impression that they were patronising their parish church. The prisoners sitting on the other side of the gangway in their striped dresses and blue and red ties had a great deal of fun with that latter category. "Coo! look at that one! Her ladyship's 'orses are waiting outside." They weren't ashamed of pointing and the remarks they passed on all of us, myself not excepted, were nobody's business. On the whole, they were a good-natured crowd, and the fact that they were not envious of our comparative freedom, the clothes we wore, the food we ate, and the cigarettes we smoked, was always a source of amazement to me. On the contrary, they seemed to feel that they were the rightful owners of this mansion, and we the patiently-suffered intruders, not to be trusted and certainly not to be envied, as we all would come to a sad end, whereas they would be allowed to stay on at a time when we would be all chucked out and forgotten. Which latter idea undoubtedly contained some truth.

The back benches on the prisoners' side were occupied by those inmates of the hospital who were able to walk. Here you saw grey and drawn, infinitely sad and touching faces. In my dreams they afterwards combined into one large pasty coloured mask which came nearer, nearer, nearer, until it was identified with my own face and made a peach of a nightmare, not losing at all by its steady recurrence. Among them were the "week-enders," old red-faced ladies who were drunk and disorderly on a Saturday, were delivered the same night into the hospital where they spent a pleasant Sunday of recovery ; on Monday they came before Court and were sentenced, and if all went well, Saturday saw them roaming the public houses, having just one too many, so that they

would be with us in Church again on a Sunday. In its way, their's was a well-regulated existence, and if too much was spent on a Saturday it was compensated by cheap living for the rest of the week.

"Where's Mrs. C. the murderess ?" I wanted my money's worth. "They are all behind us, on the balcony upstairs. You'll see them when they stand up for the singing." As we were now assembled, the service began and plunging into the first hymn with great devotion and noise, I carefully looked up. "Do you mean the little dull woman in the black hat ? she looks so ordinary!" "Yes, that's her all right. They say she screams at night." I didn't wonder. I could understand that for her a little singing wasn't quite sufficient outlet. But she did look ordinary! And was that de Freeze, the great spy, whose trial was the excitement of the moment ? She wasn't even beautiful. With a little plush cape round her shoulders she looked more as if she kept a seaside boarding house. "Why aren't they with the others ?" I asked. "They aren't convicted yet, they are being treated as honoured guests, with the utmost care and consideration. You know that in England people are assumed to be innocent until their guilt has been proved." Was bitterness raising its ugly head in me ? This woman, who had destroyed three human lives, was considered innocent, while we, who had done nothing, were guilty. Just the reverse procedure. Elsa, with her uncanny capacity for sensing what was going on in me, shook her head : "Don't let it infuriate you. It's war time, remember that——" "Sh. Sh." The people in front gave us angry glances. We discovered that we were still standing up, craning our necks while everyone else had sat down, and the sermon was about to start.

I had spoken to the chaplain once or twice before, he seemed a mild little man and I had not credited him with an undue burden of intelligence. But he had something else infinitely more important which I realised the moment he

began to speak. His power of suggestion was such that no one in his congregation remained uninterested or bored. Remembering the astonishing variety of classes, creeds, nationalities and convictions represented by his audience, so much more colourful a picture than we Internees alone would have provided, his task seemed almost hopeless. Yet far from it. When he said "The world is dark," the Fascists were convinced that secretly he was one of them, and, as they did, deplored the democratic state of England ; the Nazis (and we had a few of them) sadly considered those countries of Europe which were not yet being governed by an enlightened Quisling regime ; some of the prisoners undoubtedly reflected that they should have left those silver spoons to their original owners ; and the week-enders shrank from the prospect of a ginless, whiskeyless and certainly brandyless week; perhaps even Mrs. C. came to the conclusion that, instead of three she might have killed only two people, had she realised in time the sad state this world was in. And when, after many moving passages, he concluded with the words : "But it is in our hands to make a better future, all of us, you, and you, and you, are the creators of that future," the Facists saw themselves accomplishing their glorious undertaking ; Nazis in spirit goosestepped up and down Whitehall; the little Irish girl decided that next time she would take the tea-set as well; week-ender No. 1 considered a little bribery in order to obtain at least one bottle of stout; and de Freeze entertained good hopes that her spying activities had not been in vain. Terresinnia saw herself growing bigger and better cabbages, taking time off to sit on election platforms almost, but not quite, next to Mr. Herbert Morrison ; Elsa held her husband's hand ; Matilda cooked dainty meals explaining in kind yet firm tones the amount of labour and skill involved ; and I, I had fleeting visions of a really good dinner, new autumn clothes, achievements in the fields of literature, poetry and the art of living ; and somewhere a wish and a certainty.

The certainty that I would be free, and the wish to enjoy that freedom in a lastingly better world where it would not be an illusion only, but a reality.

And when, after more and louder hymn-singing, we filed out—being counted at the door, Facists first, aliens last—I was aware of the fact that for the past hour I had been under the spell of one of the greater diplomats of my time.

Chapter Five

I take ta knit ten a, and den t utind aix, tatds

DURING the next few weeks two events of almost equal importance occurred. I took to knitting, hardly an event you might say ; and I lost my greatest friends, but "how dreadful" you might say. How can such a thing happen? Do you mean *all* of them ? "All of them," I would reply firmly, nodding my head. "But how did it happen?" you might insist. "Were they all sheltering from a thunderstorm in a wooden hut and were they struck by lightning ? Or did they happen to sit in the same bus when it fell down the Embankment ? One friend, yes. You often lose one friend. People lose them as they lose handkerchiefs, one by one. You replace them that way too. But all of them ?" And smiling at your inexperience I would hint darkly : "They are still alive. For all I care they can stay alive until Doomsday. Cowards all. Traitors all. I've lost them. It doesn't hurt any more." And for all your inquisitiveness you wouldn't get another word out of me.

"But knitting," you might say, "how does knitting come into it?" Again I would smile kindly. "Oh, it does come into it, very much so," I would assure you. "What does a man do when he loses everything he values most ? He goes crazy, he looks for a girl friend, he gets drunk. What does a woman do if she finds herself in a similar position? She would like to kill herself, but decides that it would be a rash

thing to do ; she dreams of a man, one man and one only, whom she is going to love for always, and after having tried several small drinks which make her sad, ill or giggly, she might well, under the circumstances, take to knitting. Not in the casual fashion mind you, doing one row here and one row there, letting Auntie carry on if the moths haven't got into it in the meantime, but making a real job of it, bringing force, determination and enterprise into play. The colour doesn't matter, the shape doesn't matter, the finished product might be the laughing stock for generations to come, it's the knitting that counts.

So that instead of wondering, "What is David doing now ? How could he! How could he! He always said he loved me so much!" the serious knitter would say to herself: "Ten more rows to be done before lunch time, hurry, hurry, hurry, two plain, two purl, two plain, two purl. Damn it all, I've got the pattern wrong again!" And instead of staring into distances following the wandering of the clouds with tear-filled eyes harbouring sad memories, she'd knit and knit, knowing in her heart that she might get those two sleeves finished by the time Gertie next door had only done one and three quarters."

So I took to knitting, and perhaps you appreciate now, that the above-mentioned events were of an interlacing quality. Whilst I might have knitted without losing my friends (though this too is a probability not to be overlooked) I couldn't have borne the cruelty of this loss without the lulling, drug-like, syncopatic activity of knitting.

During that time the air raids started in earnest. One night, I had just gone to bed, and was reading aloud to myself (the knowledge that no sound would ever penetrate my stone walls made me daring, noisy and most movingly expressive) when the sirens went, "click," the light was switched off, and I sat in darkness. For a moment I caught my breath. Would they keep us locked in during a raid ? The droning of

planes came near and anti-aircraft guns went into action. I dived into my slacks, put shoes and a coat on and sat on the bed, waiting, listening, shivering all over. Please unlock me, please unlock me ; I was frantic. Should I ring the bell, our only communication with the outside world ? Usually it didn't help much. Either there were instructions to unlock us, or we would stay where we were, each one alone in a cell, helpless and frightened, while the Battle of Britain was raging outside.

Someone did ring a bell. It sounded thin and pathetic against the bangs without. But it was a signal. Everybody started ringing bells, banging on doors, knocking at walls, shouting, screaming : "Unlock us, unlock us, let us out, let us out, help, hurry." The uproar was terrific. The call was repeated in other wings until the whole prison resounded with bells ringing, feet stamping, chairs being hurled against doors and frightened women screaming at the top of their voices : "Let us out." The clattering of keys was heard now, and hurriedly one door after another was opened by wardresses in dressing gowns (some of them had been asleep already), flashing their torches into each cell: "All right ?" Matilda burst in on me : "Livia, where are you ? Are you crying, my poor little one?" She was feeling for me in the dark. "I am not crying." Tears were streaming down my face, but she couldn't see them, "I am not crying. What are we supposed to do now ?" "Come over, we are all in my cell, keep to the wall, they needn't see us." Quickly I grabbed some chocolate, took her hand and we were just tiptoeing out when desperate knocking came from next door. "Is anyone in there?" Matilda was surprised. "My God, it is Teresinnia, it *would* happen to her. Officer, officer come quickly, someone has been forgotten." The poor young wardress hurried along quickly, quite upset herself, for it was more than she could cope with. Teresinnia charged out and almost clawed her face : "You left me in there on purpose!" We took her by the arm :

"No one did it on purpose, come over with us, we will make some cocoa."

There was quite a party in Matilda's cell. Someone had managed to find hot water and cocoa was being made. Once one got used to the darkness one began to see quite well. It was Elsa, as usual, who stood on a chair and looked out of the window. "The searchlights are lovely. Look, that was an 'onion.' Another one .... another one. Things are happening. There is a fire over there!" She was as excited as a child. I held on to her and looked out. It was thrilling, the play of searchlights on the tree-tops, the fantastic colouring of the sky, droning of planes one couldn't see, the resounding boom of the guns; from this dark cell filled with huddling, whispering figures it looked as unreal as a dream.

A torch flashed at us; "Get away from the window. You should all be downstairs." It was gone. "Shall we go downstairs?" Roma looked nervous. "I don't think it will make much difference." Lotte with her sense for realities was right. The main thing was to keep away from the landing where one might get hurt by falling glass as all the roofs practically consisted of it. The cells were comparatively safe. A big yawn came from where Teresinnia had settled down: "I think I will go back to bed, I am sleepy." She vanished. One after another we did the same; we were cold, tired, and the excitement had left us exhausted. And when, at last, the 'All Clear' sounded, most of us were fast asleep in our beds.

There was a hush over the prison next morning. People looked white and a little bit ashamed, friends quarrelled and there was a definite tendency to keep one's distance. At 9 o'clock a call came: "Everyone to the ground floor. The Governor wants to speak to you!" He was short and to the point. He was deeply disgusted with our conduct of last night. This prison was one of the safest places in London; actually we were better off here than anywhere else. The

lack of shelters didn't matter in the least, this was as good or better than a shelter. And what was more, we Aliens had shown ourselves to be the only noisy and discontented ones. There had been no sound from any of the other wings, prisoners and Fascists alike had behaved beautifully. If it occurred again we would be kept locked in, as the unlocking was a privilege, not an institution. Elsa and 1 looked at each other. We the only noisy ones ? Had we been dreaming last night ?

He left us without another glance and only later on, at exercise, the news came through, for news travels quickly in a prison, that exactly the same speech had been delivered in the other wings, with the only difference that this time we, the Aliens, had behaved so beautifully. We were pacified, and those of us who liked discussions early in the morning had long talks on adult education.

From then onwards we had raids constantly. Hardly had we gone down for exercise, the sirens went and we were rushed back. At night we had just time to wash and undress quickly after being locked up, when the sirens went and we were unlocked again. We acquired quite a technique in arranging our night life ; fear and terror were forgotten and social graces were developed instead. We went on visits, had coffee and cakes, played cards, talked, and only took care not to be seen on the landings, as that was strictly forbidden. Sneaking across corridors and stairs was in the nature of a Boy Scout outing.

As the raids got worse, rumours became more persistent to the effect that we would soon go to the Isle of Man. Officers going round from one door to another, taking down names and numbers from the cards stuck to each cell, seemed to prove that this time it was true. Lotte came to me : "Livia, they have just been to your cell. You are going." "Have they been to Elsa's?" "Not yet." I hardly dared looking at Elsa's face. I knew her secret fear. And we all knew

that what had happened once, might easily happen again.

That night after the raid signals I went to her cell; she was in bed. "What will you do if you aren't going?" "I'll kill myself." "Don't be melodramatic," I replied, but she had said it so calmly that "melodramatic" seemed hardly an appropriate word to use. My heart almost stopped beating. Did she mean it? She went on quietly: "I could just stand it as long as you all were here. If you are going and I am left behind again, I won't be responsible for any of my actions." There was nothing to be said.

I went out, passing Matilda's door; she was talking to someone and I stopped to listen. Was she in one of her lyrical moods? They were hard to bear at times. She was. Her voice was deep with emotion: "The eternal sky, the stars, the universe. How small and insignificant they make me feel: and yet, they lift me to greater heights than you can imagine. Life is mysterious and wonderful." A voice I hadn't heard before, a strange voice, said rather impatiently: "One shouldn't use nature as an excuse for one's imaginary feelings. Nature has nothing to do with that." Who was she? She sounded exciting.

I went in: "This is me, Livia, can I come in?" Matilda was not pleased. Apparently she wanted to keep her new friend to herself; so I had to do some introducing in the dark. "I am Gabrielle, only came to-day," the strange voice answered. Matilda got over her little mood: "Actually, I wanted you to come, Livia; Gabrielle has been at the same college as you. She was just telling me about it." "Were you really?" I could hardly believe it, then she was almost a friend. "When were you there?" "1923, long before your time." "Well, then you must know Elizabeth, don't you?" She did, and for the next hour we talked about old friends and mutual experiences. I suddenly remembered that I had heard her name before, she had always been talked about as the most brilliant student of her time; her doings and life

had become legendary at the school. And I had to come to prison in order to meet her: was there a purpose in it? The 'All clear' sounded. "Good night, good night."

I stood still, watching Gabrielle crossing over to her side of the landing. In the twilight she looked tall, very slim, with a mob of tousled dark hair. How beautifully she walked! Suddenly she turned and waved to me: "Good night, Livia!" I dived into my door, stricken with terror. Had there been a smile in her voice? Was she laughing at me? What a lovely voice it was. I wouldn't let her see how much I liked her, I was too old for that sort of thing. Let her find her own friends! Much too disturbed to go to sleep again, I sat down on my chair, wrapped in coats and rugs, and watched the dawn rise, holding long imaginary conversations with my new friend Gabrielle, hearing again and again that strange voice say to me: "Good night, Livia."

Earlier than usual the keys rattled. "Meyer! Imhoff! Steinach! Get your trunks packed, come down to reception as quickly as possible! Landau, Freer, Hoffmann, be ready for 9 o'clock." Names were being called, screams of excitement, pleasure, impatience. This meant "Isle of Man," no doubt about it. "Laurent, where are you? Be ready at noon." Packing again. Elsa came in: "Can I help you?" "No thanks, I can manage." I cautiously peeped at her. Was she going? "No, not yet. They'll be calling people all day long." She refused to get excited as long as there was a chance. The sight of my putting tooth brushes into slippers and bananas among silk blouses was too much for her: "Here you fool, let me do that." I was pushed aside, and for the rest of the morning had to be content with handing things which weren't wanted, making bright remarks and eating chocolate. Teressinnia looked in, despising me. So I had found someone again to do my work for me. All morning I strained my ears expecting to hear Elsa's name being called, meanwhile pretending that everything was quite all right.

At noon they helped me to bundle case, kitbag and other belongings down the four stairs into "Reception." How much nicer this was than my arrival six weeks ago.

