

Raymond Gibbs
The Manor House
Yatton Keynell
Chippenham

I can well believe that some of my brothers and sisters and cousins would correct some of my facts and disagree with some of my opinions - but this document does not claim to embody the whole truth; I do claim for it, however, that it is honest - nothing is invented - it contains what I remember, as I remember it.

R.K.G.

14th March 1974

I called on Bay Wyld (*Mrs. Hugh Wyld, nee Houldsworth*) last week in the Lansdowne Nursing in Bath. She recently fell and broke her thigh and though it has been pinned, it has not mended very well and except for a daily "walk with help, she is more or less permanently in bed. She is, I believe, over 90 but with every faculty except locomotion and hearing.

Some of our conversation had to be written and I reminded her of a weekend she and Hugh Wyld and I had spent at Clifton Hampden after Gerald (*Gerald Gibbs 3rd Ld. Aldenham*) succeeded and I told her the story about Geoffrey (*Geoffrey Gibbs to whom Gerald left C.H.*) and me at C.H. after Elsie (*so-called because of her initials L.C., was wife of Gerald Gibbs and sister of Bay Wyld*) was a widow - and how Chuff (*butler at C.H.*) came out to the Churchyard after early Church to give L.C. his arm for the journey none through the Churchyard and garden, and looked back at G. and me walking behind them to say "I always say there's nothing like the Holy Communion for giving her Ladyship an appetite for breakfast".

Bay was rather amused by this comic little story about her elder sister - and told me I ought to write down any odd things I remembered about the family in the past - "Not on any principle", she said, "but just jottings as they occur to one" - she said that she was no longer capable of doing it - and that she regretted it much.

I thought I would follow her instructions - and if I am to do so I think I must begin with Grandpapa Gibbs (*1st Ld. Aldenham*) who is the furthest back of my family that I can remember.

I was six when he died and was at that early age sufficiently a snob to be aware of a sense of my own grandeur and importance as the grandson of someone for whom a muffled peal was rung at his death - I remember distinctly standing in the garden at Aldenham Vicarage with some of the family and being told that the unusual sound of the Church bells was due to their being muffled because of Grandpapa having died - and I felt puffed up and important!

I never entirely lose the feeling that it is surprising and odd that Grandpapa, who I remember very vividly, was born in George III's reign (1819 in fact, and that George III was born in 1738, so that our three overlapping lives have covered (so far) two hundred and thirty-six years!

Of course people of my age (72) have lived through a lot of reigns and revolutionary changes including two appalling wars - I was begotten in Queen Victoria's reign and have lived in Edward VII's, George V's, Edward VIII's, George VI's and Elizabeth II's reigns, but looking back it still seems wonderful to me that Grandpapa was born in the Regency period and lived in the reigns of George III and IV, William IV, Queen Victoria and Edward VII -

When he was born, "Prinnie" (*The Prince Regent, I wrote this in because Alan questioned who "Prinnie" was!!*) was still strutting about wearing stays and gorgeous uniforms, waiting and longing for the moment when he would become King -

Grandpapa was married in a blue tail coat with brass buttons and check trousers strapped under the instep of his lacquered boots, which was not fancy dress at that date - and yet I remember him as a white-haired and thoroughly Victorian old gentleman in a dark suit - and sitting on his knee was a complicated experience, avoiding as far as possible his alarming stiff right hand which was gloved in black kid, and which I knew was made of wood; sitting there I was most interested in all the various smells - which children (and other animals) are much aware of - to start with there was the

wood fire we sat beside in the library at Aldenham House - then there was the glass of wine (port I think) and the slightly parchment-like smell of (a) very well kempt old man - and the pervading smell of Aldenham House which was richer and more interesting than the smell of Aldenham Vicarage where I came from - I think it was partly that burnt good smelling wood in the fires (we mostly burnt coal) and also the smell of the panelling; I also think I remember the smell of that dreadful black kid glove.

Grandpapa Gibbs had lost his hand when his gun exploded out shooting. He was a very busy man as owner of Aldenham, Clifton Hampden and St. Dunstons in the Regent's Park which was his London House - he was a very hospitable head of his family and cousins of all degrees and old friends used to spend long visits in his house - he was a good host - but apart from all that, he was for many years the head of Antony Gibbs & Sons and busy with Australian and Chilean interests as well as the goings on in the City of London.

He was a Director and for some years Governor of the Bank of England.

Having lost his right hand he taught himself to write with his left and conducted a huge correspondence over many years till he was said to have "worn out" the muscles of his thumb - and then he went right ahead learning to type with his four remaining useful fingers and produced a large output that way, though no doubt he also used secretaries. He was a keen supporter of the theory of bi-metalism (an alternative to the Gold Standard) and on one occasion went to visit Prince Bismark at Friedrichsruhe, and took my father with him for the jaunt.

Bismark at that time was exploring the question of bi-metalism and Grandpapa was considered to be an authority on the subject.

My father (*Kenneth Francis Gibbs*) always remembered that rather exciting visit and used to tell us that at one meal they were given poached eggs on mince - which was a common enough dish in England but which Bismark thought was exclusively German, so he explained it to them in some detail and then said "I think you will find it very convenient". Convenient not in those days meaning that Grandpapa could easily run it up on his kitchen stove, as it might mean today, but meaning that the things "went together" well!

13th August 1974

Helen Orr Ewing (*Lady Orr Ewing, nee Helen Gibbs, daughter of my father's youngest brother Henry Lloyd Gibbs*) who is slightly older than me, spent a night here last week, and tells me she remembers that in the evenings Grandpapa's black kid glove was changed for a white one! also she says I ought to record among his attainments that he was for many years M.P. for the City of London, till he was made a peer; and then she thinks that Uncle Alban succeeded him in that job.

16th September 1974

Uncle Alban (*Alban George Henry 2nd Ld. Aldenham, was my father's eldest brother*) was so called because he was born within sight of the Alban Hills, when my grandparents were still on a prolonged honeymoon. I hasten to add that they were married 6 May 1845 and he was born 23 April 1846!

