RONALD & BILL KAULBACK
Some recollections of the years 1909 - 1932

B.K. Ron and I were both born in Canada while father was Staff Adjutant at the Royal Military College, Kingston. Our parents had a delightful house on the edge of Lake Ontario at the start - or end - of the Thousand Islands, with a large motor-boat, quite an innovation for those days, for the summer. In winter carriages ran across the lake on the ice, though I was too young to take any notice. Indeed I was only six months old when father was called to rejoin his regiment in India, and on November 17th 1911 we sailed from Montreal on the S.S. Corsican accompanied by a very fat negress nurse whom I dearly loved, called Elizabeth. We landed at Liverpool eight days later and moved to Southsea where we stayed with our grandmother Townend in her house on South Parade, over Christmas. Father left us on the 15th March 1912 for India on board the ill-fated R.M.S. Oceana and when she was wrecked off Beachy Head the following day, lost all his family papers and family possessions. He sailed again very shortly afterwards, while the rest of us spent the next five months in a cottage at Headley in Hampshire waiting for a troopship to take us to India. I was able to crawl by then and found the strawberry beds an irresistable draw.

We finally reached Bombay on the troopship H.M.T. Rewa on September 17th 1912, to be met by our father on the quay. We spent one night in an hotel and then took the long train journey up to Naini Tal in the Himalayan foothills. There Ron and the nurse Elizabeth both went down with tummy trouble, following the normal fate of new arrivals in the East, and were sent to hospital where the kindly authorities allowed the rest of us to live also.

We were two years in India at Naini Tal, Barrackpore near Calcutta and at Darjeeling in the foothills where we stayed at a pension called Ada Villa while father was on his travels to Canada to settle grandfather's estate and then back via Japan. By this time Elizabeth our nurse had left us to be replaced by an Eurasian woman who to our joy and strictly against all orders, would take us into the bazaars and treat us to those delicious, syrupy, but fly-blown Indian sweetmeats that one sees there spread out in the sun. Alas, she didn't last long and was soon replaced by a lady nurse, Winnie Needham whom we adored ever after and called our 'Auntie in India'. She stayed out there when we returned to England at the outbreak of the Great War and married Colonel Leake V.C., one of the very few double V.C's to survive both acts of gallantry and actually to receive the bar to his V.C.

But I can recall little of these events at first hand. Cameos of remembrance come back to me. Our native servants Barda Singh the bearer and Latu the butler, both good friends; being carried in the hills in a 'dandy' - one of those Himalayan litters on poles, with two or four porters; being taken out to see fireflies making the night bright at Barrackpore; shooting 'muggers' (crocodiles) on the drawing-room floor

with Ron to excited cries of "Shoot ! Bang ! Fire!", falling down the khud at Darjeeling and cracking my head. Those are my remembrances of India in those far off days and then it was 1914, the war had started and we were all on a troopship the Kenilworth Castle, sailing from Bombay in a convoy of 32 ships, escorted through the Mediteranean by the French cruiser Dupleix.

Mother recalls that she had taken on a sergeant's wife to be nurse for us on the voyage; an indecisive woman. There is a vivid remembrance of her dismally trying to shake suds off a sheet from my bunk in the middle of which I had happily made a glorious puddle with a large packet of Lux and a caraffe of water during the boredom of my enforced afternoon's rest. Exasperated by her moans, I counselled her to "Scwape it, Benbow you fool, scwape it !" I was three at the time, but can recall the incident clearly as well as the retribution that followed.

We landed at Devonport in mid-winter and moved straight to Winchester where father's brigade was concentrating. Those were the days when officers were expected to look after themselves and no arrangements had of course been made to receive their families fresh off the ships from India. Every hotel, pension and lodging was full, prices were sky-high and there was nowhere for us to go. Then as night was falling, just by good chance, father ran into a ministering angel in the shape of the head-master of Eastmans College who offered to put us up in the school. So at last we had a roof over our heads and we stayed there till after Christmas. I recall being allowed down with Ron to dine on Christmas night, but being sat apart with our nurse at a separate table where, insult of insults we were given chicken and milk pudding instead of the proper thing. It made a deep impression.