"Reception" looked like a cross between a village jumble sale and Caledonian Market. Everyone's carefully packed possessions were strewn round the floor, examined, turned, felt, shaken. Had we smuggled dynamite into Holloway? If so, we were not to take it out again. "Were we to undress ?" I enquired shamelessly. Yet it seemed that this search was conducted rather negligently, the aim being to create disorder in the shortest possible time, which was accomplished with a rare degree of efficiency. Sadly I sat among the remains of Elsa's labour. She was far away and I wished I had watched more closely how exactly it was being done. "May I do this, Madam?" An angel from Heaven had arrived in the shape of a friendly, smiling, pink-cheeked girl whom I didn't remember having seen before. She told me she had been a lady's-maid, and her professional handling of the situation made me feel envious of the lady who must have flourished under her care. At that moment my decision was final: whatever else I might become in my far away and glorious future, if a lady were entitled to such happiness as this, a lady I would try to be.

Whilst I was watching my case being labelled : Laurent, Rushen Internment Camp, Isle of Man, an officer came to collect me : "Quickly, your Mother." So I was to see her once more. She was brave and remarked only once that now I was being 'deported.' Was 1 ? It didn't move me in the least. Soon I would be imported again, I assured her hopefully. What really was frightful was that Elsa wasn't coming with us. "Who was Elsa ?" She didn't even know who Elsa was. We had travelled in opposite directions for the past six weeks, and whereas she still lived in the horror of the tribunal day, mine was a life full of new impressions and exciting **people.**

"Oh, Elsa was just a girl," I said, feeling rather like being back at school, when parents were infuriating by their lack of understanding and their assumed superiority. "Any way, she wasn't coming with us. It was frightful." My poor mother obviously thought I was slightly demented by my long stay in prison, and that a change of air would do me good. Patting my cheek, she said, yes, it was frightful, and feeling that under the circumstances it was difficult to achieve mutual understanding, we parted.

I rushed back : "Any news ?" They all knew what I meant. "No, not yet, it looks hopeless." Matilda was furiously cutting sandwiches for the journey when Gabrielle came in. My heart sank. She wasn't coming either, being such a recent arrival. "What's the excitement about ?" We told her. She stared at us : "And you sit here doing nothing ? Nincompoops! It is obviously an oversight, they must get in touch with the Home Office at once." I gave her what I hoped was a sarcastic look : "And how do you propose to bring about such a miraculous development ? Influence ? A little string-pulling ?" She ignored me and went out.

After ten minutes she was back. "I've seen the Governor." "You have *what* ?" We were speechless. "They are checking up now. We shall hear something definite in the afternoon."

The afternoon passed, Elsa's face got whiter and whiter, people came one by one to our part of the landing, asking in whispers if there were any news. The whole wing seemed to be breathing in suspense. Even the officers stood around in little groups looking up from time to time to the fourth floor, waiting. Supper was brought, none of us could eat, we just sat around hardly talking, not knowing what to do or say. Then an officer came running : "You are going, you are going ; come down to reception at once." "Yoo, hoo!" Was it Lotte, Roma, all of us ? Everyone jumped from their cells; there was chattering, questions, movement, Elsa burst into sobs, and began to shake all over; someone had to

hold her head, put her down on a chair and give her little sips of water to drink. Innumerable hands helped to fling her possessions into a case, and after she had been safely deposited in "Reception" we began to feel alive again. There was relief on the faces of people whom we would never have suspected of undue interest in us, and judging by the sudden general animation and rejoicing, one might have thought that a great victory had been won.

Locking-up time was near and, with a shock, the knowledge came back to me that Gabrielle was staying behind. We all shook hands with her, as one could never be quite sure of the nightly air raid. "I don't suppose I'll ever see you again." I sounded as casual as I could. "Good-bye and good luck." "Good luck to you, Livia, we may meet again, who knows. If I am not released soon, I'll turn up on the Isle of Man, we'll meet there. Should we both be free before long, this is my London address." I tried to keep my hand steady as I was writing it down. I didn't dare look at her again : "Well, I'll be seeing you some time. Good-bye." I kissed Roma, who being Italian was also staying at Holloway, and without turning back I went to my cell and was locked in for the last time.

I couldn't settle down to anything. I re-arranged my travelling bag as there would be no time for it in the morning, got ready for the night, and waited. There it was : air raid, air raid! Steps of hurrying feet, keys, unlocking : "All right ?" Yes, I was all right now, I would see her again.

The whole prison shook to its foundations that night, it was the most vicious raid that we had had so far, the night when the docks were burning, setting the whole sky aflame in colours of yellow, pink, and blood red.

I slid sideways along the walls, made a daring dash across the landing. "Who is there?" A torch flashed along the railings, I stood stock still, holding my breath. The officer passed me, thinking that perhaps she had been imagining

things. This was Gabrielle's door; was anyone in there? I might have known! Matilda's unmistakable whispers. Were they talking about me? "Livia is a great responsibility." Matilda sounded weary. "She is vain, superficial, thinks about clothes all the time. Lazy, too. But I think one might be able to help her a little, show her the deeper side of life, make her understand that even scrubbing floors brings contentment. She is so young, there is still hope for her. We older ones must make it our duty to do what we can. She is delicate, too." Gabrielle seemed bored: "From the little I have seen of her, Livia seems to me a grown-up person well able to take care of herself. She doesn't need help, at least not that kind of help. Unless she asks you for it, I wouldn't offer assistance. It is no good." Matilda was unconvinced and said so. I was boiling with rage: so that's how they talked about me, that was the idea behind Matilda's fussing over me which I had taken for sheer kindness of heart, trying at times, but not to be discouraged. Never again would I speak to her, just let her come near me, I'd show her. They were saying good-night in there, I supposed I would have to let her pass me first before I could organise my own retreat. Thank God I was going to the Isle of Man to-morrow, there would be new people, I wouldn't have to put up with that kind of nonsense. I could have pushed her down the stairs in cold blood as she was passing me, for how I hated her at that moment, as I shrank deeper into the shadows!

"Livia!" Gabrielle couldn't have seen me, it was impossible. "Don't stand out there in the cold, come here for a moment." It was she. Well, I had come to say good-bye again, I would do it quickly and have done with it. "I heard someone move out there and I had a distinct feeling it was you," Gabrielle explained. "Cigarette?" We smoked in silence. "It is a highly pleasing experience to listen to the patronizing speeches of one's elders and betters," I said. She laughed at me:

"So you were out there all the time? You shouldn't listen at key holes ; it is not done." "I couldn't help hearing. Thanks for standing up for me. I had no idea Matilda felt like that. That shows how one can never tell about other people. No one is to be trusted, no one!" I burst into tears and suddenly it all came out: how I had lost my friends, how hurt and lonely I was, how frightened, how I didn't know what would become of me, and many other things which I had carried around with me, partly buried in the subconscious.

She let me cry for a while and then she quietly told me that I had to learn to rely on myself, never to expect anything from anyone, and to be independent. Only then would I find that there was nothing to be frightened of, ever. She told me many wise and simple things amidst the explosion of bombs and the thudding of gun-fire, and when I finally left her to get some sleep I felt happy again, and confident. Whatever was going to happen now, I felt I had a chance to readjust myself. And it would be easier now, for at last I had found a friend, Gabrielle.

Chapter Six

J *I go on a journey*

THERE are several ways of travelling. Some travel for pleasure, others on business, some travel alone, others prefer company, some start out in numbers, coming back singly with a faint expression of disgust on their faces and a pronounced taste for privacy, others embark alone and return alone ; and again others go on a Cook's tour.

As any organiser of Cook's, or similar ventures, will tell you, it is a job which requires foresight, discretion, a good working knowledge of mass psychology and major strategical qualities in abundance. It is a well paid job, which is as it should be, and I suspect that the company responsible for our conveyance from Holloway to the Isle of Man did not see fit (in the interests of war-time economy) to employ such an expert, which is a consideration worthy of praise and respect. That under the circumstances it did not work quite as smoothly as it might have done, is understandable.

For instance there was a lot of waiting involved. We were rushed out of bed at about 5 o'clock, had to be ready within three minutes, and then stood around the ground floor for about an hour, untidy, uncomfortable, yawning, being counted the while, waiting. One last look at the locked doors of Roma's and Gabrielle's cells—they weren't even allowed to come and wave to us—and we were rushed to the main gate, took a hurried breakfast outside, each was given a small parcel with dry bread and corned beef, and again we stood for an hour, waiting. Finally we were marched to the front

court, a hand waved from an upper window, was it a Fascist's, a prisoner's, a murderer's hand ? We didn't care, we waved back frantically; and quickly, quickly, we were rushed into buses, after all we had a train to catch, and now the waiting began in earnest. We sat and waited. After a while an imposing force of Police, male and female, arrived to guard us on the way. There would be reinforcements at Euston. Another hour passed, the Governor came out to see if we were all ready, and at last the gates opened, and bus after bus, heavily guarded, drove out of Holloway carrying about 150 women who had a train to catch.

We enjoyed our drive after such peaceful living. We began to feel enterprising, sat up and took notice. Some of the women had had their children restored to them the previous night, and everyone suddenly took an enthusiastic interest in little Dora, who squinted, little Elsie, who was a picture of a child, and fat little Manfred, who was considered to be pale and seedy-looking, after two months in a children's home. Sights were pointed out, fashions were being studied. They still seemed to be very much the same. Here was Euston ; we came to a stop in a little side street. "Oh! it would be another two hours until our train was due to go out. It was a good thing we were in time!" I should say it was. There is nothing like waiting to steady one's nerves.

Matilda, who had been separated from us in the mad scramble to get into the buses, despairingly waved her rucksack at us. All our food was in there, but there was no means of communication other than grimacing and pointing. Elsa and Lotte, who in the meantime had become very great friends, sat whispering, so I waved back at Matilda, feeling less bitter about her sad conception of me and thinking that after all she meant well. How sleepy I was!

Suddenly there was great agitation. The train was leaving in three minutes ; hurry, hurry, hurry! In crocodile formation we proudly entered the station and marched down the plat-

form. Somehow I was caught up among the first batch, and looking back over my shoulder the spectacle was imposing, a picture not easily to be forgotten. The platform was now overflowing with women of all shapes, ages and sizes, some carrying babies, others dragging screaming children, losing badly packed parcels on the way, being escorted either side by Policemen in shining helmets and Policewomen in white gloves. (Police and Internees seemed about equal in numbers, if not in status). The passengers stared at us, open-mouthed, taking it all in. Here was something to tell the family about when they got home. I could just hear them : "My dear, you never saw such a frightful looking lot. The scum of the earth, criminals all of them. Should be kept behind lock and key." I couldn't blame them, we certainly did look frightful and untidy after a sleepless night and the strenuous waiting activities of the morning. Hardly had we settled down in the train, when it began to move, and this was the last of London that most of us were to see for a long time to come.

Liverpool was reached without undue haste and after everyone else had left the train we were handed out, counted, put into buses. Were we going to catch the boat straight away ? Nobody knew. It didn't look as if we were driving down to the docks. We passed a big building with barred windows : Liverpool prison. Would we stay there? Nobody knew. One of the advantages of travelling as an Internee is the fact that there is no need to worry about accommodation —ever! There is always a prison where one can stay, have a meal, and feel at home. Some of us had 'done' three, four or five in the course of their detention and compared notes as to style, comfort and general suitability. There was one, I forget which, where a bath was to be had every day. What more is there to wish for ?

We came to a halt at a peculiar looking place. What was it, surely not a prison? "A Seaman's Home," we were informed, where we would stop for a cup of tea. As it was

ALVA.

Unskill'd!

CARLOS.

'Tis pity I've no leisure now
To fight this worthy battle fairly out:
But at some other time, we——

ALVA.

Prince, we both
Miscalculate—but still in opposite ways.
You, for example, overrate your age
By twenty years, whilst on the other hand,
I, by as many, underrate it—

CARLOS.

Well!

ALVA.

And this suggests the thought, how many nights
Beside his lovely Lnsitanian bride—
Your mother—would the King right gladly give
To buy an arm like this, to aid his crown.
Full well he knows, far easier is the task
To make a monarch than a monarchy;
Far easier too, to stock the world with kings
Than frame an empire for a king to rule.

CARLOS.

Most true, Duke Alva, yet——

ALVA.

And how much blood,
Your subjects' dearest blood, must flow in streams
Before two drops could make a king of you.

CARLOS.

Most true, by Heaven! and in two words comprised,
All that the pride of merit has to urge
Against the pride of fortune. But the moral—
Now, Duke Alva!

ALVA.

Woe to the nursling babe
Of royalty, that mocks the careful hand
Which fosters it! How calmly it may sleep
on the soft cushion of our victories!
The monarch's crown is bright with sparkling gems,
But no eye sees the wounds that **purchased them.**

This sword has given our laws to distant realms,
Has blazed before the banner of the cross,
And in these quarters of the globe has traced
Ensanguined furrows for the seed of faith.
God was the judge in heaven, and I on earth.

CARLOS.

God, or the Devil—it little matters which ;
Yours was his chosen arm—that stands confess'd.
And now no more of this. Some thoughts there are
Whereof the memory pains me. I respect
My father's choice,—my father needs an Alva!
But that he needs him is not just the point
I envy in him : a great man you are,
This may be true, and I well nigh believe it,
Only I fear your mission is begun
Some thousand years too soon. Alva, methinks,
Were just the man to suit the end of time.
Then when the giant insolence of vice
Shall have exhausted Heaven's enduring patience,
And the rich waving harvest of misdeeds
Stands in full ear, and asks a matchless reaper,
Then should you fill the post. O God ! my Paradise !
My Flanders! But of this I must not think.
'Tis said you carry with you a full store
Of sentences of death already signed.
This shows a prudent foresight! No more need
To fear your foe's designs, or secret plots :
O, father! ill indeed I've understood thee,
Calling thee harsh, to save me from a post,
Where Alva's self alone can fitly shine !—
'Twas an unerring token of your love.

ALVA.

These words deserve——

CARLOS.

What!

ALVA.

But your birth protects you.

CARLOB *(seizing his sword).*

That calls for blood ! Duke, draw your sword.

on a deck chair. Matilda came : "They say we shall have to share beds on the Isle of Man. Shall we stay together?" "Good God! yes"; I was horrified. "How do you know ?" "Everybody says so, it was in the papers too. Elsa and Lotte are going to share. If we can, we will all stay together, shall we ?" "Of course we will!" We had been friends for weeks now, I hadn't thought the matter needed mentioning at all.

There was something strange happening on that boat. People who had been constantly together at Holloway kept a distance from each other, everyone looking out for themselves, wanting best seats, quarrelling, making cutting remarks on each other's clothes, behaviour, looks. Perhaps we were over-tired, I was imagining it all. Elsa was strange, too ; but then she was ill with excitement, being suddenly so near her husband. Did he know she was coming? She strained her eyes trying to catch the first glimpse of the Island.

We got there in the afternoon. Waiting until everyone else had left the boat, Police received us, checked papers, identity cards, luggage. A few local children staring at the "Aliens"; abuse which we pretended not to hear ; a train waiting ; eight people in one compartment, locked from the outside ; the last stage of the journey.

The four of us had managed to stay together. Teresinnia had appeared miraculously from nowhere in particular, there was Mrs. Kessiter, a dear old lady, refugee from Holland, who was hoping to find her daughter and grandchildren waiting for her. She was full of information about the camp and told us there were two villages, Port Erin and Port St. Mary. Erin was the more important one, the Commandant lived there, and she thought we might all be put into the big hotels. She herself hoped very much that her daughter, who stayed at St. Mary, had arranged for them to be together. It seemed to be a smaller place, more of a fishing village, and people were billeted in private houses. We listened to her, wondering where we would find ourselves that night.

The Island looked lovely. There were hills in the distance, queer crater-like formations, wide plains, fields, trees, and fuchsias in bloom everywhere. Hedges of them along the railway line, masses of red further away, nodding, blossoming, glowing fuchsias. To us, after Holloway and the Seaman's Home, it seemed unbelievable. We would be able to go for walks, sit in the fields, lie in the sun. We hadn't thought of it in that light: this was marvellous. Suddenly we all felt very hopeful and animated.