He was fifty-five years older than me so from my earliest recollection of him he seemed an old man - but I never got to know him at all well until I was at Oxford and used to go over and shoot at Clifton Hampden and lunch there frequently on Sundays.

There was a lot that was most attractive about Uncle Alban; he seemed always pretty vague - but was very intelligent - and in Antony Gibbs & Sons they used to say that if only they could get him to give his mind to a problem he could always produce the best answer: but it was seldom worth the effort owing to his natural indolence and also his deafness.

One's recollection of those crowded luncheon parties at C.H., with too many men-servants trying to make their way round the large table in the not *very* enormous dining-room, forced into accommodating seldom less than a dozen people - and often more - is accompanied by the memory of incessant noise - both on the part of the person talking to Uncle A. in a loud bellow - and Katie's piercing shouts from the other end of the table addressed to "Father darling" and giving added information or corrections to what was being said elsewhere.

My father was born 2 April 1856 and was at Winchester during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, as he reminded me when I went to Winchester for the first time in September 1914 just after the outbreak of war. He became Vicar of Aldenham in 1884, at the age of 28, and Grandpapa did up the Vicarage (incidentally giving it a bogus Queen Anne front) and increased the income to £1000 a year to mark the occasion.

My Gibbs grandfather lived at Aldenham House some distance from the Church and Vicarage and my Barnett grandfather (*Charles Edward Barnett*, who for some reason we always called BOPPY, while the uncles and my mother equally obscurely and oddly always called him PELL) lived at Edge Grove - At the end of the vicarage drive you crossed the road and, by a little gate, walked straight into Edge Grove Park and so communication between the two houses was frequent and easy.

In 1894 my parents married, my father being 38 and very nearly twenty years older than my mother (*Mabel Alice Barnett*). This rather surprising marriage was, I believe, something of a shock to my father's family, and apparently he was strolling about with Uncle Alban and told him he was going to marry my mother - they walked on for some distance and finally uncle Alban said "Do you mean personally or professionally?"

The Aldenham Gibbs family was just about a generation older than the Edge Grove Barnett family, so that Katie (*The Honble. Catherine Louisa Gibbs*), who was uncle Alban's elder daughter, was just about the same age as my mother, and undoubtedly (except for uncle Harry Gibbs (*The Honble. Henry Lloyd Gibbs*), who was the youngest and by all accounts quite a gay spark) were inclined to see my mother as a very rough and tumble child. She was the only daughter with five brothers and much given to horses and fox-hunting not to mention rat-hunting and snaring rabbits and other boyish pursuits - and they could only with great loyalty and difficulty gradually bring themselves to think of her as a suitable wife for the vicar of Aldenham.

18th October 1976

It is a long time since I wrote anything in this book and now I feel inclined to digress for a moment into the question of Snobbery and the Social Structure, which seems to me very relevant to all that I have been writing and thinking, about the period my life covers.

Alan (*Alan Francis Gibbs, my nephew*), who had read this first part and who stayed here this summer, was amused by my attitudes in this respect, just as I have been amused by my predecessors'.

I remember a character in "Our betters": she was born American and had been an heiress, she had married an Italian Prince of great descent and magnificent houses but of tumbled-down

finances. She remarked that snobbery was "only the Spirit of Chivalry in a reach-me-down" and looking back dispassionately at what must have been a very unsatisfactory husband she remarked that *when* she had first met him "I did not look upon him as a fortune-hunting dago - it was Romance that stood in his shoes".

Certainly romance has been a big factor in snobbery.

Snob has so many shades of meaning and its meaning changes all the time, since W.S. Gilbert, describing somebody who had had a good meal, said "and when as snobs would say, he had put it all away" – when W.S.G used "snob" there, he meant a low class person who uses low class slang.

I suppose it would have been one of the assumptions of the period that any "low class person would be liable to admire or envy his "superiors" and probably aspire to their acquaintance and imitate their social tricks and habits: hence snob, more or less, as we understand its meaning.

By 1976 it seems to me that snob and snobbery have come to cover an area of meaning much wider than it used (to), including perhaps the entire social structure as it existed when I was born.

Still, today, we treat the Queen and members of the Royal Family with special formalities of awe and respect, bowing or curtsying (we hope) at the right moments etc.

When I was born and society was structured like a pyramid with King Edward VII at the top of it, what is now called the "pecking order" was a very well understood thing and awe and respect was given formal expression, and moreover was very widely felt for the strata of society above any given individual. The degree of stratification of society at that date practically has to have been lived through in order to be believed.

Except for Andrew, who was born at Hatfield, my brothers and sisters and I were all born at Aldenham. We were the children of a much respected and loved Vicar, who had already been there a long time - but more than that we were "his Lordship's little grandchildren", we were Lords of the Earth from birth - it was a privilege for the postman to have a peep at us in our prams.

Elderly and highly respectable people who had been born lower down in the pyramid called us "Master Raymond, Miss Dorothea" etc. *when* we were still tiny children, just as today elderly courtiers call little loyal children "Sir" and "Ma'am" - or petnaps they no longer do this, I am out of touch and can't say, but only yesterday they certainly did.

When I was twelve we left Aldenham and my father bought a lovely old house at Hatfield, much bigger than Aldenham vicarage, and there we began to live on a decidedly enlarged scale.

Anyone might have expected that we would have been a slightly grander family than we had been at Aldenham, and in a certain sense we were, but NOT in Hatfield. There we suddenly found that comparatively speaking we were nobody in particular. Why? but of course, because Hatfield was dominated by Hatfield House and the Salisburys, and the Cecil family were born much higher up the pyramid than our own.

The general flavour of the situation can perhaps be illustrated by the fact that nice little Mrs. Allen, the housekeeper at Hatfield House, could not bring herself to call my sisters "Miss Dorothea and Miss Anstice", she used to call them "Lady Dorothea and Lady Anstice" and then would correct herself as though it had been just a slip of the tongue.

The whole thing perhaps sounds irretrievably comic and quite unreal, but unreal was the thing it very truly was not. It was all a very real reflection of the biggest worldly fact that there is - the fact of Power.