Of father going off to the war in Flanders I remember nothing. We moved to the home of Uncle Frank and Auntie May Townend who lived in a large house in the then open countryside near Croydon. There I had my fourth birthday, clearly remembered for the large model watering cart I was given which delighted me and which I trundled about the roads near the house, watering the dust.

My recollections are still all glimpses at that time. Ilkley in Yorkshire, it must have been still 1915, staying at the Holroyd's farmhouse of Hangingstone on the edge of the moors under the Cow and Calf rocks, where mother and father had spent part of their honeymoon. The smell of fresh bread on baking day; the farm animals; walks with our nurse in a brown and white uniform to the tarn; the sheep dogs. Then father coming back from the war, wounded and without his arm, but joining us to climb about all over the Cow and Calf and go for wonderful walks pointing out the signs of the country and wild things. Then moving to Harrogate where we stayed at Southlands Hotel and were given dancing lessons to pass the time. A clear picture that; I was deeply attracted by a tall girl in the class, because her feet were size 7! She was far older than I but I insisted on

dancing with her to her dismay. Then Richmond in Yorkshire, a wonderful old town, almost mediaeval, with clattering cobbled streets, the massive castle dominating the River Swale, with bottomless dungeons to give one gooseflesh, and the legend of a long lost secret passage to Easby Abbey. We stayed at the Grove Hotel for a while and then moved into a house of our own at 47 Newbiggin with our new Norland governess Audrey Bell. Father was now on the staff at the newly built Catterick Camp three miles to the south, and from time to time we would be allowed to go out to visit him, taking a carriage and having to get out to walk and ease the horses up the steep hill from the Swale.

It was 1916 before we ourselves moved on to live at Hipswell Lodge, a large country house with attached farm buildings near Hipswell village on the edge of Catterick Camp, and found ourselves back in army life once more. Many of the outbuildings at the Lodge were occupied by head-quarter's offices - troops were everywhere and German prisoners, curious men in strange green-grey uniforms with dull white metal buttons and little round, flap caps with no peaks who sometimes gave us German coins and oddities. Numbers of them were building the New Road from the camp to Richmond station; a great improvement to the old road past Billy Banks woods over the bridge and up the steep hill under the great Norman castle to Newbiggin.

R.K. From the time I was 6, until I was 15, we lived at Hipswell Lodge. There was what, for these more austere days, would be classed as a considerable staff, consisting of a butler, a footman, a cook, a parlourmaid, a housemaid, a kitchen maid and a hall boy and, outside, grooms and gardeners. There were stables for a number of horses, coach houses and many (to us boys) most useful and attractive barns, lofts, byres and so on; several paddocks, one of which had a series of practice jumps for the horses; a walled vegetable garden, with peach, pear and plum trees against the walls, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries and currants (the vegetables themselves were not so interesting in those days); and a long drive, bordered by pinewoods, in which we had a hut of our own, with a high-class biscuit-tin oven just outside it. From time to time we would take out rations to this very private establishment, and cook our own lunch, to our infinite satisfaction; and (up to the age of 9 or 10, anyway) we would sometimes, in our generosity, deliver a rather burnt portion of stew, or a blackened and smoky rice pudding, to the house, for the delectation of the grown-ups at their own, duller, lunch. The offering was always courteously received; but, as it inevitably went into the dining-room by the hand of the butler, we never actually saw it rapturously consumed.

I have the clearest memories of space and freedom to spread our wings. We were at liberty to go anywhere. There were the moors only a mile or two away - not then mere tank ranges as now, but moors as they should be, with grouse and hares, and stony tracks across them, and heather. We knew the farms around the camp, and the farmers, and we would be given large slabs of rich plum cake, spread with butter, and with

Wensleydale cheese on top, when we called in. There was Scotton Hall, where the General lived, and where there was a lake, with fish in it, and a boat. I had the first cold curry of my life sitting in that boat with a kindly Major, who had undertaken to teach me to fish - and very good it was. And there was the Swale, with its nearest point only two miles away, there for the walking, with its trout, and its rocks, and the woods on its banks, and the mysterious mine-workings running into the side of the hill in Billy Banks woods close to the Old Bridge and Richmond.