"St. Mary." The train slowed down. The station was crowded with sunburnt, laughing, shouting people, thousands of them, waving at us : "Hallo, hallo, how many are you ? You will like it here, cheerio!" Elsa discovered a friend: "Martha, are we getting out here ?" A big blonde girl almost fell into the train. "No, you are all going to Erin. Here, have some sweets!" She threw a bag of toffee at us, others waved flowers, someone I didn't know and never saw again flung me little kisses ; it was like a mad-house. Gosh! didn't they all look German! Old Mrs. Kessiter had found her daughter, she was the only one to get out here. "Good-bye, good-bye, see you again!" We rolled on.

The landscape had suddenly become very bare, hardly a tree ; this was seaside all right. How I would loathe it. If there had been thousands of people at St. Mary, there were millions at Erin. The noise was incredible. Had they unlocked us then, I would have begged to stay in that train. "Stand back, everybody!" The inevitable Police, even here in the Camp. Compartment by compartment we were unlocked, let out and received by a smiling, gushing lady. "This way dear." She had helpers who were told where to take us. "Three for the Hydro, six to The Towers, eight to Seaview, four to the Strand Cafe. You have lost your friend, dear? Never mind, you will find her again. No one gets lost here." We were pushed, counted, torn apart. Elsa and Lotte just vanished, only by hanging on to Matilda's ruck-sack did I

manage not to get lost myself.

We found ourselves tramping down a lane. "This is where you are going to live," a cheerful girl told us. She knocked at the door of a boarding house : "Two Internees for you, Mrs. Drinkwater." Mrs. Drinkwater was outraged. "I have no room. What will they think of next," and slammed the door in our faces. So that was that. Back to the station, which was already deserted. The smiling lady was just on her way home. "Mrs. Drinkwater had no room for these two," our guide told her. "Mrs. Drinkwater ? Who is Mrs. Drinkwater ? Who are you ?" she wanted to know. I just looked the other way. This was a farce. Matilda would burst in a minute, I could see it coming. "But they've just arrived" ; the girl got flustered too. "Ah yes, so they have, take them to The Bay View, plenty of room there. Good-night, you'll be happy there." She was gone.

This time we walked up the sea front. Sea everywhere, I didn't care. I just wanted a bed to sleep in. The girl was in a hurry. It was almost eight o'clock, there was curfew at eight, she would have to be in her billet by then. The streets were quite empty already. This was The Bay View. "Just knock at the door, all the best, good-night," and before we could thank her, the girl had disappeared. We knocked. Nothing happened, We knocked again. A face showed in a window : "Who are you ?" "We are new, supposed to live here!" "The landlord is out." "Can't you let us in?" "Impossible, the door is locked. You can't get in, we can't come out. Wait!" She was back in a second. "Catch," she threw us bananas, oranges, apples.

I settled down on the steps and wondered if we were going to spend the night there. Matilda's mood suddenly changed and she became hilarious. There were people hanging out of all the windows now, trying to be helpful, laughing, feeling sorry for us. "You'll be put into jail for overstepping the curfew!" "That's O.K. with me, we've just come from there.

Give me Holloway anytime. At least there is a bed for everyone." "You've been at Holloway ?" The little brunnette who had thrown us the oranges looked scared. It suddenly dawned on me that most of the people here hadn't been in prison at all, they had been sent here straight away.

"There is Mr. Harrison, he'll help you!" A young curly-headed clergyman was coming towards us. "Mr. Harrison, these two aren't wanted here. Can they go back home, please?" "What is all this ?" We told him. He was disgusted. "I'll arrange something for you, even if I have to take you to my own house. You must be dead tired. Here let me carry this." He took my things and, after much wandering about, we eventually landed in a small private house where a small bedroom was waiting for us with, horror of horrors, one small bed for two people.

We thanked our Mr. Harrison, had a vague impression of a landlady and three co-internees, several cups of tea, a little bit of unpacking, and bed. At least it was a bed, that was something to be thankful for. Matilda was so cross by this time that she didn't even say good night to me, but lay there tossing, sighing, moaning. I tried to make myself as unnoticeable as I could, determined not to cry. Let me sleep, please let me sleep.

"Good-night Livia." Was I dreaming already ? I had heard it so distinctly. Gabrielle, dear, dear Gabrielle, why aren't you here, I need you so much. I fell asleep.

THE LADIES' PARADISE

Where lies
The Ladies' Paradise ?

On the sea shore
Where the seagulls soar
Ever now as before ;
On the sandy beach
Where the lobsters screech
And the starfish preach ;
On the promenade
Where they ride in state
And are always late,

Here lies
The Ladies' Paradise.

Perfect ladies each and all,
Tripping along as if they might fall,
Full *of* secrets, chitter chatter,
Exclamations, titter tatter,
Giggling in delightful voices
At the sound of which rejoices
All the island high and low
As they flitter to and fro.
Shells adorning throat and hair
Adding beauty to the fair,
As they floating, skipping, dancing,
Form a vision most entrancing.
Perfect ladies each and all,
Answering to no man's call.

For a lady will be gracious
In what ever situation,
And the flighty and flirtatious
Are not given the occasion,
As all ladies are observing
One another with stern mind,
Not permitting any swerving
Of the one or other kind.

Should one fail, there will be outcry
On great waves of consternation,
The offender will be punished
As fits righteous indignation,
Will be banned for ever more
From the peaceful happy shore
Resting under mist blue skies,
The perfect Ladies' Paradise.

Chapter Seven

7k

RUSHEN Internment Camp, Isle of Man. Looking back on it now, I remember long peaceful afternoons in front of our sitting room fire, walks in the fields, along the sea shore, in sun, in rain, in storm. Meeting friends on the promenade : "Have you done any writing, Livia ? May we come to tea soon ?" Laughing, nodding, parting. Having coffee at Miss Gale's, going to the cinema, "Let's be grand and sit in the 9d. ones," admiring Mr. Brindle's display of knitting wools and Harris tweeds : "Do you think that yellow would suit me ?" Looking to see if any new shoes had arrived in the shoe shop : "No, no, I don't want to buy anything, just let's see what they have" ; coming out proudly with a brightly-coloured pair of shoe laces ; taking the landlady's little daughter to buy sweets: "Don't be absurd, of course it's not my own child" ; getting into difficulties with the superintendent ; excitements over parcels, books, letters.

"So and so has been released, two brothers in the Gestapo, fiance in the German air force ; Mrs. de Beer in for duration, husband drowned in the Arandora Star, Jewish refugee." Indignation mounting sky high, gently receding again in the even running of the days.

"They had a fight in the Bradda Glen, no one knows why ; hitting each other, throwing tea cups ;. the children enjoyed it." Mr. Shroeder's lecture on Monday afternoons: "I can't say I agree with his views on Bernard Shaw, but his English, my dear!" "Have you seen the jumpers they make in the Service Exchange now ? I could do better than that." "There

are ducks' eggs to be had at the farm." "I looked everywhere, no chocolate until Friday." "And when she wouldn't sweep under her bed, I said to her : What do you think you are I said, you may have been a lady before you came. Lady, I said, ha ha, here we are all alike, my good lady. The cheek, I said!"

No, we were not all alike, and our lives differed considerably. What was, for me, for the better part of a year a time of comparative contentment and inner freedom, was, for others, the most frightful strain and unhappiness. Those who lived in the big hotels and suffered from the gossip and constant malicious attacks of others, those who stayed in small houses and were used by unscrupulous landladies as maids of all work, those who were torn away from husbands and children, those who knew their families to be in the front lines of London, in the trenches of Swiss Cottage, Bloomsbury and Maida Vale, those who had not yet learned to think of themselves as removed from their own background ; and all those who were not quite consciously determined to make the best of it, at whatever cost.

There were others who liked the absence of responsibility, the fact that no decision was required of them, for some it was the first real "holiday" as they called it, others enjoyed the easy companionship, the chance of meeting people they wouldn't have met in the ordinary course of their lives ; and Mrs. Becker who had kept the little haberdashery shop in a back street of Manchester was happy and proud to dry dishes, graciously handed to her by Mile. Adele, the great singer and opera star.

I had a little of everything. When, later on, people envied me for the privacy and warmth of our room, I said, with a whimsical look in my eye, "Yes, but you should have seen me when I first came ; I had a rotten time," assuming, as a matter of course, that suffering prepares the way to ever greater happiness. Which we all know to be untrue.

The very first days were not so bad, there was too much to do, to see, too many new impressions. The three other girls in the house were nice girls, they had all been maids in English households and liked to help the landlady with her work ; as they had no inclination to use their time in any other way, they did more and more work until they were doing all of it. That was no affair of mine, they could please themselves. The situation became difficult when they expected the same degree of valour from Matilda and myself. As far as I was concerned, I was determined not to do more than my duty. There were definite rules and regulations and I would keep to them ; remaining firm and putting up with all the unpleasantness this entailed, needed greater energy and was more tiresome than if I had cleaned the whole house single-handed three times a day.

We had to go to our district office that first morning. June, the house representative, told us at breakfast that the whole camp was divided into three districts, each headed by a superintendent who was deputising for the commandant. If we wanted anything, needed advice, permission (and there was permission needed for almost everything) we had to go to her. She represented Authority. This morning we would have to introduce ourselves and be looked over. I was glad to be able to leave the house with such a legitimate excuse.

Teresinnia was at the office and I was moved almost to tears to meet such a dear old friend. She was in splendid spirits, had had a three-course dinner the previous night and an excellent breakfast. "There was a cat's hair in my food last night," she whispered to me. "What did you do?" "I took it out." Sensible girl; I loved her that moment. She had seen the superintendent already and was on her way out. "Please wait for me." She handsomely consented to meet me in the pastry shop next door. I hurried through formalities. There were forms to fill in, questions to answer. It all seemed so vague, I missed the prison discipline. "Do

we get pocket money?" That question had worried me all the time. "It will take three to four weeks before your money can be transferred from Holloway. Until then you have to make do with your ten shillings." Good heavens! I had spent my ten shillings. I shouldn't have had those drinks.

Teresinnia was happily employed in the pastry shop, eating one doughnut after another. "Lend me some money please." She gave me half a crown and I had doughnuts too. "I can get all the money I want," she boasted. "How?" "Post savings account, you just get permission from the office and draw 5/- a week pocket money, any amount for bills." It sounded too involved for me. It seemed she had got up extremely early that morning and what she didn't know about camp life wasn't worth mentioning. "Come along, I'll show you everything," she offered. We went round several corners and were in the main street. "This is the Dutch cafe'." "Dutch cafe ?" "It's headquarters now, the Commandant has her office here, but it's difficult to get through to her. The Billeting Officer is here too. If you want to move, you just go to her." "Move ? Can you move then ?" "Of course you can," she laughed at me, "Livia, don't look so unhappy. Now you are the one. Do you remember when you pulled me up at Holloway ?"

Did I remember! "I wish I were back there." She stared at me, open-mouthed. "You are mad!" "No, I mean it," I insisted. "At least you knew where you were. If one is a prisoner, one should be in a prison. It's only fair. This half and half business doesn't impress me at all. It's so aimless." People were standing around in groups, glancing at us curiously. All newcomers were exciting. Teresinnia had made friends already : "Trudi, this is Livia. She is frightened, let's show her round." We had exchanged roles. It was Teresinnia now who boisterously patronised me. "Behind us is the Camp bank, that's where you get your money—if you get it. There's the cinema, two films a week ; I am going this afternoon."

We were walking along the sea front now, all the big hotels were there: Eagle Hotel, Windsor House, Breakwater, Imperial, Snaefell. "That's where the post office is." "I saw a post office down there." "Ah, you mustn't use that, this is the camp post office. You post your letters here, fetch your parcels. There are lists of names if you have a parcel." "How do we get our letters?" "They are brought to you." When would I *get* my mother's first letter? I knew it might take some time, there were stories being told of people who had to wait three months until letters reached them from London.

"This is Collinson's Cafe." An architectural nightmare, a mixture of early Asiatic, late Gothic and Ealing Broadway style. I thought it was a Fata Morgana, an extravagance of my tired brain. But no, there it was and there it remained, and it will probably outlast us all. "What's happening there?" "That's where the adult classes are. There are lectures, handicrafts, gymnastics, elocution, languages, everything. In the afternoon you can have coffee there and dance." The gay life indeed. Coloured posters in the windows told of the splendours to be found inside. There was a camp library too. Not a very good one, as I found out later. "Good God, lunch time!" Teresinnia was shocked. "Can you find your way back by yourself, Livia?" "Of course, you old native, thank you so much, see you soon!" She raced off.

I wouldn't go back to lunch. I wanted to walk by myself. Should I go down to the beach? The tide was high, people were bathing. Very hearty, very hearty indeed. Mrs. Kessiter suddenly came up from behind, carrying a wet bathing suit. "Have you been in the water?" I was incredulous. She was beaming with happiness: "Oh, it's marvellous; you must come in to-morrow, Miss Laurent. Which way are you going? I must hurry back to lunch." "Can I come with you?" She was heading towards St. Mary and I was glad of the walk.

She talked incessantly: "My daughter will be so glad to meet you. Are you quite happy where you are? I have such a lovely room, a real Persian carpet on the floor, and period furniture. You must come and look at it. What a beautiful place this is. Doesn't this view remind you of the Lago Maggiore?" No, it didn't remind me of the Lago Maggiore, I wanted to go back to Holloway; did she know if one could apply for a transfer? "Now, now, Miss Laurent, this will never do. You were always so happy in prison. Why the sudden change? Don't you like it in your place? We'll find room for you at my hotel. It's rather overcrowded, though; would you mind sharing a bed with somebody?" "Yes, I would mind sharing a bed with somebody; sharing with Matilda was quite bad enough." She pretended not to notice my rudeness and went on talking happily.

Dear Mrs. Kessiter, more than once during those first weeks you helped me regain my balance. Not by anything particular you said or did, just by being as you are, reminding me of several aunts I used to hate as a child, thus constituting almost a piece of home for me. By living a little out of time, you managed to see the Norwegian fjords at the back side of Bradda Head, the view from your window alternated between the Bavarian lakes and Northern Italy, the lady who sold darning wool in the corner shop looked rather like the wife of the French Consul at Berlin. You hardly noticed when it rained, yet I often saw you tightly wrapped in your mackintosh when the sun was blazing down, and when you went out with two grandsons and came home with none, you were a bit embarassed and hoped that they would be picked up by somebody. They usually were. You eagerly went to all the classes, expecting to acquire more and exciting knowledge, you bathed every day, you were kind and incredibly brave, and I am grateful to you.

The walk to St. Mary took about twenty minutes, it was further inland and looked a little more like countryside;

there were trees, cows in the fields, small country cottages, a farm house here and there, and at one spot you could actually stand, and look round to each and every side without noticing sea anywhere. Again and again I came back to that particular place and just looked round feeling happy. Mrs. Kessiter left me to get her lunch, and after many promises that I would soon come and meet her family, I walked on through St. Mary until 1 came to the harbour.

Here was a very much wider view, not so closed in by rocks as Port Erin, and I immediately liked it. The whole place was more genuine, without the frightful barrack-like seaside hotels and boarding houses. That is, if you ignored the Ballaqueeny Hotel, a palace of modern design for living, where three hundred internees made existence difficult for each other. Down here you found lovely ancient fishermen's cottages built in the centuries-old stone which contains all colours from slate grey to pink, yellow and blue. There were thick walls of it everywhere, originally built to keep the wind away from gardens and protect the houses against winter storms, now all in a state of decay, tumbling down and badly in need of repair. No one seemed to take an interest in them any more, and further up suburban villas showed their ugly faces. I walked back along the shore and was suddenly struck by the realisation that these slowly climbing terraces, uneven little houses, square walled-in gardens, narrow dark lanes, and a storm-blown tree here and there gilded by the warm September sun bringing out the latent colouring, did slightly resemble the South of France. No word of this to Mrs. Kessiter though ; it would start an entirely new train of thought.