Naturally wealth was an important source of power too - to be a Marquis, as Lord Salisbury was, was then a position of power and influence, but to be a Marquis in command of very great wealth as Lord Salisbury was, was to be a great force in the country's affairs.

The person I always think of as Ld. Salisbury is the one of my youth, the son of Queen Victoria's great Prime Minister.

We at our much lower level in society, whether as children or later as young men and women, took it for granted as did all the people we lived among, high and low, rich and poor, that we had a privileged position and some influence and authority, simply because that was where we were born.

Just as at that time King Edward was the man who stood highest in the world and our country was acknowledged as the greatest in the world, with the result that any ordinary Englishman, any "Tommy Atkins" anywhere on the globe, had beneath and behind him a sub stratum of power and authority, which gave him a protection, a confidence and perhaps a cockiness of which other nations were obliged to acknowledge the value; so the "gentry" in our own country, even the most insignificant member of that hazy, amorphous, undefined brotherhood, had a "something behind him and supporting him which had to be reckoned with, and to a very slight degree still has, though those who have it and those who have not are all pretty anxious to avoid any longer acknowledging its existence.

The system of aristocratic Government, of a ruling class, of some people being referred to as the Upper Classes (note the plural!) is a phenomenon which has been declining ever since the end of the 18th Century, and is still with us in the form of rather faint echoes and traces.

The system, like any other system, had the defects of its qualities -

Any system must rest upon power quite inevitably - the alternative is chaos, and where there is power it will have its slight abuses and its really shocking abuses - it will of course also have its shining examples of integrity, and I think that David Cecil's lovely book about his family rightly displays his father, who was "our" Ld. Salisbury, as one of those examples.

David Cecil too, and he surely has a right to speak from a real knowledge of the facts, said that Ly. Catharine de burgh (in *Pride and Prejudice*) was not a caricature, and that her unbelievable arrogance and insolence was a true picture or some of the great ladies of the period.

It is only forty years ago that I as a young man in my early thirties rented a house at Billesdon - quite a small house fully adequately staffed for my modest needs in those more lavish days by a married couple inside and a gardener outside (*Mr. a Mrs. Hughes and the gardener Mr. Swift who claimed to belong to the family of Dean Swift*). But though it was indeed a very modest establishment it was called The Manor House, and that I suppose was enough to give it a flavour of claimed to be grandeur - but whatever the reason it is a fact that to my utter astonishment (it was a violent anachronism *even* then) there were two women in the village who invariably curtsied to me - they used to go swishing down to the ground as I passed in my little Morris car on my way to work in Leicester! I daresay it will be difficult to believe this put so it was and I found it quite difficult to believe myself!

The quoting of particular instances, including the madly anachronistic one just mentioned, is intended to display the fact that changes are blurred over a period and do not take place evenly in every place nor in everybody's mind; but this quoting of instances and also the rough attempt to analyse can, I am sure, easily give an impression that all that I have been writing about was far more conscious than it really was.

Most people take given facts of their time, established usage and traditional goings on, absolutely for granted and scarcely think about them at all. Still more thoughtlessly accepted are the social customs and attitudes of a period which is socially much more staple than is the present day - and forty years ago and more, we never thought about these things in the ordinary way, but just accepted them as the way things were.

I think that in these days many people look back perhaps a little self-righteously at the errors of the past and forget that every social system has its faults and virtues.

In Russia their present system, which is perhaps as tyrannical as any, arose, after all, from a dread of and disgust with tyranny.

It is inaccurate and false to look at old days in the modern context - old days must be looked at in the context of their time.

Well that I am glad to say is the end of my "digressing for a moment" into the questions of Snobbery and the Social Structure.

Reverting now to my parents' marriage, which was a great event in the village, I think I must record the fact that to his horror my father discovered that some of his more enthusiastic friends in the village had decided to erect a large triumphal arch at the entrance to the Churchyard; that it was to be decked with flowers of course was delightful, but that it was to be surmounted by a huge banner bearing the text "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" he felt was more than he could stomach, and by the exercise of much devious care and tact was in the end able to prevent. The whole thing seems to me delightfully and wonderfully to the credit of the innocent motives of all concerned.

My parents were married on 5 June 1894, that was when my father was 38 and had already been ten years Vicar of Aldenham; my mother was 18 - no wonder my father's family were a bit surprised.

There was besides such a very different "style" in the two families -

Grandpapa Barnett frightening us all into fits with loud out bursts of quick temper - cursing the footmen and the grooms heartily: eating and drinking well and making it clear that his comfort and convenience were the matters of overriding importance in his house - yet very attractive and full of jokes and much loved (including by some of the footmen and grooms).

Grandpapa Gibbs, sedate and quietly "important" - Uncle Vicary (*The Hon. Vicary Gibbs*) the later occupant, with Aunt Edith (*Hon. Edith Gibbs, brother and sister*) of Aldenham House, coming to The Church with his orchid in his button-hole - casting his eyes up to Heaven at intervals when reading the Lessons in Church, or closing the equally sanctimoniously in order to display the fact that in any case he knew the Lesson by heart!

Aunt Edith, devoted sister of my father, who never signed her letters to him any less formally or any more warmly than "ever your affectionate sister Edith C. Gibbs".

Then there was Granny Barnett (*Mrs. Charles Barnett, Augusta Rosa nee Walsh*) - Granny, beloved of all, whose husband and other contemporaries called her "Rosa", but who was called "Justice" by Uncle Ralph her youngest son, "Owlie" by Aunt Cicely (*Mrs. Walter Barnett, née Helsey*) her daughter-in-law, "Cattie" or "The Cattie" by my father, who also sometimes reverting to type) called her "Mrs. Barnett"; she seemed to have endless names to suit the whims of her many adorers. She was always totally tolerant of Boppy's vagaries, and used to laugh at him in a quiet way.

Talking of names, her father (*Lord Ormathwaite*) called her and her sister Auntie Minnie Trelawney "those damned democrats, my daughters".