Matilda received me reproachfully : "Where have you been, there was all the washing up to be done!" We had our first bad row which resulted in our not speaking to each other for several weeks. During that time I grew enormously fat. "Livia, what have you done to yourself? You must stop

eating." Elsa and Lotte were quite upset when I met them for tea about three weeks after our arrival. "Oh I don't mind, as long as I get into these trousers it doesn't matter. They are corduroy, they stretch. None of my skirts fit me any more though." I had some more cakes. Those two were quite contented ; almost at once they had started working in one of the district offices, they got on well with the officials, had found new friends, and Elsa would soon meet her husband. She thought of nothing else. I told them about Matilda and myself, and they thought we were being extremely childish. I suppose we were. Matilda had also stopped speaking to Elsa and Lotte, no one quite knew why, but she nursed a grievance.

When I left my friends that afternoon, though arranging to meet again, I knew that that companionship was over too. It had been over the moment we left Holloway. It happened to everybody. I met Leni. "How is Gretel ?" They had been inseparable, always walking arm in arm. "We quarrelled," and a long story of Gretel's misdeeds followed. Hildegarde walked around by herself. "Where's Rita ?" "Don't mention that name to me, I never want to see her again," she flared up. On the small territory alloted to four thousand people, many lonely walks were taken, many tales of horror told about the friends of yesterday. Why was this necessary ? Did people's true natures come out in this so-called freedom ? Had they only been subdued in Holloway ? The story went that a sedative had been mixed in our food there, that's why we had been so peaceful and placid in prison. Quite possible, it would make as good an explanation as any.

Well, I went on eating and got fatter. "How well you look, Madam," the smiling pink-cheeked lady's maid exclaimed when she ran into me. She was the flower of her profession. Anyone else would have said : "How dare you go round like that. Are you supposed to be an elephant, a sea-horse or a barrage balloon ? Take yourself out of my sight." Needless

to say, I knitted furiously.

I began to be able to distinguish faces I constantly saw in the streets, and no longer were they a mass of blue-eyed, Germanic-looking, sunburnt people, wearing slacks, turbans and yellow shell necklaces ; but as by a miracle they divided themselves into various groups : those I was longing to speak to, those I wouldn't have minded being approached by, and those with whom I, quite definitely, would never wish to exchange one word. I had long, purely theoretical arguments with myself, telling myself why I liked so-and-so and couldn't stand so-and-so. Theoretical, because being isolated in the small house I lived in, I had no chance of meeting anyone and it was unthinkable that one should speak to people to whom one hadn't been formally introduced. Every face from Holloway, no matter who it was, proved therefore a pure source of joy to me.

Also we were bound together by one common worry : "Have you heard from London ?" "Not yet ; you ?" "No, I have my family there. If only I knew that they were safe." "My mother is there. Let me know when you get a letter." Every morning the wireless boomed away : "There was a heavy raid on London last night, the number of casualities is not yet known. Raiders over north-west suburb—London tube station hit, many dead—several people machine gunned in the streets—another bad night for the East End—the people of London are standing up magnificently." Yes, the people of London were standing up magnificently. We were safe up there, why did we have to worry ? No news is good news ; bad news travels fast. We knew all the answers. And yet, our friends and families were part of the people of London. We wanted to know what had happened to them. Means of communication had broken down, we knew that too. And we also knew that inadequate censoring arrangements played their part in prolonging this agony of waiting.

After four weeks I could stand no more. Two days I spent

going from one office to another, trying to get permission to send a telegram. The official who was to give the final signature looked up at me : "We all want to know how our friends are. We can't all send telegrams." Was she going to stop it now, after I had almost got it through ? "Please, I haven't heard from my mother for weeks!" I burst into tears and she signed it. "This is the first and the last time." I rushed out. Coming back from the village post office I ran into Teresinnia.

"Have you collected your parcel?" "What parcel?" "I distinctly remember seeing your name on the list. Hurry, they're closing any minute now." She came with me, they were just locking the door. "May I have my parcel, please," I was breathless. "I just want to see where it comes from, you needn't give it to me." It was a small package of chocolate. That was my mother's handwriting. "Look, my mother has written this, it's only three days old, she must have been all right then. She couldn't send a parcel if she were ill, could she?" Everyone agreed.

Teresinnia was not reluctant to receive her share of the chocolate. We found a small note in it: "Happy birthday, my child." Oh yes, there would be a birthday to-morrow. I had forgotten all about it.

What is the barbed wire doing
Set up everywhere I see?
Is it meant to keep the world out
Or protect the world from me ?

Certainly we both are nasty
And we know it very well.
Is the world worse or am I worse,
That's the one thing 1 can't tell.

Until one of us gets better
We will stay right where we are.
World on one side, me on one side,
Each of us quite pleased so far.

Chapter Eight

Birthday behind barbed wire

THERE was a film not long ago, where an extremely rich man whose family doesn't care much about him is left to celebrate his birthday alone, singing to himself the while : "Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday my darling, happy birthday to me." Then he goes off to find himself a girl—but that is another story.

It takes a lot of trouble to get born, it's hard work and needs a lifetime of readjustment. Those who didn't do it too well, naturally don't like to be reminded of a job they couldn't quite tackle, and every year at the anniversary of their failure, they will tell you with a blush of modesty : "No presents this year, dear, let's ignore it altogether. A birthday is a day like any other day." Oh! is it? What nonsense!

It's one of the few things I have accomplished successfully so far. With my natural capacity for doing the wrong thing and attacking problems from the tail end, I might easily have tried to do the dying part first before getting myself born. I know of several cases where something of the kind must have happened, and the trained observer can easily point them out to you ; the symptoms are unmistakable.

Well, I escaped such calamity by sheer will-power, and I regard it as just cause for rejoicing. I tell everyone which day it is going to be, mention what might be acceptable to me in the way of small offerings, and then sit back, waiting calmly, confident as to results. However, in the ultimate reckoning, my twenty-sixth birthday will have to be put down

among the more unsuccessful ones, as far as presents, human kindness and congenial atmosphere were concerned. Yet owing to the extraordinary circumstances, not much else could have been expected, and looking back on it now, my calm acceptance of this fact seems to constitute the first move on my part to take life more philosophically.

While dressing that morning, I secretly watched Matilda for signs of approaching reconciliation. What a good opportunity to bury the axe once and for all ! If only she'd say "Many happy returns," in her gruffest voice, not even looking at me, we could kiss, and cry a little, and have breakfast in comfort, and go for a long walk this morning, and the day would be saved. Even if to-morrow it would start all over again. I tried to hypnotise her : "Say it, say it." Yet not for her such softening of intent. She had a grievance, her decision was just, and never again would she speak to me, birthday or no birthday. Her silence and the trick she had of looking through and beyond me, as if I were entirely composed of thin air, clearly indicated that my hopes were vain. Feeling slightly ashamed of this defeat, I left the house as soon as possible and walked as far as one could go.

As it was Sunday, the streets were empty, people were in church or preparing the Sunday dinner. Reaching Bradda Head, the highest hill in that vicinity, I walked beside the barbed wire partly covered with blackberry bushes, hoping to find a nice spot on the top of the hill where I could lie in the heather. Only one other person was up there, standing at the barrier, staring with fixed expression over the fields and plains beyond.

As I was passing her she turned and suddenly spoke to me : "Do you get that awful 'shut-in' feeling too ?" "Shut in ?" I pretended not to know what she meant. "I have just been walking for over an hour. You couldn't call that 'shut in,' could you ?" She shook her head. "I want to go over there," she pointed towards the landscape on the other side

of the wire. "Just run, run, run. Across fields, paths, fences. It's worse than a prison. There you don't see what you are missing. The walls shut you in, the world is far away ; here it is all in front of you, you see it, and can't have it."

I had heard others say the same, though I myself had never been affected by the sight of barbed wire at all. If you didn't look very closely, it might have been an ordinary fence or railing, whatever you pleased to call it. I tried to make her feel more cheerful: "Why not look at the other side?" I suggested. "There's a lovely view across the sea. And the local people for instance, most of them hardly ever leave this place. Perhaps once or twice a year they go to Douglas for their shopping. Who wants to go to Douglas ? I don't. I remember a cottage in the country where I once stayed for six months, hardly moving out of the front door ; just imagine that. And dowagers, people who retire to their estates——" She cut short my eloquence : "That's not the point at all. If the people here stay put, they do it of their own free will. They needn't stay. For most of us it is quite sufficient to know we could, if we wanted to." She wasn't looking at me now. "Claustrophobia." Had I been thinking aloud ? She almost attacked me : "Call it claustrophobia, call it hysterics, call it anything you like. Don't look so smug. If you felt as I do, you wouldn't be so superior. Go away, go away." I hesitated : "It wasn't I who started this conversation. Sorry I said the wrong thing. Come and walk with me, it's my birthday ; I don't really feel smug at all. One can't help one's face." For the first time she looked at me properly : "Your birthday! Many happy returns!" She was the only one to say it that day.

We walked across the plateau until we came to a sheltered place. "Let's sit down for a while." "We are going to have rain, you can see Ireland over there," she told me. True, there was a dim outline to be seen far away across the water. "Is it a long way off?" "Not really, you can easily get there

in a small fishing boat. There are some Nazis in our house who always talk about going one day. I wonder if they will." "You aren't a Nazi?" "Good heavens, no." "But why are you with them? If you don't share their views, it must be difficult for you." "Yes," she admitted, "it's most difficult at times. You can't pick and choose. There's a rumour though, that we'll soon be separated." "Can't you move somewhere else?" "If I tried very hard I might get permission. But how am I to know that it won't be the same in another house? You never know with whom you will have to mix here. When I first came, I had to share a bed with someone who had tuberculosis." "What?" I couldn't believe it. "Yes, it's true. I was frightened out of my wits. Eventually she was taken to hospital. We kept the windows open, that was all we could do. But how frightened I was; I hardly dared breathe at night!" I thought that over for a bit. "So you came here right at the beginning?" "I arrived with the first batch, they say I'm lucky having missed Holloway. I'm not so sure. The muddle at first was terrifying. Never will I forget that crossing." "Was it rough?" "Rough? There were 2,000 people on a boat with accommodation for only 700. I am not going to describe to you what that was like. When we came here, nothing was prepared at all. It was quite a job for the officials, too; they had a tough time. The only good thing was that you could walk practically anywhere. It's only lately that the barbed wire has come so close."

Here we were again. I had thought she had forgotten about that barbed wire. "You are quite right, if this goes on I'll be a hospital case soon." Again my face had told more than I had meant to show. "I am quite aware of it. Only I cannot stop it. I dream barbed wire, I think barbed wire, I see barbed wire. Soon my brain will snap, and then I'll probably eat barbed wire." "Don't be silly. Hadn't you better go and see a doctor?" "They wait here until it has

happened, then you get all the treatment you need. Prevention doesn't come within their scope. I saw a woman having a breakdown only the other day ; it was frightful." "Where is she now?" "In the local asylum. They are very well cared for there. The worst of it was, that we all saw it coming for weeks. Yet no one took the slightest notice. With proper medical attention in time it would never have happened." "As serious as that?" "As serious as that," she answered.

She suddenly realised that she didn't know me at all and became very agitated. "I think I must go now." "Must you really ?" I was sorry to lose my companion. But she was half-way down the slope already. "See you again some time!" I never saw her again, perhaps she was released soon after. Or did she give in to that insistent little voice ticking away in her brain : "Barbed wire so close, barbed wire so close, barbed wire so close, so close, so close ?" I have never been able to find out.

Most of that day I stayed on the hill, completely undisturbed by faces, voices, people. If there wasn't any affection given me, at least there was no discord either, and if it may be described as a serious departure from truthfulness when I wrote to my mother that evening : "Everyone was very kind," it was not entirely untrue when I went on to tell her : "and so I had quite a happy birthday."

A strange gift was given me.
A slice of time apart of time
Removed from the stream of event,
To do with as I think it fit
In purpose and intent.

It's manifold magnificence
Dazzles my eye unused as yet
Seeing beyond that narrow path
Between high walls
On which we tread.

New vistas open out to new perception,
Green pastures spread in promise far ahead
Still overwhelming in their revelation.

Much ballast has to be thrown overboard,
Unhappiness turned into memory,
Before new courage conquers hesitation.

Chapter Nine

Design for living

THE weeks passed, I got used to feeling rather empty, dissatisfied and vaguely unhappy, and only realised how hopeless it all was while writing my two weekly letters of twenty-four lines each, elaborating on variations of the one theme : "Get me out of here, do all you can, I can't stand it much longer." Once posted, all passion was spent, and again I relapsed into a kind of coma.

One Saturday morning, while I was on my way to dispose of one of these bi-weekly lamentations, I caught sight of Lotte talking to a small group of people, all looking alike in mackintoshes and oilskin hoods which we wore as protection against the thin November drizzle. There was a check mackintosh, blue and yellow, I hadn't seen before. Lotte winked at me : "Look, who is here!" The check mackintosh turned round. "Gabrielle! When did you arrive?" We shook hands, and I knew that now all would be well.

"I came late last night, only twelve of us, when the bombing got worse they decided to send us here. I am glad to see you, Livia." 'The 'B' wing was hit!" Lotte was most animated. "Anyone hurt ?" "Only a little French girl because she wouldn't stay in her cell. She rushed out and fell down the stairs as the railings collapsed. Broke a leg, nothing serious." So the Governor had been right: the cells were fairly safe. Every one was full of questions : how was so-and-so, had Elfrida been released ? This was like the good old times at Holloway. "Is Roma still there?" "Yes, she sends her love to all of you. She hoped so much to come. She looks very ill." We all went to have coffee. "Where

are you staying, Gabrielle ?" "At one of the big hotels, I must try and move at once. It's so noisy, you can't hear yourself think. I have started writing a book, and I want to paint again. They say you can find small houses here." "Well, I'm in a small house, and it's frightful." I told her about my wretched two months.

She was incredulous : "Haven't you done any work at all then ?" "Work ? If you call housework work, I've done a lot of that. Nothing else, not even read a book. But I'm now an expert knitter." She failed to see the humour of it. "That can't go on. You mustn't waste your time like that. Here is your chance of doing the things you've always wanted to do, don't let it slide away. Shall we move together?" "That would be marvellous! But Matilda ?"—I told her about Matilda. "On top of everything else, her possessions were bombed in London, and she feels terribly burnt up about it. She still refuses to speak to me." "I'll talk to her," Gabrielle promised, "perhaps we'll all move together. On Monday we'll go to the office and see what can be done." As easy as that. For eight weeks I had been wondering whether I should move or not. Gabrielle, hardly here for twenty-four hours, was quite determined to make the best of things.

On Sunday we went for a long walk. She was full of Holloway stories, longing to be back. Shortly after our departure she had become attached to some very nice French people and constantly talked about them. It was like a repetition of my own arrival. I tried to point out the sights : "You can see Ireland from here." She hardly looked, and continued her account of Helene's astonishing skill in dealing with unwilling landing sweepers, how none of them had washed for weeks after hot water and heating systems had broken down, how they could hardly walk in the yard as it was covered with broken glass and splinters, and how nice it all had been. "And the privacy! If you didn't want to see anyone, you just retired to your cell and put up a notice :

'Do not disturb.' Here, it's chattering from morning till night." I nodded. How well I could understand her. She was sharing a room with two young girls, one of whom had suddenly turned out to be a violent Nazi. Gabrielle had only known her as a quiet little person who hardly ever spoke and sometimes came to clean her cell in exchange for food, sweets or cigarettes. As she had to share with someone, Gabrielle had chosen her, believing her to be harmless and inoffensive. Her astonishment was profound at hearing quiet little Marie suddenly burst out into long hymns of hate, and professing her deep satisfaction at every single bomb which had been dropped on London. That was the end of their budding friendship ; and another reason for Gabrielle's determination to find a new home. We laughed, and decided that one could never tell, not realising at the time the very serious result this short interlude was to have later on.

Matilda was delighted at seeing Gabrielle again, delighted at the idea of moving together, and only tried once in my absence to persuade Gabrielle that surely the two of them would be better off without me. Yet this crisis was dealt with efficiently, and I almost fainted with joy and relief when 1 heard Matilda addressing me again for the first time in weeks, as one grown-up person might speak to another grown-up person. Things were looking up, decidedly.

On Monday we went to see the Billetting Officer and received that rarest of rare permissions, to go and find ourselves a billet. For three full weeks Gabrielle and I went from house to house, knocking at every door, even the more unlikely looking ones : "Do you take Internees ?" Some shut the doors in our faces straight away, others exclaimed: "The cheek of it" ; others enquired if we would mind taking the baby out in the morning and playing with her in the afternoon, one lady said she would love to have us, the work wasn't much, and we would be free on Wednesdays after tea. It looked hopeless. More than once I said : "Let's leave it,

it's no good. We just have to put up with where we are." But Gabrielle would have none of that. "I still have a few more addresses. What about the little yellow house down there ?" "Oh, I know that one. The only time I did try to move, I went there. The landlady had some trouble with her Internees and never wants to see an alien again." "What nonsense, let's try."

We went and knocked at the door. After a bit it was opened just a fraction of an inch. "Do you take Internees ? We have a permission to move." The door opened a little further, revealing a short middle-aged woman with huge blue eyes looking at us as if we were strange animals. "Oh no, I don't want any internees." "Haven't you any room?" "Oh yes, I have plenty of room." She glanced at Gabrielle as if she might reconsider her verdict if pressed just a little more. Gabrielle came up to expectations : "Won't you think it over? We are quite nice people. I am sure you won't regret it." The lady hesitated : "I must ask my husband and daughter this evening." We rushed back next morning. "Are you going to take us ?" She was very cautious. "We'll try it. If we don't get on you will have to leave again."

That week-end we moved in, and stayed. Our dear little Mrs. Watt soon realised that we were quite human, and that there was no need to be afraid of us. Margaret, her young daughter, sometimes had significant dreams that the aliens had blown up the house while everyone was fast asleep, and that Miss Laurent particularly had been up to no good. But that was as far as it went, and no one took much notice. We had a nice little sitting room where we could have a fire all to ourselves, a real luxury in an internment camp; Gabrielle and I shared a bedroom, as Matilda considered her nerves were much too shattered, and her sad experiences entitled her to the privacy of the only single room. We didn't grudge her this small comfort.

I began to feel that there was something to be said for

being alive after all. We did most of our own cooking, and there being only three of us we could arrange things as we liked. I started unpacking my books and putting them in the sitting room ; Gabrielle brought hers, her brushes, colours and canvasses, and all of a sudden we lived in a working atmosphere where one could read, write, paint, go to classes, have discussions, bring in people for tea, and feel that even behind barbed wire one could find contentment and a sensible way of living. At about that time I started writing poetry.

Teresinnia came to tea, bringing Trudi with her : "What a nice place. How lucky you are!" "We worked hard for it, no ill-feeling please! You just go round asking everybody : do you take Internees, do you take Internees? You wouldn't make the effort." "No," she admitted, "I wouldn't, but just imagine something like this in a German concentration camp. Even we in the hotels, who are always complaining about bad food, the everlasting gossip, no fires, and that sort of thing, are better off than those poor people in German concentration camps who would gladly change with us." "Don't be depressing. Of course they would. After all, this is England, you don't expect ill-treatment here. This is not a barbarian country." "I am not so sure that they really would want to change" ; Trudi, who had hardly spoken so far, made us all sit up. "Don't be ridiculous, I'd rather be here for the duration, working for a lazy landlady from morning till night, than spend one single day in a concentration camp. You don't know what you are talking about."

Didn't she ? I suddenly looked closer at Trudi. In Holloway we had hardly noticed her—she had always kept to herself. But hadn't somebody told me——? Wasn't there a story ——? she smiled : "I spent three years in one." "Three years ? And you are still alive. How did you get out ? How did you get in ? Don't talk about it, if you don't want to." We were burning with curiosity. Most of us had known men who were in concentration camps, but a woman! "No, I don't

want to talk about it, it was awful." We were disappointed. "Are you a Communist?" I shyly ventured. "No, not even that; Socialist. And I hadn't done anything. They took me for something I might have done. And they were quite right. Given half the chance, I would have done it. So at least I knew what I was in for. I had a conviction to fight for, and I was with people who shared that conviction. Here you can't even attempt to organise a community; the elements don't mix. And another thing, there were no social differences. We all wore the same clothes, ate the same food, had the same routine and worked very hard, in the fields mostly. Here you have rich people and poor people, some play Bridge, others sweep floors, others stay in bed all day; there is no unity. And there cannot be. So perhaps you understand now why I said that I wasn't so sure which was to be preferred. 1 admit, it was terrible, often I hoped I could die. But there was satisfaction in it too, and a certain sense of justification. You know, I would have done it, given half the chance," she repeated, looking at us proudly.

I suddenly respected her very much. "Haven't you had a tribunal?" Gabrielle asked her. "Surely having been in a concentration camp is sufficient proof to show whose enemy you are." "Oh, not at all. Do you know what they said to me at the tribunal? 'If you were in a concentration camp all that time, you must have done something to deserve it.' So I was sent here. And I will probably have to stay here. The vicious circle." No one commented on that. But it gave us something to think about.

Gabrielle was very quiet that night. "If that had happened to anyone less balanced, what bitterness it would produce." No need to ask her what she was talking about. "She is an extremely sensible girl to take it so well. Jewish, too." "What?" "Yes, she is Jewish, too."

Chapter Ten

Where do the babies *come from*

CHRISTMAS came and passed, we celebrated fittingly, felt a little sentimental at times, remembering how we had spent it with our families the year before, and wondering what the next year would bring. There was a Christmas play at St. Mary which gave great joy to all those who took part, and roused the finer feelings in some others who went to see it. It was an unsuccessful attempt to unite the Jewish festival with the Christian one : the first part was taken from the Old Testament, the second told the birth of Christ. Unsuccessful, because the two parts seemed to cancel each other, and Gabrielle and I were not impressed. There is too much compromise in this world already, and we both felt that this was not the way to achieve a better and more lasting understanding. But it played on the sentiments of many people, and the intentions were excellent.

The week between Christmas and the New Year we treated as a holiday ; Gabrielle, who was by now giving classes wherever they were wanted, needed a rest, and we devoted it to reading aloud from Dickens, T. S. Eliot, and *The Lotus Eaters.* We also cultivated social contacts.

Roma and the other Italians (there were only about ten of them altogether) arrived early in the New Year, looking pale and badly in need of fresh air. We gave a small tea-party in her honour, and again Holloway arose before our eyes. There had been changes, she told us, all the people we had known were released, there was a small stove now where they could cook their own food, and they all had had a nice Christmas. There had been presents for everyone. She was

the first one who was not longing to be back, but as her husband was here, all her friends were here, and she had spent a little over eight months in prison, it was understandable.

We had shared some mutual friends in London : "How is Charles these days ; does he ever write to you ?" Charles had been one of my greater worries these last few weeks. With a splendid disregard for the fact that an Internee is permitted only twenty-four lines in a letter, and that we had to use prisoner of war paper, on which the pen got stuck every time one became intense, he insisted on being given a complete record of life on the Isle of Man. Being a serious young man with a passionate interest in social phenomena, and some extremely awkward bees in his bonnet, he also requested a few enlightening remarks on the sex problem. "Now, what am I to tell him ? That I have no sex problem, that it is none of his business ; or shall I go round and do some research, asking people questions ? The results would probably never pass the censor. Tell me, do we have a sex problem ?" "Who hasn't ?" Gabrielle seemed a little cross. "I know some of you don't agree with me, but why talk about it. Most people have a sex problem, even in normal circumstances. And look at all the young couples separated by the war, for instance." "There's always leave, *we* don't get leave," Lotte said. Matilda looked prim. "In my profession I met so many dissatisfied, unhappy and worried people, that I can't say that this differs so much from the life outside," Gabrielle insisted.

"Would you say there is a lot of the other thing about, you know——" I hesitated. "Lesbians, you mean ? How can we tell. It's most probable that among four thousand women, you will find a few who are Lesbian. You find that everywhere. Any violent friendship between women contains some of that element, it's inevitable. And in a place like this, people do get more attached than they would ordinarily. But why over-rate it? Why give it so much importance?

Why call it by a name, even ? It's certainly not a problem as long as it doesn't concern you. And should you get to it eventually, you'll find it will look after itself." Matilda looked prim.

Mrs. Kessiter suddenly put down her knitting and nodded several times ; "How right you are, Miss Gabrielle. Things do look after themselves. And nature always triumphs. Look at all the babies being born here, it's most encouraging." She picked up her knitting again. "But that's the married women, Mrs. Kessiter, who were pregnant when they came here. Soon that will have to stop." Elsa, the nurse, was adamant on that point. "Excuse me," Roma said, "most of the babies born at Holloway were illegitimate children ; hardly any of the mothers were married ; one had her third child there. I don't suppose it's very different here." Matilda looked prim. "No, it isn't" ; Mrs. Kessiter was feeling cheerful. "Eighty per cent, are illegitimate. That's nothing compared with what we are going to have. It's most encouraging." "Is that why we aren't allowed down in the caves any more ?" Something began to dawn on Lotte : "All that part of the beach has been wired off." "Yes, that's why." Mrs. Kessister seemed possessed of inside information : "You have to thank the mothers of our future Manx generation for that. Quite a good mixture, I should imagine. Well, they'll have to find other places ; nature always triumphs." At that point Matilda left the room, while Mrs. Kessiter went on happily with her knitting.

After they had left there was still that letter to be written to Charles. "What shall I say?" 1 asked Gabrielle. "It would be best to refer him to Mrs. Kessiter. Though I suppose the solution would be much too simple for him. Let him work it out for himself !"

And I sent him that historical letter beginning with the words : "Dear Charles, please tell me, where, oh where do the babies come from?"

Chapter Eleven

Happy you people!

EXCITEMENT was spreading. Landladies told their Internees, Internees rushed off to pass it on, suddenly everyone knew. Three had escaped to Ireland. Who were they? No one knew. How had they done it ? Everybody knew. A fisherman had taken them across in a small boat, £5 each, luggage left behind. Had they been living in a small house, where they could slip out easily after dark ? Oh no, they had stayed at the Hydro. But that's where the Commandant and all the officials live. Quite so ; from right under the Commandant's nose ; everyone shrieked with delight. But that wasn't all, they had sent a postcard to the Commandant telling her of their safe arrival at Dublin. No, that couldn't be true, it sounded too unlikely. However, it made a good story and became somewhat more elaborate as time went on.

There was a sequel to it. Suddenly all our money for bills was stopped, we were only allowed the 5/- pocket money over an indefinite period. The system which so far had worked satisfactorily, of buying whatever one wanted on bills, getting them approved and signed by the superintendent, drawing the money at fortnightly intervals, seemed to have left a few loopholes for individual enterprise. Naturally one had to pay one's bills, as the receipts had to be handed in before further bills were signed. But shopkeepers were quite willing to put down a larger amount than was actually due, and the difference enabled the fortunate Interneee to visit the cinema more often, buy more sweets than were good for

her, or purchase an extra lipstick, an article which was never approved by the all too severe health-superintendent in charge of the chemist's bills (every time lipstick appeared on our bills, she crossed it out with a determination which one couldn't help feeling might have been better employed in worthier pursuits).

The whole scheme worked well, everybody knew about it, and not much harm was done. Suddenly the idea came up, that riches might be assembled in secret which would enable the greater part of the Internee population eventually to emigrate to Ireland. To prevent such mishap, our bills were stopped and everyone felt outraged. We wanted to know why. After a great deal of negotiation, the Commandant promised to come to the Lecture Hall in St. Mary and tell the Internees of that locality why they were being punished. A baby show was to precede this event, thus enhancing the regal gesture. We were eagerly looking forward to the day.

After the babies had been inspected—no questions asked here as to manner of origin and the right to existence—we grown-ups were spoken to very severely yet not without kindness.

Dame Joanna Cruickshank was deeply grieved to find that some of us had not been quite straight with the authorities. It was hard for her to say, but say it she must, there were some Internees who had actually reverted to dishonesty in order to obtain some of their own money. Not without reluctance she had found herself compelled to employ this method, which, as she fully realised, punished innocent and guilty alike. She sincerely hoped it would not have to be for long. It was as painful to her as it must have been to us. As soon as we would show ourselves worthy of her renewed trust, she would reconsider the issue. And there was something else she had meant to say to us for a long long time. Happiness was of our own making ; place, conditions and circumstances were of no importance. All that mattered was to be happy!

While she went on talking at great length, imploring us to be happy at all costs, I watched the people as they were listening. There was old Mrs. Kaiser, a grandmother, who had brought up a large number of sons and daughters, who had been a good wife and mother and was nearing the conclusion of a full and varied life. Being poor, she couldn't have been one of those so rightly punished for embezzling their own money, but she looked crestfallen and apologetic just the same. There was little Miss Schwarz, a Bible student, who would rather have died than infringe the slightest regulation, however ridiculous, looking sad and guilty. There were countless others, teachers, successful business women, women who had done their jobs in life as well as anybody, and who had every right to be proud, independent, and confident, looking like children in a charity school, cowed and utterly crushed. There were little murmurs of regret, someone went so far as to say : "I'll never do it again," although I am convinced she hadn't done anything at all, and the general atmosphere was unbearable.

The only failing of these women was the fact that they had the wrong kind of passport; very few of them were enemies, still less would they have indulged in any act of malice. But the fact alone was sufficient to overshadow any other consideration for their personal value, their own integrity. And they accepted it. The terrible thing was their own acceptance of it, making it possible for a technical matter to influence their character, their courage, touch their very souls. To watch them in the offices, waiting patiently hour after hour, where there should have been no waiting necessary at all. To see a woman of sixty being servile towards a girl of twenty, who in the ordinary course of events might have been her employee, being servile because the girl belonged to the staff and could give or withhold a permission. And watching the girl being conscious of her power, enjoying it, using it

This is the terrible thing which made it possible for the totalitarian governments to come into power, and the steady process of this disintegration of the human soul is the one fact which keeps them in power. Here it was happening to a few people, in comparatively slow stages, not having any serious manifestations in the world of action. But the process was the same, highly significant of all that is happening these days, a state of mind and soul which results from evil, and in its turn breeds more evil.

And whenever I'm asked now : "Why are you complaining ? You yourself admit that you had quite a good time, no harm was done to you, you are well and healthy," I again see that lecture hall and the faces of several hundred women only too ready to assume a disguise, which was no part of them, but which would quickly eat its way into their hearts and make them servile, stupid, poor creatures without a will or anything they could call their own.

And as if in answer to a question, only the other day I came across a sentence in a Russian short story called "The River of Life," which I would hardly have noticed had I not felt it so deeply myself. A student who is about to take his life, because he cannot stand his own littleness any more, writes in his last letter to a friend "——for the quiet degradation of the human soul is more horrible than all the barricades and slaughter in the world."

Away from destruction, disturbance and noise.
Away from the places where living is sandwiched between
The raid just over and the raid to come,
Where sleep is snatched, where love is snatched,
Where all is centred round bare existence,
I rejoice !

That I have been offered the means of different life.
Not as favour exactly, yet if I choose to turn it to such
You will not grudge me this cause of contentment.
For look, here I am, without ties, without obligation,
Entirely free to listen into myself and make of it
What I can.

The time of your trial
Is time of my reflection.
The time of your waste
Is time of my reserve.
Where you lose yourself
I will find myself.
Both ways equally hard.

But when you are tired
And your hand grows weary of your stern task
I will be there
To fill the breach
And carry on where you left off.

And I rejoice.

Chapter Twelve

We *can all join the* A.T.S. *now*

THE New Year had brought very cold weather, storm and snow. There were days when people who lived at the sea front were not allowed outside their doors, for the storm could easily knock you down ; it was impossible to walk round corners. There were minor injuries, everyone suffered from chilblains, the lack of vitamins in the food we were given had lowered the resistance of most of us, and people felt tired, ill, and depressed. In the big hotels where a hundred or more Internees were supposed to get warm in front of one, or at the best two small fires, tempers ran high, and many preferred to sit in icy bedrooms where one could watch one's breath clouding in the air.