Aunt Edith's signature of her letters to my father reflected the whole style of that generation of his family; even Aunt Anna (*Lady Hunsdon*), who was much more relaxed and easy, only once in her life signed a letter to mother simply "Anna" and that was because she could no longer put "Anna Gibbs" and was shy (we supposed) of putting "Anna Hunsdon" just after Uncle Herbert had been made a peer - but in her next letter she was back on form and achieved "Anna Hunsdon".

In passing I must say how wonderful it was for us as children and young people to have had the Hunsdons (*1st Ld. Hunsdon of Hunsdon*) as uncle and aunt and such members of their family who happened to be our contemporaries as our earliest and most beloved friends and cousins.

The "special relationship" which I had with Geoffrey (*The Hon. Geoffrey Gibbs who later inherited Clifton Hampden*) and Humphrey (*The Hon. Sir Humphrey Gibbs, one time Governor of Rhodesia*) from my earliest remembrance has stayed with me all my life though I have seen so little of Hum since he first went to Rhodesia.

The nurseries at Briggens and number Nine Portman Square were as familiar as our own - and the best of our summer holiday was almost always as a matter of course spent with them on some large sporting property in Scotland which Uncle Herbert had taken for the grouse shooting season -

It is wonderful indeed how we came to think of it as a "matter of course" that Uncle Herbert should lavish this very expensive sporting holiday on young nephews and nieces and others of the sort, when nearly every man of his type would have reserved it or at any rate all the best of it for older established good shots who had sporting places of their own or other advantages which he could take part in.

I think it is relevant to the "social structure that though Grandpapa Gibbs was decidedly well off, I, as a third son of a fifth son, was not particularly well blessed with cash as a young man but lived on my income of tuppence na'penny more or less on the millionaire scale, because of this great platform of grandparents and uncles:

Eighteen Courtfield Gardens (Grandpapa Barnett), Twelve Upper Belgrave Street (Uncle Vicary and Aunt Edith) and Nine Portman Square (Uncle Herbert and Aunt Anna) with to a lesser extent Uncle Alban's House in Portland Place provided endless hospitality for meals or for a night or two in London simply for the asking; all of them immensely hospitable and welcoming people.

I was staying in Upper Belgrave Street once and (rather unusually) was dining there: Uncle Vicary was out and Aunt Edith and I were alone together - Dinner was announced and I waited for Aunt Edith to go in - she didn't go, however, and after a few moments she said "Well, I think dinner is ready", I agree - pause - then she said "Well, my dear, if you will give me your arm I think we may go in". Awkwardly and unaccustomed I offered her my arm and we processed across the large cold hall into a little ante-room of the dining room, where we dined together in our stately way!

This seemed sufficiently old-fashioned to me, fifty years ago. Can it be necessary, I wonder, to add that Aunt Edith was no cripple: she demanded my arm because it was the proper thing when going in to dinner.

I couldn't help speculating whether she and Uncle Vicary went into dinner arm-in-arm when they were alone; I think not because at any rate in London I think they always had a small table brought into the library and their dinner alone together in front of the fire.

Now I think of it, I can remember my mother saying something about "that hugger-mugger arrangement of Edith and Vicary, having their dinner brought into the room where they sit".

My mother was a considerable critic and also a terribly good mimic, a dangerous gift she inherited from Granny, though I think she was an even better performer than Granny.

Both could be most awfully funny and both combined mimicry with criticism to fairly devastating effect.

Mother was a very noticing person and would pick up any little trick of speech or facial expression or gesture, so that she not only sounded like the person she was caricaturing, but even, often, looked like then.

Bobby was an emotional man, letting fly with hot temper, with affection, with fun, with sentiment, his whole soul running with the wind before any breezes that came along - and I think quite proud of it.-

I can so well see that Mother inherited a good share of this from him and that I did from her.

Mother found the degree of restraint and reserve that she met in some people was either horrifying or comic -

Horrifying (for instance) and I rather agree, that my father's mother thought it wrong to stir up a child's "feelings" and on principle never displayed any of the bottled-up affection she undoubtedly felt for them - always, according to my father, appearing totally composed and a little bit cold, so that they had to wait till they were grown up to find out how much she loved them all.

Then Mother found Aunt Edith comic in one of her many forms of restraint and reserve, in that she never spoke with the slightest enthusiasm for anything she herself had bought - she never said she was "really rather pleased with her new hat or dress etc., she never was "quite delighted with the new curtains in the drawing (room) or such things - she had one comment and only one - "I thought it would do". Mother used to imitate this, at the same time poking forward the first and second fingers of her right hand in the odd little gesture so typical of Aunt Edith that one could simply see her standing there, though needless to say she was not present: one definitely did not laugh at Aunt Edith's little funny ways, to her face, even when one found them very endearing.

Aunt Edith was a formidable person, though immensely kind to those who found favour in her sight! This I think all my father's children did, as well as other nephews and nieces.

She liked young people and was amused by their oddities - as they were by hers.

She handed a letter to Uncle Vicary one day saying "Here is a letter from that nice child who stayed here - she signs herself 'Pam', doubtless she would have written 'Pamela' had she the time"!

Aunt E. and I snared a passion for P.G. Wodehouse and used to lend each other his books and laugh at his jokes - 'Summer Lightning' was a favourite with us both.

When I first started staying nights with her and Uncle V., when I was going to Balls in London and that sort of thing, she offered to take my cards round and drop them at the house where I had dined or danced. I refused this offer as politely as I could - never having possessed any cards and not believing that the custom still persisted. She was anxious I should do the right thing and made enquiries among her acquaintance to satisfy herself that this was no longer expected - and told me later that it was all right and I need not do it.

She, like all sensible people, believed that it was as well to be up to date but felt that the polite conventions of the time were binding.

London was a wonderful gay place in those days and young men of my age were invited as you might say "everywhere" owing to the shortage of men after the war - I expect we were pretty spoilt, graciously attending Balls in great London houses, where our sisters would seldom get asked.

Kathleen and I have been reading Cecil Woodnam Smith's *Queen Victoria* - an excellent book, more about the domestic than the public life of the Queen.