Gabrielle and 1 worked steadily, feeling almost guilty that we had a warm room to sit in. Matilda went to the Service Exchange every day, where she had found congenial occupation which made her feel satisfied and useful. The Service Exchange —the name explains itself—presented a highly intricate system for providing and exchanging work. Those who worked full-time had the chance of making 2/7 a week, for the remainder they were given vouchers. So a teacher who worked at the school or gave private lessons, could have a jumper knitted in return, or have her hair done, or her clothes repaired. There was a laundry working full time, a hairdressing saloon, dressmakers, toymakers, weavers, spinners, fortune tellers, people who would type for you, or write a competent English letter, others who would take your children for walks, or

clean your mackintosh by a special method, guaranteed Viennese ; even legal advice was to be had. Gardening came under the scheme too, and everywhere you saw people working in small allotments, later on in the fields, getting ready for the spring. And a good job they made of it.

In this way everyone who wanted to work could do so, either for the community or for herself, without any pressure needed, except perhaps the wish to earn a little money. After months of continued internment, most people's resources had come to an end, friends who in the beginning had been anxious to send small amounts to make things easier, suddenly got rather tired of it and decided that dear Ella was quite well off where she was, no air raids, nothing to worry about, let her look after herself. In most cases, dear Ella had the choice of applying for relief which consisted of a small piece of soap, a little toothpowder and an ill-fitting pair of shoes whenever needed ; or work for her 2/7 per week which hardly paid for shoe soles and the barest necessities of life. True, she had board and lodging, but if she couldn't afford to buy extra food occasionally, an apple, an orange or some additional margarine, things didn't look too good for her. In some houses people were very well fed, in most of them they were underfed. There was no official standard as to quantity and quality of food to be given to internees, and the whole thing was left to the landlady's discretion. That some of them abused this trust, and only thought of their own pocket, stands to reason.

Tribunals were in full swing now. Every morning, buses heavily guarded by police, went to Douglas, taking ten to twenty internees who came back in the evening tired, excited, pleased or in despair, according to the events of the day, full of stories of what the judge had said to them, and secretly getting their possessions ready in case they might be released soon. The strangest things happened. Some of those who had come back so confidently ("He was charming, my dear,

he even asked what I would do when free again") suddenly three weeks afterwards were given their "A", which means duration, or "B", which means "No cause for release at present." Some never got an answer at all, or had to wait for it until late in the summer. Others who were dissolved in tears : "Oh, I'll never get out, never, they knew all about that time when Tom and I, you know, when Tom and I ——" were released from one day to another. Jewish refugees stayed ; self-confessed Nazis, who had registered for return to Germany, went, to take domestic posts in English houses, or resume life again somewhere in England.

(By that time we had Nazi houses which were composed of all those who had registered for going back to Germany in the autumn, when there had been a chance of transport. Nothing came of it and they are still there. Later on they split up again into Austrians and Germans, or rather Roman Catholics and Lutherians. Not all of them were necessarily Nazis ; some just wanted to go home to mother, in preference to being interned, not even realising what Nazism means. But the one fact remains clear : they all had homes in Germany, to which they wished to return).

On the other hand of course, Jewish refugees went, and Nazis stayed. There seemed to be no rules whatever, and we soon gave up puzzling our heads over it. We would never find the key. Often we wished that one of us, or a trusted non-interned central European could be permitted to sit at those tribunals, even if only in an advisory capacity. The recognition of certain fundamental differences would be no difficulty for a person of that description, while it proved a grave problem to anyone not used to this variety of races, creeds, beliefs and political convictions, represented by any group of people originating from the oppressed countries (including Germany!)

But good and bad alike, people went, and the Internee population was steadily decreasing. Being late-comers and

having had a second tribunal before being interned, we knew that we would have to wait our time.

Another excitement was sweeping the camp. "We can all join the A.T.S. now." "Don't be funny, we are enemies. How can we join the English army." "Look at the Pioneer Corps ; the men are joining up all the time ; it's true. Quite official!" It was. The story went that if you put down your name, you would be released within a fortnight, given a week's holiday and then sent to a training centre. It sounded fantastic. Here we were, interned as dangerous to the state, but suddenly encouraged to play our part in the defence of that state. "Do we get an equal chance ? Is there promotion for aliens ?" I wanted to make sure of that. No, it didn't seem that there would be promotion. Aliens would work in the kitchens, be store keepers and do clerical work. After all, an ex-Internee couldn't expect to become an officer all of a sudden. "Why not ? If you are fit to join the army, you should at least get an equal chance. This is the people's war." Many of us felt that very strongly. "Do you know what they are saying about the men joining up ? They are only doing it to get out of internment." Here was another point; obviously it was an entirely different thing for a free person to join up. We wanted our tribunals first, to be given our freedom on grounds of past history and personal integrity, and then we would make up our minds.

Many others of course rushed to enrol, they regarded it as a proof of their loyalty, some though it would make a change after the boredom of internment, and little Erica suddenly looked quite pink in the face with pleasure : "Just think of the holiday, a whole week. I'll be able to see John again." I looked at her doubtfully. "You'll never pass the health examination—forgive my being so crude. You aren't well enough, physical work would kill you." She quite agreed. "Yes, but the holiday. We might even get married." She was pinker than ever. She wasn't accepted, on health grounds,

but **got** released just the same a little later, and married John immediately.

Gabrielle was doubtful : "Do you think they will let me do my work ?" Everyone shouted her down : "You'd be wasted in a routine job. Think of all the people wanting you, asking for you. Your place is in a hospital where you can do really valuable work." It was true. It seemed to me that every person's first duty was to do the job they were best fitted for, especially if that job was of national importance. Gabrielle, with her extraordinary qualifications and capabilities, would be of more use in a hospital or convalescent home. The gymnastics she taught, the health exercises and massage, were vastly different and superior to any other system I have ever come across, and the results she got, even in the camp, were astonishing. So she just applied for an opportunity to do her own work again.

Now we had another game. So far the first questions asked if you met anyone in the street had been : "Have you had a tribunal? What category? How disgraceful! Cheer up!" This could be enlarged upon in various directions now : "Joining up ? They'll never take you. I want to be an orderly, cooks get better pay though. Commander Woods is interviewing people, Martha went this morning." The place was buzzing.

The married women were in the news too : "My husband says we'll have mixed camps soon. Wouldn't it be lovely ?" Beatrice was not so sure. "It would break up my marriage. Otto and I always had separate bedrooms. There won't be any romance left." She was not enthusiastic. Apparently she preferred the monthly meetings, on which I am not entitled to express an opinion, never having been to one.

I only saw the other side of it, as it were, wives feverishly getting ready days beforehand, having their hair done and wearing it in curlers, buying small things for their husbands **who** were always hungry, and being bundled off into trains

all in their Sunday best, and nicely labelled with name and camp of destination. Drab little Hildegard had suddenly developed into a ravishing beauty adorned with flowing veils, rouge, and the lingering scent of Chanel 5, and Mrs. Kaiser looked imperial in black moire. There was no objection to the meeting of relatives in general, and uncles, nephews and cousins suddenly appeared in large numbers. A little wangling from both sides produced highly pleasing contacts, and it seemed that a good time was had by all. More than once I was discreetly offered a cousin or even a brother-in-law and I am sorry now that 1 was so prim. Who knows—I probably missed my chance again.

Later on the tactics were changed, and the men came to visit the women's camp. We husbandless creatures had curfew during the time they would be in the streets, and only from windows and behind curtains were we able to peep at them. "Isn't Mrs. Koch's husband attractive! He looks much younger than she." "Oh, that's Mr. Purvin, I wouldn't have him for a gift. Frightful little man." "What a beauty, oh what a beauty! Who is he?" Helga almost swooned. We looked closer at the object of her admiration. Of course it would be——it was——the local butcher's boy, who had got himself mixed up in the procession of husbands on their way to Collinson's, where tea, cake, and a short speech by the Commandant would be provided.

On the whole, I didn't regret my single state, especially when the mixed camp rumours came up. I had terrible visions of what that would be like. However, it didn't materialise until late in the spring, and also the A.T.S. enrolment progressed only in slow stages. Time was of no importance in an internment camp. If you weren't released now, you might have a tribunal in six months' time, and if your papers were lost it would take even longer. Why worry !

We all became restless. I was progressing with my work, **but** only by firmly excluding everything else. As long as we

had realised that we would have to wait, we had felt settled and secure somehow. Now, with people leaving all the time, things were breaking up and spring was approaching. There might be changes soon, yet we didn't quite know what to wish for.

Air raid signals became more frequent on the island. Stray bombs were dropped in odd places, our gas masks were re-examined, and we were ordered to leave our beds in case of a night raid. The householder was responsible for our being downstairs. In some of the big hotels people were rushed into cold damp cellars where they sat up all night; at the Hydro, where the Commandant reigned, and which was largely reserved for sick and old people, everyone was lined up on the staircase. And dear Mrs. Watt and Margaret spent several evenings in the little cupboard under the stairs, as Mrs. Watt had gathered from the newspapers that this was one of the best places to be in. Mr. Watt went off to fulfil his home guard duties, occasionally coming back for a cup of tea, which was being served from under the stairs.

Matilda, Gabrielle and I sat in the dark sitting room, yawning. We tried to read by candle-light. "If only this terrible war would be over soon. What does anything matter as long as people kill each other." "Would you want it to be over anyhow ?" I asked Matilda. She pulled herself together : "No, of course not. England must win." We all realised that any other outcome would be unthinkable, that it would only mean a new and more horrible phase of war.

Later on in bed I couldn't go to sleep. "Are you asleep, Gabrielle ?" She moved a little. "No, I'm not. What is it, Livia? Unhappy?" "How long do you think this war is going to last, Gabrielle ?" "Who can tell, my dear, it may be over to-morrow, it may last a long time. In 1914, the soldiers thought they would be home by Christmas, and it took them four years." "If I am here for the duration——" "What nonsense, we'll both be released soon," she sounded

impatient. "If I am here for the duration," I insisted, "and this war lasts three or four years, I'll be about thirty when I get out. Is that a good age to start life again?" She wasn't impatient any more. "Go to sleep now. Yes, that's a very good age, Livia."

THE SUFFERER SPEAKS (FOR MATILDA)

Did you hear about my suffering?
Let me tell you all about my suffering,
No one ever suffered like me.
You know, you won't believe a thing
For mine was such extreme suffering
As could only have happened to me.
You didn't think it was the operation?
Everybody has operations.
Or my fall at the railway station?
Every one falls at railway stations.
It's something more special, really quaint
If only you knew, you would straight-away faint,
And I bore it in silence, I never complained,
How I revel in suffering nobly restrained!

Of course it wasn't just the suffering,
There was also the suffering I suffered through su
Which was very painful indeed.
You know it's a very peculiar thing
How suffering causes more suffering;
On that we are surely agreed.
In fact it began with the operation
Although everybody has operations,
And there was the fall at the railway station
Though more people fell at all sorts of stations.
Yet there is something else and entirely mine
—How I do lie awake every night in distress—
I still see that horrible railway line,
But that's not the point I would like to stress.

It is how I suffered my suffering,
And how kindly my suffering suffered me.
We suffered each other as friends.
It wasn't just everyday suffering,
For that might have been the usual thing
Which everyone understands.
It was much more subtle than operations
Or incidents at railway stations,
Sublime, unique and dignified,
Though no one was tried as I have been tried.
Really most special, absurdly quaint
If only you knew you would straight-away faint,
And I suffered it all with such noble restraint,
In silence I did it—and never complained.

Chapter Thirteen

Tribunal,s sea fish,mixed camp

GABRIELLE had her tribunal towards the end of March. Although we were quite convinced that she would be released immediately, we were terribly excited about it. Something was happening at last. So the letters her pupils and patients had written to the Home Office, asking for her release, had helped after all. She would be the first of us to leave. Looking incredibly like a lady with hat, gloves, handbag and my best pair of stockings, she went off at what seemed the crack of dawn, followed and surrounded by our best wishes. Yes, all my wishes too, although the idea of being left without her was terrifying me, I wouldn't think of it until it really happened. I thought of it all day. I played several games of patience that morning, an art I had acquired during internment. Will she be released, will she not, will she, will she not? She would be released, the cards said so, no two ways about it. What was I going to do all by myself? Matilda and I alone would be an impossible team ; all the old trouble would start again. As it was, it had a way of raising its ugly head in unguarded moments.

I went for a walk in the afternoon. Mrs. Kessiter stood at a street corner, aimlessly. "Are you waiting for anyone, Mrs. Kessiter?" 'There's to be a conducted tour of the biological station ; we were told to meet here. It is three o'clock, isn't it ?" It was five minutes past. We waited together. "These tours are most interesting, you should come too, Miss Livia. Last time we studied sea fish. Habits, colouring, inclinations. We found a lovely pool in the rocks,

with the queerest creatures floating around. One of my grandsons fell in and rather spoilt it. These tours are extremely instructive. Whenever I come to a new place, I make a point of seeing everything. Have you ever been to the Prado in Madrid ?" "No, I haven't. Surely they don't keep sea fish there ?" "No, no, El Grecos mostly. That was on a Tuesday too, I remember, that's why it struck me as remarkable." "But it's Thursday, Mrs. Kessiter, Thursday." She seemed upset. "Oh, then I missed it, how stupid of me. I had been so looking forward to it. Or would it be next Tuesday do you think ?"

I promised to find out for her, and while she was telling me of her sensational new method of making felt flowers, stalks and leaves looking decidedly more real than anything to be found in the fields, we went back to her hotel for tea. "Have you been told yet when to move, Livia ?" her daughter asked me. "Move ? what for ?" I was surprised. "Don't you know ? The mixed camp is coming to St. Mary. It will all be wired off and we have to go to Erin." "How frightful," I couldn't believe it. Leave our dear Mrs. Watt, where we were so happy ? Impossible. And the garden. Gabrielle, whose passion for gardening was only equalled by her skill in making things grow, would be very sad not to see the results. But then she was leaving anyway. It all came back to me. So I was losing everything at once. Companionship, comfort, congenial surroundings. It had come all at once, and it was going all at once. That's what life was. And Erin. The Internees of St. Mary were as contemptuous of the Internees of Port Erin as the Internees of Port Erin felt superior to the Internees of St. Mary. How quickly these divisions sprang up!

St. Mary, with only a thousand Internees as compared with Port Erin's original three thousand, harboured a group of highly efficient teachers and intellectuals whose glory reflected on all of us. On the strength of it, we regarded

ourselves as most select and exclusive. Was not at this very moment a play being rehearsed by the greater portion of the St. Mary population? Was not everyone who wasn't actually taking part in it, either going to sing in the chorus, paint scenery, make costumes, type the script, play the piano, play the flute, or just make a nuisance of themselves at rehearsals? Was such activity to be found at Port Erin? No. Did they have the wish, initiative, and perseverance to dive into an undertaking of similar description? A thousand times, no. As far as the community was concerned, St. Mary scored. It had a good school, excellent lectures, a warm club room where people could sit in the afternoons, and the play "Everyman," which was performed for a whole week at Easter to full houses, was a great advance when compared with the Christmas effort. One couldn't help feeling that a few years of internment would produce excellent team work, and that a group of "Internee Players" touring the provinces (accompanied by an adequate police force of course!) might prove an asset to the theatrical life of these islands. All this would have to break up.

I went home sadder than ever. Gabrielle came back late at night, exhausted by her adventure. "What was it like? Were they nice to you?" "They were extremely polite. Only questioned me for five minutes. Routine questions mostly. Either it's very good or very bad." "Of course it's good. Tribunals are formalities anyway. It's all been decided long ago. How lonely I'll be without you. Have you heard already that we'll have to move?"

We asked to be allowed to stay on until Gabrielle's release would be through, which would take about three weeks. "Three weeks, no longer"— the Billetting Officer was in a gracious mood. Everything was for the last time now, and we were very kind to each other.