In it we found that the Duke of Kent arriving at Kensington Palace "which was then a country house", was delighted with it, admired the lovely park and the rural prospects, and also found it convenient "as it was near the town". He arrived there just before Queen Victoria was born in 1819 (the same year that Grandpapa Gibbs was born).

It gives one some notion of what London was then.

Just about 50 years later Granny and Boppy were married at St. George's Hanover Square and spent the first night or their honeymoon in her father's house in Berkeley square. While there, they "drove out" to Earls Court to see the apple blossom!

Granny's brother, Uncle Arthur Ormathwaite (*2nd Lt. Ormathwaite*) was one of many gentlemen of his date who could boast that he had shot snipe in what had since become Belgrave Square.

The Walsh family were a fine example of how to go down in the world!

My great-grandfather Ormathwaite inherited Warfield which was a decent property with a dear old house in Berkshire - also what I believe was quite a large property, I think, in Cumberland, from which we look his name of Ormathwaite; he was the largest landowner in Radnorshire and Lt. of that County, also he had a house in Berkeley Square.

This was not enough and he usually took a deer forest for the stalking and Granny remembered the dreary times she used to spend in Scotland where there was only one drive down which to take your "constitutional", as the ladies of the party were prohibited from going anywhere else for fear they might disturb the deer.

It must have been fairly dismal to be a woman in that sort of household - Granny loved her dear Warfield but saw too little of it as she had of course to go the rounds to the places her parents went to. My great-grandfather O. evidently thought that his position warranted any and every extravagance and left a much-diminished fortune to Uncle Arthur.

I forgot to say, by the way, that we also had a property of some sort in Ireland and my mother went over there with Uncle Ralph for the snipe and duck shooting. Neither my gt. grandfather nor Uncle Arthur paid much attention to this property and my mother and Uncle R. were surprised to find with what reverence and apparent affection the photograph or one or other of the owners was treasured and displayed in the front parlour here and there.

If there was any way sincere about that it would certainly be surprising - one hadn't understood that absentee landlords in Ireland were so much loved!

Anyhow I hope I have displayed the fact that gt.grandfather O. lived rather high in the world - he married the Lady Jane Grey of the period

Uncle Arthur not to be outdone married a daughter of the Duke of Beaufort who was referred to as Aunt Emily but I don't remember her. He continued on his father's course of grandeur and over-spending and duly handed a further shrunk patrimony to Arthur, my mother's first cousin, who married Lady Clemantine Pratt (*3rd La. Ormathwaite*).

Arthur, by insane over-spending, was still able to live it up - he had Warfield and some of the Radnorshire property: he was an equerry of King Edward VII (when he was P. of Wales).

Late in his life mother and I went to stay with him at Warfield and looking out of the window we asked him what was going on over there - "Oh" he said "they are building some carnation houses - I don't know what the Trustees are going to say about it".

A very few years after that he was completely ruined and lived out the short remainder of his life on the charity of his butler who had a little house in a little street somewhere, I believe, on the outskirts of London and there, to her eternal credit, Queen Mary, motored out to visit him.

Kindly gestures and helpful visits to old servants, such as Queen Mary's to Arthur, were a great feature of that "ancien regime" that I am trying to recall.

Of course it was "de haut en bas": that was inevitable in a period when both the HAUT and the BAS both of them acknowledged the fact quite as a matter of course.

The H. and B. are still with us, and I think always will be, but they both at present seem to be a little bit ashamed of it.

I was interested to read in the recently published private (very private) diaries of Richard Crossman, the rather extreme-left Minister of Housing, that he objected strongly to the "egalitarian" (that was his word) behaviour of the local socialists towards Harold Wilson the Prime Minister, on some great provincial political occasion. He was sickened by it and took the scornful line of a Duke in a melodrama looking down on the ill-bred riff-raff.

Yet Crossman was deeply concerned about the housing conditions of the poor, working himself to a standstill trying to improve matters - and of course to improve his career. It reminded me irresistibly of Chesterton's comment beginning "They have given us into the hands of new, unhappy Lords" and going on later "The load of their loveless pity is worse than the ancient wrongs."

Granny (*Mrs. Charles Barnett*) had a pleasant kindly habit, like many other ladies of her time: it was to take the superabundance from her own table to poor people nearby.

She had little containers, two or three fitting on top of each other and making so many little towers. They were always put in the dining room at Edge Grove and after luncheon she would put helpings of meat, vegetables and pudding into the various containers and then carry them off to various of the old and poor, who thus (were) saved buying and cooking and also given better food than they could have bought for themselves.

Juliet Mansel, not long ago, was saying how the same custom prevailed in her own home and how she, as a girl, was "made to go and distribute this stuff and now she HATED his LOATHSOME form of degrading charity.

Whereupon we had an immediate flare up - me saying "How can it possibly be wrong to give food to people who need it?" and she saying "Of course they ought to have been paid more so that they didn't need it".

Within moments we had decided not to argue and had forgiven each other - but it seems to me she had fallen into the very common habit of assessing the manners and morals of the past in the context of today and forgetting that then there was no Welfare State, and half-a dozen gentlemen were probably the only employers in the Parish and if, in the goodness of their hearts, they decided to pay double or treble the current wage rate, they would inevitably have to cut down their staffs (and/or their butchers bills etc.) by half or two-thirds and accordingly throw half or two-thirds of the local people out of work.

In those days "giving employment" was regarded as a virtue in the better off people and giving employment all the year through, by living permanently in your country house was considered specially virtuous by the neighbourhood.

People generally were even more ignorant of economic facts than they are today and they looked pretty narrowly at such facts as they knew: "giving employment for three-quarters of the year in London, Scotland, or come to that even in foreign parts, was definitely not accounted so virtuous as giving it at home.

My parents could and did afford a very happy comfortable establishment at home where they were quite content to stay, so they had no temptation to go galivanting off for long periods away and in any case could not have afforded it.

My father was much absorbed by his work as a parson at Aldenham, and as time went on as Archdeacon of St. Albans, and left the control of things and family at home to my mother to a very great extent.

This suited my mother's capacities and also her taste - she was an able manager of what became, at Hatfield, quite an establishment in a modest way.

Seven or eight servants in the house, three or four gardeners - a house carpenter and odd-job man who also ran the machine to make the electricity for the house until we went into the main electricity supply - then there was a regularly proper laundry with cottage attached which was run by two laundry-maids - also at different times a chauffeur or a groom or one man who combined the two.

Then there were about 70 acres of land on which we had a little farm which provided milk and cream (Jersey cows) and other things for home consumption - there was a cowman who looked after that.

It was a small affair compared with Aldenham House with its forty gardeners in my Grandfather's time and its hundred or more gardeners in Uncle Vicary's day - and of course it was totally insignificant when compared with the great houses such as Hatfield or Welbeck.

At Welbeck for instance the Duke of Portland had such an immense staff that before the 1914 war they used to divide the male part of it into I think (1) House servants, (2) Gardeners, (3) Stables, (4) Forestry men, and for all I know other departments, and each of these groups used to find cricket XIs and play against each other.

But coming back to my mother who was rather the matriarch type and who loved the management of things, including her family; it is, in one's recollection, always her and not my father

who was head gardener, farm manager etc. She loved all country things and all sport, she was a very keen gardener - and wanted us all to ride well and her sons to shoot well and she took enormous trouble to make a very enjoyable life for us.

Sue had the most astonishing youth and energy - at 50 looked about 35, she would ride and run and play tennis and hockey and ice hockey with tremendous enjoyment and vigour.

Hockey at one period was a great ploy among us and our neighbours and we used to have great hockey occasions with all ages and both sexes.

Mother had a comic tendency to judge animals by her own human ethical standards. For instance she was a keen feeder of those birds which she regarded as legitimate garden birds - greenfinches, sparrows, tits and other rarer visitors.

She would go out with bread and scraps to the bird table making friendly and inviting noises - but coming indoors and looking out to make sure all was going well, she would see a crowd of starlings gobbling up everything; with an angry cry of "Those BEASTLY starlings" she would dash out again making furious shoo-ing and brrr-ing noises, frightening every bird for a long way round, and muttering "Those odious starlings HANGING ABOUT for what they can get"! But of course the starlings were the first to come back!

Once when Anstice (*my sister Austice*) was away from home, mother was left in charge of A's little fox terrier who was called Tangerine.

She said to me one day "I'm NOT going to have Tanny sleeping in my bedroom any more" and then with a face of great disgust and slightly sotto voce" as if it was not a sort of thing one really liked to talk about "She SUCKS her FEET"!

Mother always spoke with emphasis and a good deal of her conversation was in capital letters.

My father was such a very different character - but equally hard to describe - he was much quieter and less easily moved, though he could flare up angrily at times and often would go off into helpless shouts of laughter, particularly when he was younger and particularly at meal-times! I suppose he was usually too fully occupied with his work and duties to give way to fun and amusement except when we were all sitting round the table together.

He lived in two rather water-tight compartments: his duties as a parson was his work, and his family was his amusement, his delight and his relaxation.

He left nearly all the disciplining and organising of the family to my mother - too much I sometimes think.

He was entirely without self-importance and very delightful to live with. His religion and faith were, I should say, of a very ordinary conventional sort for the middling-to-nigh-Church parson of his day - the only exceptional thing about it was its great depth and reality and the reality of the presence of God in his life.

My mother was talking to me about him some time after he had died and she remarked (and was proud to say it, that if anyone had spoken slightingly to him of our Lord, he would have been more hurt and unhappy than if they had spoken slightingly of her - I think that was true.

Once when Uncle Walter (*Walter Barnett*) was out hunting with the Old Berkeley in our neighbourhood, he had a fall and broke his leg. He was brought to Aldenham Vicarage as the nearest convenient place and a bedroom was made for him on the ground floor in what had once

been the "back drawing room" but which by that time was the schoolroom. 'Those of us therefore who would have had our tea in the schoolroom were downgraded and had it in the nursery upstairs instead.

I very well remember one teatime there, in April 1912, when my father who had been in London came up to join us for tea in the nursery - and I remember the red mark across his forehead which signified that he had been wearing a top hat - instead of his squashy black clerical hat with an enormous large brim to it which we usually wore.

He looked horrified as he walked into the room and stood there instead of sitting down and told us of the disaster of the sinking of the Titanic, news of which he had heard in London.

So much seems to hang on this memory -

The fact that a country clergyman thought it quite impossible to go to London with any hat other than a top hat. The fact that my father never called it a "top hat" - I think he felt that was a rather vulgar modernism - he always called it a "silk hat" or a "high hat". The fact that he entirely rejected the conventional narrow brimmed clerical hat of the period, and for ordinary use at home wore "an Italian organ grinder's hat", black and rather floppy with a very wide brim - I never saw any other parson wearing such a hat: he used to buy them from some good hatter in London, who perhaps imported them from Italy?!

Then there was the horror with which people (were) talking of the disaster of the Titanic - as far as Nanny was concerned it was "a Judgement" though what exactly that meant to her, I never discovered - I don't think she was still with us at that date, but I know that was her comment: other "grown up" reactions around us were of terrific shock - as though the earth had trembled beneath our feet and nothing was safe anymore.

We who later had to become so well accustomed to horror and disaster can't now quite recapture the immense sensation of horror of that moment.

Then there was the fact of Nursery Tea and the number of different Teas that might be taking place at the same time (more or less) in that quite small house, all provided by "them" (one seldom said "the servants" - still less did one mention a particular name - one just said "oh, don't bother about your luggage, they will take it up for you")

Yes - Tea - it might easily be provided separately for my father on a tray in the Study, say, perhaps if he came in too late to have it in the drawing-room with my mother - then according to our various ages there might easily be a Nursery Tea and a Schoolroom Tea, besides the Tea which took place with some ceremony and in quantity in the Servants Hall.

Time has gone on - I have been writing at intervals and here it is very near the end of 1977 (27 December 1977).

On Saturday week, 7th January 1978, John and Julie (*Miss Julie Edwards*) will be getting married.