"Will you remember me at all?" "Don't be silly." "Internment friends aren't real friends perhaps. Everything may be

out of focus without our realising it. If we are all slightly potty, no one would notice it here. Seen from outside it will all look quite different." "Sit still, don't wriggle," Gabrielle was painting my portrait, also for the last time.

The idea worried me very much, that perhaps we had all gone slightly insane. It was suggested by the letters we received. Having lost our freedom, people apparently thought we had lost our reason too. If I asked for my summer clothes to be sent, I could be sure that a parcel of woollies would arrive almost immediately. If Gabrielle wanted water colours, an imposing selection of oils turned up ; a request for the Penguin edition of Shakespeare most certainly produced a nicely bound volume of *Gulliver's Travels* or Michael Arlen's *Green Hat.* It was almost a game ; not quite, because there were only two explanations. Either we had gone mad or the people outside weren't all there. Both of which were equally depressing.

Three times a day I had to be told that Gabrielle wouldn't forget me, that she might even write to me occasionally. She bought small presents for everyone, shook hands with our more casual acquaintances, promised she would do all she could to get me out as well, and for the last time that day, she wouldn't forget me. And please would I shut up now. I reminded her that we had meant to be kind to each other and she apologised. We got quite near to being emotional about it.

Gabrielle's release seemed to take longer than usual. The greater part of St. Mary had been evacuated, and it would be our turn soon. The barbed wire for the married camp was being put up already. They were only to have the promenade, the wire ran half way between the houses and the sea front. Not much more than a chicken run. We were told that those were the regulations for the men, and the wives had to put up with it. Twice a week they would be let out to do their shopping in the village. The walk between St. Mary and

Port Erin, the only one we really had, would be out of bounds, and for the women's camp there would only be the sea front left for walks, recreation and exercise. A most discouraging prospect, it would be like Holloway. There were also rumours that the Fascist women would come to the island soon, and we might have to mix with them. The future looked dark.

Gabrielle and I had to resume our house-hunting activities again. Officially one would have to go where put, but we hoped to be allowed to make some suggestions. Matilda suddenly walked out on us. Apparently we had got on her nerves much more than we had realised. According to her, we had shamelessly made use of her, let her work for us, suppressed her individuality, and she didn't mind if she never saw another hand-painted picture again. As for poetry, it was painful to listen to, especially the home-made variety. She didn't mince her words and looked more long-suffering than ever. We didn't prevent her going, which seemed wrong again, for she told everybody we had turned her out. Never again did she speak to us, except to say an occasional "good morning," or "nice weather to-day." We felt rather sad and upset about it all.

Lotte came to our rescue. She knew just the place for us. It was a nice small house, similar to Mrs. Watt's. The landlady was willing to have us, and as by a miracle there were no objections to our going there.

Mrs. Watt had got used to her aliens and was very sad to lose us. She adored Gabrielle. "Isn't Miss Gabrielle wonderful," she exclaimed every time Gabrielle opened her mouth, worked in the garden, helped in the house, or taught Margaret how to walk properly. Miss Laurent was a necessary evil which went with such splendour. You have to take the bad with the good. Mrs. Watt was a very wise and kind woman. And in return for a hand-painted picture and some home-made poetry she gave us 5/- each as a parting present, a vast amount of cash for an internee. We were so moved

that we shed a few tears, and after many promises **that** she would soon come to visit us, we left our nice little home, where we had spent a happy and active winter.

The streets were crowded with people pushing wheelbarrows, prams, carts, dragging suit-cases. Various station lorries went to and fro. Wives were moving to St. Mary, spinsters retired into Port Erin. There would be no opportunity of meeting again as the two camps would be organised separately. Friends were heartbroken, and in many cases it seemed that the husband would have a hard time trying to make up for the intimacy, understanding, and ease which sometimes exists between women who together have weathered the storm.

One hope was left. The cinema. The married couples would be allowed to visit the Port Erin cinema once a week. It would all be under supervision of course, but one might catch sight of each other. Hurrah! Not all was lost yet. See you at the cinema!

THE FRIGHTENED LADY

I am frightened, I am frightened
And I don't know what to do.
How this life is full of danger
Which might threaten me or you.

All my thoughts are painting pictures
Of eventual circumstances
Which confuse me and destroy me
Playing havoc with my senses.

Easily it might be raining
When I wear my newest dress.
Oh I know it would amuse you
If you witnessed my distress.

Let me tell you your detachment
Causes me extreme annoyance.
Soon you will be very sorry
And acknowledge my clairvoyance.

Horror lurks in every corner,
Friends are spiteful enemies,
Accidents can always happen
As a fact they still increase.

Love is never to be trusted,
Pleasures have their shady side
Which is hardly pleasurable
Owing to the sting they hide.

Though I use the utmost caution
In my dealings with each day,
Something which I had not counted
May occur as well it may.

Death or illness, sudden parting,
Quarrel, loss of all possession,
Oh at times I see it clearly,
This despair beyond expression.

How can I escape, avoid it
Is there nothing I can do?
I am frightened, I am frightened
And I think you should be too

Chapter Fourteen

Bewate o

WE got used to our new home, the family was very nice, but we missed our daily walks. The barbed wire had come very close indeed. One didn't dare walk quickly any more, because one would reach the barrier too soon. One valiant person was said to have managed walking one full hour without repeating herself; but that must have included all blind alleys, stiles, doorways, stopping at corners, and looking right and left, before crossing the road.

No news of Gabrielle's release yet. Her sister was writing : "When are you coming ? There are hot water bottles in your bed already." One would just have to wait again. It was getting warmer, we spent hours sitting in the sun. In May, Dame Joanna left, and a new Commandant arrived, Mr. Cuthbert, late of Scotland Yard. I thought there was some irony in this. Cuthbert had been the secretary of the Bow Street tribunal from where most of us had been interned ; he had signed the summons. Now that we were all safely rounded up, he came to see if we were still there, and how we were getting on. Things seemed to be getting stricter, but no great changes were noticeable. Mr. Cuthbert at once made a great hit with the landladies, who came back from their first meeting filled with admiration for his speech, looks and the promises he had made. Everything was going to be fair now, he would see to it that all those who should be released, would have their cases reviewed quickly. "Such a good-looking man, he used to be an actor at one time." His praises were sung in many kitchens that night.

Gabrielle and I suddenly had many new friends. Every St. Mary face in the greyness of Port Erin was a joy to meet and had to be spoken to. Elsa had been released some time ago, Lotte had a tribunal and went three weeks after, Matilda ignored us, Roma came to tea sometimes. Among the new ones were Ruth, Irmela, Gisela, Helga, Inga, Gerda, and old Mrs. Stranz, who had the distinction of having been interned twice—no one could imagine why. Yet she took it philosophically, was an extremely clever and well-read woman, and we enjoyed her company and her extensive knowledge.

It was a blessing we knew so many nice people. For I was giving way to something very much resembling a nervous breakdown. The prospect of losing Gabrielle, the uncertainty as to whether I would ever have another tribunal, the general atmosphere of unrest, perhaps the spring too, were playing more on my nerves than I would admit. Everything seemed against me since we had come to Port Erin, every encounter with the authorities proved cause for despair, and I needed all my fighting spirit. We had a new superintendent who thought we were too sure of ourselves and needed putting in our places. We were treated accordingly. Had I been tougher, I wouldn't have minded at all being shouted at, instead of getting a reasonable answer to a reasonable request. I would have used a little flattery, as many people did, looked a little downcast, and got exactly what I wanted. With deeply felt thanks I would have retired backwards out of the door, leaving the official at her desk under the impression that she had been extremely obliging, and that there was something to be said for treating the aliens as if they were human beings. (Several of the officials were exceedingly nice and kind, it was just my personal misfortune to have to deal with those who weren't).

Things came to a head when, after inspecting my chemist's bill, the health superintendent crossed out peroxide for

gargling (cost 6d.) remarking, "this is much too precious for aliens, much too precious." Giving me a severe look she added : "Wipe that frightful stuff off your mouth. I tell all my girls not to use lipstick. An abominable habit." At that point I rushed out, cried for hours, just couldn't stop, and never went near an office again. Others took my bills for me, and the next weeks proved that if you kept away from the authorities, and the authorities kept away from you, you had a reasonable chance of contentment, in spite of being interned.

Gabrielle was called to the office. What could it be? I waited for her outside. Teresinnia and Trudi passed, arm in arm, Teresinnia looking magnificent in a canary yellow dress. "What a lovely dress!" I was feeling envious. "Yes, isn't it ? Do you know where it comes from ? Promise not to laugh." I promised. "It used to be an angel's costume in the Labour Party's Christmas play. They gave it to me for dusters when it got too old. You know, I used to work for them. Well, I washed it and took it to pieces. This is the result." It was a splendid sight, with gold buttons glittering in the sunlight.

Trudi was restless : "Come on, we must try and get hold of Helga, I want to know if it's true." "If what is true?" I didn't want them to go, why was Gabrielle being so long ? Was anything the matter ? At the back of our minds was always the fear that our families might die or be wounded, and we would only hear of it weeks later. "Don't you know ? Helga is supposed to have been accepted for the A.T.S. The whole camp is in an uproar. I want to ask her if it's true." I couldn't understand Trudi. "Why shouldn't it be true? Lots of people are being accepted. I am very glad for her. She was so much hoping to go." "But don't you know that she is a cousin of Hess?" "Rudolf Hess? Don't be idiotic!" "But she is. Two or three times removed, granted, and she hasn't seen him since she was a child and isn't in

touch with him at all. But there you are. Rudolf Hess, the mystery man of this war." "But it must be in her papers ; don't they know?" "She says she gave all her particulars when she arrived in this country, and again when she enrolled. I must find out if it's true." At that moment Helga herself came round the corner, on her way to the office, accompanied by people to the right of her, people to the left of her, behind her and in front of her. Excitement was running high. She was beaming : "Have you heard ? Isn't it marvellous ? So they don't hold it against me. Oh, I am so happy." She was a very popular girl and we were all happy with her. So there was no prejudice after all.

Here was Gabrielle back again, looking very white in the face. "Was it anything important ?" I asked her. She took my arm and I could feel her trembling. "Nothing much. Just that they have put me in category "A". That means duration. I suppose you'll be pleased, Livia." "Good heavens!" I couldn't believe it. Was there no justice in this world ? Was she sure it wasn't a mistake ? No, she had seen the letter herself. That's what it said.

I felt quite numb inside, and we walked up and down the cliffs, up and down the beach, sat on the stones somewhere, hardly talking. What was there to be said? "You'll have to make another application at once." "Yes, yes, of course," she sounded infinitely weary. "Now all my friends will think that I must be guilty of something. Everyone could understand about last year, with all that muddle and panic going on. But this is different, they've had plenty of time for revision. This is final." "It can't be, it can't be." I was in tears now. "We must do all we can. If you don't object, they will think you are quite pleased with the verdict. And think of your work. Promise you will appeal." "I doubt if it helps much ; but we'll get it cleared up somehow. Come on, let's go home."

On the way home I asked her : "Did you mean what you

said, Gabrielle, about my being pleased ?" She stood still for a moment and stared at me : "Did I say that ? I was terribly upset just then. Of course I didn't mean it. Forget it." "Please, Gabrielle," I wasn't quite happy yet. "Naturally I like being with you. But never for one minute did I wish you wouldn't be released. It never entered my head even. You must believe that." She smiled a little ghost of a smile ; "Don't dramatise things so much. Of course I believe you. Don't cry, you fool, there's nothing to cry about." I was sobbing helplessly now. The injustice of it all !

THE CROOKEDNESS OF CROOKED THINGS

The crookedness of crooked things
Is really quite amazing.
The question what is straight or not
Seems mostly self-effacing.

For even crookedness depends
Mainly on those observing,
And you who watch with crooked eyes
Will miss the gentle curving.

Why that should be I wouldn't know,
Though I remember dimly,
Somewhere exists a law for it
Which states it all quite primly,

That crooked things and crooked eyes
Dissolve each other neatly
So that the vision which remains
Is straightened out completely.

Once straightened so, it represents
The hypocrites' facade,
And under this convenient cloak
Deceives us unafraid.

Deceives us, though it's our fault,
For our crooked eyes,
Cause crooked world and crooked things
To wear such shrewd disguise.

Chapter Fifteen

Who takes notice of denouncements!

Now that we might have settled down again, the one thing I had hoped for and the one thing I now dreaded, happened. Miss Laurent was to have her tribunal. Attired in all my best clothes as according to camp custom, carrying a bulging parcel of sandwiches and a tiny piece of chocolate someone had managed to find for me (everything was getting very scarce on the island now), I set out early in the morning.

Gabrielle came to the station with me. "Have you got everything ? Papers, birth certificate, letters of recommendation, handkerchiefs, you are sure to cry." At the station were only five others—the majority of Internees had already had their trip to Douglas—and one policewoman to look after us. I was glad to find Helga there, the only person I knew. As usual she was extremely cheerful, and Gabrielle told her to hit me on the head should I get too mournful. Experience had taught us that this was the only way of coping with recurrent depression.

I waved to Gabrielle and we were off. The first time on a train since my arrival last September. This was the end of May. We all began to enjoy ourselves tremendously. We exclaimed over everything, as if we had never seen a tree, a field, or a hill before in our lives. Helga was in happy conversation with the policewoman, imploring her to take us to the cinema should we be finished early in the afternoon. We wouldn't tell anyone. Already I was wondering what they were doing in the camp now. Gabrielle would just be starting to give her lesson.

In Douglas no one took undue notice of us, internees and their guards were an everyday occurrence. An Air Force officer in his fast car was of much greater interest to the population. Once in the Court House, we sat waiting on hard chairs and benches, unpacking our sandwiches almost at once. This again was queerly reminiscent of countless school expeditions one had been to as a child. If only one could have the same trusting attitude, all would be well.

Names were being called, one after the other we went in ; half an hour seemed to be the average time for questioning. Miss Laurent's turn came just before lunch. The judge looked nice, quite different from the one at Bow Street, and I was so grateful at being spoken to politely (at Bow Street every word one had said was regarded as a lie and treated as such) that I didn't mind too much when he played on my emotions just a little more than necessary. All my handkerchiefs came in useful, and when I emerged later on, the others regarded me with caution and respect. This was serious, it seemed.

We went to a recruiting hall where we made tea and had the remainder of our sandwiches, amidst posters of "Join up now," and fingers pointing straight at me : "England needs you." The afternoon's proceedings were slowed up by some cases from the Asylum which had to be fitted in, and were treated with the utmost care. One was in the depths of gloom because she had started to cry and shiver while being questioned, and only calmed down when the policewoman sternly nodded in my direction : 'This one has been crying too." We regarded each other with mutual hate and contempt.

We did manage to catch the early train and never was anyone more anxious to get back to an internment camp than 1 was. The rush and excitement .of the world, if Douglas was the world, were not for me any longer. I wanted to get into my slacks, sit around, talk or not talk, and hear all about the Fascists coming. At one of the stations where we stopped, some Italian male Internees stood waiting on the

platform, in their blue working overalls. They looked fit and sunburnt. One, after cautiously peeping at his guard, picked some bluebells and handed them to me through the open window. That was a signal, they all grabbed whatever was growing on the line, and now we even had flowers to take back from our excursion.

I was happy to be back. Everyone came to enquire how it had been. There was nothing to be said, it might be good, it might be bad. Only now I remembered that I had been asked what I would do if I were free again, a question generally considered to mean release.

Gabrielle had had a letter from her sister saying that in answer to her enquiries as to why Gabrielle's tribunal had failed, she had been told that she mixed with the wrong set of people in the camp. I sat up. So now I was the wrong set of people! What a charming idea. Gabrielle told me not to be ridiculous, and we decided to get to the bottom of it.