Two days ago (Christmas Day) K, and I called at Sheldon and as usual Elsie (*Mrs. Martin Gibbs*) made enquiries as to how I was getting on with this book - which reminded me that I want to put down something about my father, Aunt Edith and the uncles and their particular type of humour which was inclined to be sardonic and as my brother Leo (who was the sternest critic of all family goings on) was careful to point out, was nearly always achieved at someone else's expense.

Uncle Alban perhaps achieved the comic with complete benevolence more often than not. A lady sitting next to him at dinner, making conversation in a way she hoped would interest him, and at the top of her voice, as we all had to do when talking to him, said "A terrible thing, this increase in Death Duties!!" - "Yes," said Uncle A. promptly "Any ideas I may 'a had 'a dyin' have been entirely knocked upon the head!"

Aunt Edith: "She was a gushing woman, she seized me by the hand and said 'May I call you Emily?' 'By all means' I said 'but it is NOT my name'! To be "gushing" was one of the worst crimes!

Somebody said of my father "Dear Kenneth has got such a delightful sense of humour" - "Yes" said Uncle Herbert "I believe that, outside the family, he is sometimes considered amusing."

Uncle Vicary, after the ladies, including one old and garrulous, had gone up to bed ... "Someone ought to put a baize cloth over that old woman's head".

There were two Adams cousins, Meg and Mary Ann who lived at Blackheath and often stayed at Aldenham for long periods - Uncle Vicary and Aunt Edith were both fond of them; he always referred to them as "the little black heathens".

Somebody who used often to come to our house was blessed with a great capacity for laughter and an enormous cavernous mouth to do it with: my father said "When dear Cecily laughs I CLING to the furniture!"

Now that I have written all that down, I don't think any of it seems very funny, but all I know is that it did seem uproariously so at the time! "irretrievably comic" as my father used sometimes to say.

My mother had a very pretty appreciation of the comic sometimes when a girlfriend of mine got married to an amiable and quite undistinguished young man, much to the surprise of all who had watched her ambitious proceedings, my mother said "Well you see a genuine affection has come along and thwarted all her plans!"

7 April 1979

Another long time has gone by since I last wrote in this book -

Martin and Elsie came here to have a drink before dinner last night, bringing Elsie's nephew, Robert Dalrimple, who is going to paint a picture of George Henry Gibbs to hang up in their stables along with all the others. They had hoped to find that we had a picture of him but we have only got a photograph of the miniature from the Aldenham family miniatures, which they had already got.

However, this all brought to mind George Henry (my Great Grandfather) and I remember asking Aunt Edith if she remembered him - she said she did not, and thought he had probably died before she was born, but she added "Old Mrs. A' Court Repington, who was a very nice old lady said to me once 'I knew your grandfather, he was a perfect model of a Christian gentleman'".

I love that remark - besides being a high compliment to G.H., it belongs so exactly to its own date.

4 November 1979

Robbie Mather has been doing a lot of work here this summer, painting outside woodwork and also quite a lot of repairing. He is a very clever do-it-yourself exponent.

He read this book so far and we talked quite a lot sporadically about days gone by and he was rather specially about intrigued about carriages, harness, coats of arms, servants in livery etc.

Talking of carriages reminded me that my father had said that "Aunt Ward" (*Mrs. Townley Ward*) was buried at Aldenham and that the procession of carriages had extended about two miles so that the tail end of it had not quite reached Letchmore Heath when the hearse arrived at Aldenham Church (from Aldenham House)

I expressed surprise at so many people having gone to her funeral, but my father said "Oh no! There would only be two or three people there - one didn't go to funerals in those days, one just sent a carriage with the blinds drawn down as a mark of respect".

Reading in some book about Queen Victoria, I noticed that she was said to have "sent a carriage" to the funeral of poor Lady Flora Hastings.

Aunt Ward was my grandfather's great-aunt, being a sister of Mrs. Antony Gibbs (Dorothea Barnett) - she was of course a contemporary of Aunt Bertram and Aunt Norris in "Mansfield Park", and at that date I suppose it would have been too familiar to speak of her as Aunt Eleanor which was her name.

Her large full length picture by Romney (of which most of us have a print) always hung at Aldenham - and so I suppose kept her memory green: it is at any rate a fact that all my grandfather's descendants down to my generation, and perhaps beyond, call her "Aunt Ward" to this day. The picture was later at Briggens and I hope Antony Aldenham still houses it somewhere.

She was a racy character (Dorothea's fashionable sister) and her journal was considered so improper that the young ladies of our family used not to be allowed to read them!

Now I daresay they would seem quite ordinary and harmless.

Going on about carriages and therefore harness: I remember my Barnett Grandmother driving up to the door of the Vicarage at Aldenham in a Victoria with a parasoled guest sitting smiling beside her.

I expect I had often seen Edge Grove carriages before but on that occasion I noticed that the metal parts of the harness were of brass, which I thought rather shabby when I remembered our own which were of steel and of course brilliantly shining like silver.

I asked why the Edge Grove carriage was equipped that way and was told that the metals used were controlled by the metal in your coat of arms - ours Argent being represented by steel, and the Barnett OR being represented by brass.

All this reminds me of other armorial stuff - for instance the family coaches (only very few of them) at King George V's Coronation, and I remember standing with my (and my mother's) great friend Rachel Erskine who pointed out to me which families they belonged to because she knew their colours; the only one I think I remember (and I am not quite sure of that) was Lord Londonderry's green and silver.

I think that the only possible way of assessing the meaning of such words as "vulgar", "vulgarity", "vulgar display" etc. is to permit oneself a perfectly candid double standard.

The spectacular announcement of rank and lineage 'by those who had been used to go in for it for many generations' was not of course "vulgar" - How could it be?!

But let a very new Sir Georgius Midas start up anything comparable and "vulgar display" was the only possible description.

That reminds me that Uncle Alban once gave me a lift up to London from Aldenham House in his electric Brougham; and I recollect that he had quite a small modest coronet on the door panel and nothing else - not even a crest which most family carriages had at that time.