We told all our friends, hoping to find a clue. Inga was helpful: "You've probably been denounced as a Nazi, that's what happened to me last summer." She was placid about it. "We've all been denounced. That's why we were interned. Last year it was quite sufficient if a discharged maid, or someone with a grievance went to the police and said : 'So-and-so needs watching,' for us to be either watched, watched and interned, or interned straight away, we all know that." "I don't mean that, that's past history. In the camp, I mean." We thought we hadn't heard properly. "In the camp ? Do you realise what you are saying ? What would be the object of denunciation in the camp ?" I tried to sound superior. She wasn't discouraged in the least. "Not very different to denunciation outside. Jealousy, nothing else. Though here it is boredom as well. The first denouncement *got* you interned, the second one *keeps* you interned. It all happened to me last summer. And I am still here,

as you can see for yourself. Lena here too. Weren't you Lena ?" Lena nodded her dark head. "Oh yes, it's one of the most popular pastimes here, didn't you know?" No, we hadn't known. Through living in such seclusion we had probably missed some of the brighter sides of camp life, but so far we seemed to have escaped much sordidness as well. Now it had caught up with us, at least as far as Gabrielle was concerned.

"There is one person, I can't tell you her name, who specialises in that sort of thing. She has developed it into a fine art," Inga told us. "She is responsible for the prolonged stay of at least ten people I know. That would make you number eleven, Gabrielle." "Do I know her?" Gabrielle was stunned. "I don't think you do. That's not necessary at all. She probably saw you in the street, disliked the look of you, and embarked on her little venture. An intriguing occupation." "But who would take notice of it ?" I couldn't believe it. Inga smiled. "Events show that notice is being taken. She herself is quite open about it all, boasts of it. She enjoys the trust and respect of a number of officials here. What channels she uses, I wouldn't know. But she succeeds." Inga suddenly sat very still: "You know, I could kill that woman." We all agreed that this was the vilest, lowest thing anyone could do.

Going deeper into the question we discovered that it was a general practice in the camp, that people denounced each other with varying results. Most were amateurs, but if this went on, they might improve their methods. We found out that a number of rumours were circling in the camp about both of us. There always will be unfounded rumours in any community, and they should be ignored as such, but if they are allowed to ruin a person's chance of freedom, they have to be taken very seriously. One of the rumours apparently originated from the fact that Gabrielle had arrived from Holloway with the little girl, who later on showed herself

to be a Nazi. According to camp philosophy that made Gabrielle a Nazi too, and I wouldn't have been surprised to find that I was of the party as well. We collected all the facts we could, Gabrielle wrote a long statement to the Home Office, explained the position to the Commandant, asking for his help. Nothing more could be done, and we began to keep more than ever to ourselves, since no one was to be trusted in this place.

I made myself get used to the idea of going back into life, as we called it. Three weeks was the usual time for releases to come through ; for three weeks Gabrielle and I were very kind to each other. She promised not to forget me, I promised to work for her release, I didn't buy presents, being much too superstitious, and I felt very cowardly and frightened. Tuesday and Friday being release days, I stayed in all the afternoon, pretending to work, but really only looking out of the window. Was anyone coming up the hill with papers in her hand ? I had many hallucinations, but none of them materialised. After four weeks I decided that 1 would have to stay, most probably denounced as well, and concentrate on some more work. Other things needed our attention.

The Fascists were coming.

Chapter Sixteen

Some arrive, others go

A NUMBER of boarding houses were to be cleared for the Fascists. They would live by themselves, but mix with us in the street, come to the same classes and share camp life with us. Having learnt by experience, we wondered if going to a French lesson with a Fascist would make us Fascist as well. Quite possibly. The general idea seemed to be that all the more honourable elements had left the camp already, or would be leaving soon, and what remained might just as well be allowed to mix. No serious harm done. This evening the first batch was to arrive.

According to the landladies, who as usual were exceedingly well informed, special arrangements had been made for the comfort and welfare of some of them, electricity had been installed, and everyone felt honoured at the thought of nobility in our midst.

Shopkeepers went to great lengths explaining to us, their dear, dear aliens, that they would never serve a Fascist, never. If a Fascist came in asking for as much as a pinch of salt, she would be shown the door in no uncertain manner. A dear old friend of ours who served teas in the garden when the weather was nice was emphatic in her exclamations that no Fascist would ever sit on her garden chairs. If we were unreliable, we couldn't be blamed for it (murmurs of protest from our side) we weren't English. But English people should know better. Not on her garden chairs ; oh no.

We considered : should we just go to the station and see who was coming ? It would be wiser not to. "Are you going

Helga?" "Where?" (Helga was just recovering from the shock of having been refused by the A.T.S. after all. She had been looking forward to it so much. Here again, probably, denunciation in the camp had played its part). 'To look at the Fascists." "Certainly not. None of us are going. They might think we were there to welcome them." No one was going. Roma, Gisela, Irmela, Ruth, lnga, Gerda, Teresinnia and Trudi, would make a point of staying at home in protest.

"Gabrielle, would you like to go for a walk?" It was after dinner. Gabrielle looked unconcerned. "It's quite a nice evening, one might as well." We were at the station in no time. Everyone was there : Helga, Roma, Gisela, Irmela, Ruth, Gerda, Teresinnia and Trudi, and several hundred others. "We just went for a walk, such a lovely evening." We all laughed.

Police were there in full force, detectives, officials, semi-officials and the local gentry. We only hoped they would be here before curfew. There was the train. "Stand back everybody!" We were held in check. Craning our necks, we waited for things to happen. There was a face we knew. Freda. Had she turned Fascist ? She wasn't English either. Eight to ten others appeared, looking shyly at the sea of faces staring at them. The train steamed out. That was all. These weren't Fascists, they were detained people. We knew them all from Hollo way. They were more or less similar to us, with the only difference that they had no German passports, being from the borderlands. They were Polish or Czech ; one was married to an American but hadn't acquired American citizenship yet, in spite of having lost her German nationality. They certainly were not Fascists. We were disappointed.

We had several "Fascist" arrivals of a similar description. The majority of them continued their stay at Holloway. The very few genuine British ones who did turn up at last,

were put into a very special house with a superintendent in residence. But there was no glamour about it. They served as an excuse for new rumours and persecutions. That was all. One unfortunate person, after having picked a few small flowers, unthinkingly crossed the station road at a time when more Fascists were expected. Next day the story went that she had welcomed the Fascists with generous floral offerings, and no one wanted to sit at table with her for at least a fortnight.

One morning we woke up to a new phenomenon. Late the night before a group of very well dressed ladies, some of them sparkling with diamonds, others just wearing plain gold jewellery, had increased our numbers. The house they lived in was immediately christened "Piccadilly House," and well-meaning friends didn't leave us in serious doubt as to the why and wherefore. At first we felt annoyed and very prim, then the idea gradually gained ground that it was a profession like any other. And if studying insect life might be described as a more respectable occupation, this was certainly the more spectacular one.

We discovered that most of them were very nice, they eagerly came to all the classes, kept up a physical training of rigid discipline, and some of them had a highly cultured taste in classical music. It might be of interest to add, that all of these later arrivals got on beautifully with the authorities. In a few plain words they asked for what they wanted, and what's more, they got it. Which just goes to show.

All the shopkeepers were delighted with them, and they were heartily welcome to any garden chair they chose to sit on.

Everyone asked me : "Haven't you heard yet, Livia ?" No, I hadn't heard and I thought it looked hopeless. If only they would let me know, it wouldn't be so bad. A certainty, however disagreeable, is easier to cope with than an uncertainty. My mother wrote : "You must be patient," Gabrielle

said : "Don't be so foul-tempered," Mrs. Kessiter sadly shook her head. She herself had been released, but was permitted to stay on for a while as she had nowhere to go.

She was weaving scarves, crocheting belts, and thought she might go in for a little pottery. There was some lovely red clay to be found on the beach, such a pity not to use it. If I would come with her she could show me a little flower pot she had made all by herself. It was losing water and inclined to tumble a bit, but rather beautiful all the same. She seemed worried that day : "I wonder if you have noticed a peculiarity in this place, Miss Livia." She sounded sad. "I've noticed a great number of peculiarities in this place, Mrs. Kessiter ; which one do you mean ?" It was difficult for her to find the right words. "You know that I don't like to be hard on my fellow beings, Miss Livia, but I've made a study of the subject and I would like to speak about it to an impartial observer." Good heavens, had I done anything? "All my life I kept maids, I treated them well, and they were most attached to me. My housekeeper stayed with me for thirty years. So there is no personal prejudice on my part, you see that, don't you ?" I saw nothing of the kind, but I nodded. "Now it seems to me that a number of domestic servants have been interned here with us." Bravo, Mrs. Kessiter, her powers of observation were magnificent. To be exact, about eighty per cent, were domestic servants. "Have you noticed that a large proportion don't do any work at all ? If they have duty, they moan about it for weeks beforehand, and have to recover for weeks after. All the real work here is done by others. A most remarkable coincidence. And they are so ill too. Do you think they will die out eventually ? I thought about it the other night, and got a little worried. I know there's a lot of talk about a new order going on, but even if they won't be maids any more, they'll have to be something. If they don't die out, of course. They're all very ill."

"They just imagine that they are ill, don't let it worry you, Mrs. Kessiter. They'll probably be very good maids again by the time they get out." She was unconvinced. "I wonder what Miss Gabrielle would say to it. She must keep in touch with them all the time. Doesn't she? Some of them are very ill." "Gabrielle could tell you a few stories," I admitted, "not only do they invent the most complicated illnesses, they also have long tales of past splendour to tell. In their imagination the lives of other people get terribly mixed up with their own, and they seem to find relief in dreaming a little." "What a strain," Mrs. Kessiter sympathised. "That's why they get so run down. Just imagine the effort of remembering, if you said the other day that you went to the theatre every evening, or only once a week ; and after all, somebody might find out that you hadn't been riding in Hyde Park every morning. It's really quite pathetic." Mrs. Kessiter allowed herself to be comforted for the time being, but I strongly felt that much of her leisure would be devoted to a further study of the subject.

It had made me think, too. Supposing these people weren't released sooner or later. They had no personal discipline, and would slip from physical laziness to mental decay. Even for those who fully realised where the danger lay, it was hard and often impossible to keep to a healthy, well balanced routine. It needed a constant extra effort, which we sometimes just did not find the strength to make.

On the way home I ran into the post girl. "Telegram for you, Miss Laurent." I could hardly open it, I was trembling so much. Gabrielle was suddenly there. Had she come to meet me ? What was all this ? "Released, letter follows, happy with you, Mother." So here it was, after three months of waiting. "Happy with you." Was I happy? I didn't know. It was so sudden. If you have been interned for over a year, everything is very sudden.

"Oh, Gabrielle, I want to stay with you." "Sh, sh, no

hysterics in the street. We'll go for a walk now, and then go home, and we'll buy something nice for dinner. Let's enjoy these last few days. The official release isn't through yet, you'll have at least a week to get ready, if not more." That was true, I wasn't being whisked off from Tuesday to Friday, as had happened to a great many people. At least I could do it in style. Releases were comparatively rare in those days of August and everybody took an interest. "Livia's released." "Congratulations." People who had treasured a secret admiration for Gabrielle in their hearts, were particularly cheerful, wishing me all the best.

We didn't enjoy these last few days. It was like a long wait at a station platform after you had said everything you meant to say and the train refuses to move. "Have you got everything ? Papers, chocolates, cigarettes ? Remember me to Austin," you repeat over and over again, feeling a perfect fool. That's how it was. We had said everything long ago, had discussed every possibility, and what should be done under given circumstances, we were glad to be still together, but also anxious to get it over and done with.

There were endless formalities ; getting released was a very much harder job than getting oneself interned.

On the last day we had a small party. I would have preferred to disappear quietly, but the landlady had said : "You must say good-bye properly to your friends, Miss Livia." They all came, Teresinnia, Inga, Irmela, Gisela, Mrs. Kessiter and daughter, Trudi, Helga, Gerda, and one or two new friends we had made. All the old ones had been released long ago, Roma had gone to the mixed camp, Matilda was not on speaking terms with us. But all the others came, and were a little sad that they weren't going themselves, hoped Gabrielle would soon be released too, and had glorious visions of the life in front of me.

I suddenly realised that the last thing I wanted was to leave all these people. Yet, as no one had asked me if 1

wanted to come, so no one asked me if I wanted to go. You are pushed into it, and then you are pushed out of it. And if you come out with a grin on your face, so much the better for you.

As Gabrielle and I both react to excitement in the same manner—by getting even more sleepy than usual—we slept well, and next morning I was most indignant that I wasn't given an egg for breakfast, one of my privileges as a departing Internee. They had thought I would be too restless to eat one.

It was still curfew for Gabrielle, and she couldn't come with me. We kissed quickly, I felt I couldn't stand parting ceremonies or last words, and she stood at the gate waving to me. Before turning the corner at the bottom of the hill, I looked round, and saw her once more, slim, with a mop of dark tousled hair, tall against the grey light of early morning, looking exactly as she had done on the landing at Holloway, ages ago, when 1 had seen her for the first time after a night of air raids. When and where would I see her again ?

Gabrielle, dear dear Gabrielle, will they keep you there indefinitely? Before leaving I made a statement, vouching for you and your loyalty, as everyone else has done who knows you. Will they take the word of one Internee for another Internee ? You are not one of the people who would merely not do any harm. You are one of those very few who would do a lot of good. You are needed out here. Your place is in the world of to-day, not in an internment camp. See you again soon, Gabrielle, if there is any justice left in this world !

Chapter Seventeen

Until further order!

THE station was in an uproar. There were few of us going, about twelve only, but those twelve made a great deal of noise. We were given our tickets, bags and cases were examined. Old Mrs. Stranz was going too and we stayed together. Someone brought a telegram for me : "Should I not be there in time, telephone when you arrive. Mother." "You realise, Miss Laurent, that you are not allowed to use the telephone until to-morrow morning, after you have registered with the police ? Nor to send a wire ?" I hadn't realised anything of the kind. Of course I would have telephoned, had I arrived at Euston and found nobody there. Luckily they had told me in time! It seemed only too easy for an ex-Internee to get into trouble again.

For the last time we made the journey to Douglas. The fact that we had to pay a penny for our bus fare from station to docks annoyed everyone terribly. I don't know why, it just did. Once on the boat we were free, no guards any more, several sinister looking individuals were pointed out to us as detectives travelling incognito. To this day I haven't discovered what the incognito consisted of. The man at the bar pretended to recognise me and registered great joy. I promised him that I would come back on a pleasure trip. Several other people must have had the same idea. The boat was overcrowded. I had none of the traditional emotions : "Free at last, what happiness!" but only the acute feeling of discomfort which comes from being extremely sleepy and having nowhere

to sleep. Coming ashore, we were received back into England —one could hardly say "repatriated"—and once on the train I began to realise that this was true. I was going back. After a year away I was going back. Granted, there wasn't much for me to go back to. At the best it could be summed up as "a new beginning."

Well, wasn't that about the most exciting thing that could happen to one ?

And as I thought about this last year of mine, as one will think while travelling on trains which in their steady hurried movement seem to be saying to those who are a little frightened of the future : "Not yet, not yet, not yet," I realised that like the princess in the fairy tale, I had been given three things. And though I have learnt not to cling to possessions, or to hold on to that which belongs to me no more, I would pray to the powers that be, to let me keep these : a friend, greater awareness and understanding of the things around me, and a more courageous heart.

* * * *

Mrs. Stranz came to me : "Livia, have you looked at your registration book yet ?" "Why, what's the matter ? I haven't lost it, have I ?" I hadn't. Here it was. "Don't tell me I'm not released after all!" "No, no, but look what it says." I looked. "The holder of this certificate is to be exempted from internment until further order." It seemed fairly reasonable, short and to the point. "Why are you so upset ?" "Until further order," she had tears in her eyes. "We were interned until further order, now we are released until further order. What do you say to that ?"

It was then that I said a very wise thing : "That, my dear Mrs. Stranz," I said, "is the joy of living."

And a lady named Adeline Horder
While crossing the Warwickshire border
Looked up in the air
For the weather was fair
And wondered about "further order."

She thought, that with vagueness prevailing,
Any slight unintentional failing
Might mean repetition
Of shortsighted vision—
And she'd have preferred plainer sailing.

I impressed on the lady named Horder
What apparently no one had taught her,
That we none of us knew
When the next move was due
And we all live "until further order."