The only other time I ever remember being in an electric Brougham was driving round London shopping with (*Winifred*) the Duchess of Portland - and noticing the splendour of Portland the coat of arms with two crests (Cavendish and Bentinck) and the whole thing, which seemed almost to cover the door panel, surrounded by a ducal coronet!

This very considerable display was not of course "vulgar" display!!

I can remember that having made friends with Morven Bentinck at Oxford, I went to spend a night at his parents' house, No.3 Grosvenor Square (since demolished) and at breakfast I was invited to go shopping with his mother, so we set off in the electric Brougham and as I was a new friend of Morven's she took the opportunity to find out a bit about me.

Some mothers might have wanted to know just the same things but might not have been so direct and immediate in their questioning.

She did it, as she did everything, with great charm and so it was not offensive but it was a little noticeable and rather comic.

She said she knew Lags Gibbs and that he had sometimes stayed at Welbeck "We used to ask him for Betty Cranbourne" she said! Then she said "Mr. Vicary Gibbs stayed with us and was a great help to Portland about the trees and shrubs". (I never heard her call him anything but Portland and that was the name that any of his old friends would call him, including women and including his brothers and sister.)

Then she went on to inform me that Uncle Vicary was my uncle and was a brother of Ld. Aldenham; then that Uncle Vicary was unmarried; to all of which I agreed.

She then said "Lord Aldenham has no children" but I had to tell her that he had a married son and two daughters - however she swept that aside and said "It is the son who has no children" and to that I agreed.

She then came to the point "One day, she said "you will be Lord Aldenham". I said "Oh no! I've got a large family of cousins between me and that, and in any case I have got an elder brother".

In the kindest possible way she put her hand on my knee "Oh Ray; she said "I am sorry"!

20 April 1980

Time flies along - This last week we had an invitation to the wedding of Vicary, Antony Aldenham's eldest, who will if he lives be the sixth Lord Aldenham - which makes it sound quite an ole peerage, but seeing that I have known every Ld. A. that there has been so far, I cannot feel that it is really very antique!

Going back for a moment to carriages and motor cars, all in the old days made to order and painted in the family colours, I think I should record that it surprised Robbie Mather quite a bit to hear that Doda and I, going down for the first time to stay at Pytte with the Hubert Gibbises, looked

out of the window of the train and were relieved to see that we were being met, recognising the family colours on the car.

This was not always done and I have a kind of idea that while Aldenham and Tyntesfield did it, Briggens and Barrow did not; at any rate I remember the story about Cousin Martin (*Henry Martin Gibbs of Barrow*) and Cousin Eunice deciding that the time had come for them to own a motor car, and setting off to Hoopers the coachbuilders in St. James's Street, who had I suppose made their carriages in the past and who had now entered a new phase and were building motor car bodies as well; they were asked what sort of a car they had in mind, and replied that they had not entirely made up their minds but they thought that, on the whole, they would like a blue one.

5 October 1981

I had begun to think that there was nothing more to write but lately there have been several things which have woken up more memories.

I discovered a letter addressed to me from The Old Rectory at Hatfield by my father, telling me that Aunt Edith had been there and that they had been talking about Charles Crawley, their great-grandfather.

Aunt Edith said that C.C. had got up one morning, had taken family prayers and had his breakfast and had then said to Susan, the daughter who lived with him, that he was going to die that day. She said at once that she must send for the doctor. He said "That is as you please, my dear, but I am going to die today" - and so he duly did!

Apparently Susan was not a very imaginative house keeper and my father once told me that Charles Crawley used to get rather tired of the eternal leg of mutton; one day he stood up at the head of his table and said Grace, going straight on without pause "... another of Susan's legs".

Miss le Lièvre has lately come into our life; she has written a delightful and interesting book about the great gardener Miss Willmott, after whom so many plants have been named - it is called "Miss Willmott and her Gardens".

Miss Willmott did not care for Uncle Vicary ("Mr. Vicary Gibbs, whose character is as ugly as his garden") and it appears that she looked on him as a rival, which was perhaps rather a compliment.

Miss le Lièvre now thinks of writing a book about Uncle Vicary and the garden at Aldenham, which means digging deep into the past as the number of people who remember Aldenham Garden and Uncle V., who died in 1932, are a diminishing band.

Miss le L. is of course wanting to get in touch with any men who were gardeners there and any other links, and by the greatest luck Nan Bernays (*Mrs. Robert Bernays*), who had asked us to luncheon, told us that her John Hughes who gardens with her and for her and is a very knowledgeable gardener, had his early training at Aldenham.

John Hughes knows other men who used to work at Aldenham - and so the hunt is up and Miss le Lievre comes here on Saturday to be taken to see John Hughes and Nan's garden.

Miss le Lièvre has been in touch with other members of the family including Antony Aldenham who apparently has a lot of Aldenham photographic records, and also Christopher Gibbs (Clifton Hampden) who needless to say is keen to help and probably has letters and diaries etc.

Christopher called here a few weeks ago and we had great talks, partly arising out of this notebook. He was very thrilled with our bust of Charles Crawley and also keen that I should write down gossip things that I remember hearing about the original Sir Vicary (Sir Vinegar).

I think we are all lucky to be descended from Antony, who seems to have been such a gentle nice person and not from his brother Vicary, who really seems to have been a bit of a horror.

My father told me that he (Sir V.) met an acquaintance in the street and told him some little comic story adding "I believe you are dining with the Regent tonight, as I am - you tell him that story - it would amuse him".

But when the moment came and the man had brought the conversation round appropriately and fired off his bon mot at the Regent, Sir V. at once perked up and said "Oh, my dear Sir, you must not impose upon H.R.H. in that way; we all know that old joke" - and thereupon he quoted the whole thing in Latin.

One more absurd thing cropped up when I was talking to Christopher: the fact that my father, till the end of his life, always had his bath in a hip bath in front of the fire in his dressing room, the hot water being carried up in one of those great big cans.

He said he didn't at all like the idea of going to have his bath in one of those "public baths" (meaning of course one of the bathrooms in his own house!).

THE END