Memories too of encouragement to do whatever seemed good to us, provided we did no damage and shut all gates behind us, and so long as we kept within the boundaries of permissible behaviour as laid down by Family Law. These were fairly widely set, but very much in position, and they gave us, as children, a great and comforting feeling of security. Within those limits we were free as the air; but if we strayed over the lines (as we sometimes did) and were caught, we took it for granted that we would suffer the penalty. As a result, when punishment did fall on us, we had no least feelings of bitterness or injustice. One of the very minor boundaries was concerned with mealtimes. If Bill or I were not in our places at table, clean and neat, within five minutes of the gong sounding, we were docked the sweet course, and we made very certain that we were in good time for the next meal!

Cars were rare then, and one went visiting (or just meandering) on foot, on a bicycle, on horseback or in a pony-trap. Legs, in fact, were for use, and not simply conveniences when propping up a bar; and that, I am certain, meant that, as boys, we had far more fun, and we certainly learnt far more about nature, than if we had been born forty years later. Going anywhere was a slow proceeding, giving time to see and appreciate things on the way -- and the exercise certainly gave rise to phenomenal appetites! Even sitting in a trap, with the wind and the rain on you (there were no saloon traps!), and getting out to walk up hills, was nearly as good. I must have been 7 and Bill about 5½, when we started to learn to ride seriously - and we suffered torments at first from stiffness. Weeks of riding bareback, trotting, cantering and galloping; and before we were even allowed reins we had to be able to jump bareback. Saddles followed a good deal later. But once we had got over the stiffness, it was all tremendous fun, riding over the moors like Red Indians (yes, feathers and all!); and when we were promoted to saddles we were taken out hunting with the Zetland and the Bedale, either by our father, or by Norman, the head groom, or both, whenever the meet was near enough to ride to, and the ground not too hard for the horses. My own highlight, as far as hunting was concerned, was the miraculous day when, apart from the huntsman and, I am sure, Norman, I was the only one in at the kill after a point of 2 hours and 55 minutes. That was with the Zetland, and I rode home in glory with the mask and the brush dangling one at either side of the saddle. I was 11 then.

B.K. Ron was having the best of it at this time. Either my legs were too

short to get round Ginger and Tommy our two ponies, or my sense of balance too rudimentary, because I kept falling off till finally in justified exasperation my parents decided to demote me to something smaller. We duly journeyed to Northallerton, quite fifteen miles away and the limit of our radius of action in those horse-drawn days, where Mrs. Puncheon, a well known breeder of Shetlands, provided me with an evil tempered little mare called Sappho. She had a habit which I was quite unable to control, of cantering forward briskly in the right direction and then without warning suddenly jinking like a hare and pitching me onto my head. Loud were the directions flung at me as to how to control my horse, but to no avail. I protested my inability till finally to show me the error of my ways father told the under-groom to ride her round the paddock before us all. Exactly the same thing happened and he landed on his head. Oh never was there such balm for a small boy's soul.! Sappho was removed and replaced from Mrs. Puncheon's stable by Mavis who was much more tractable and whom I rode with pleasure till I was eight years old and we went to school.

But it would be a mistake to imagine that our pleasures came free. Privelege and responsibility went hand in hand, so we were expected to earn our pleasures, and when we were allowed ponies it was only on condition that we took care of them. So we rose early for morning stables under the martinet eye of Norman, who had served in the 11th Hussars, (the "Cherry Pickers" on account of their red full-dress breeches) and never let his underlings forget that that was the finest cavalry regiment in the British Army. Norman had clear ideas as to how ponies should be kept. Not for us the luxury of returning after dark on a cold winter's evening, tired from a long day in the field and leaving the ponies to the grooms while we bathed and supped. Far from it ! For us it was coats off, unsaddle, rub-down, water, feed, muck-out and rug-up to Norman's satisfaction before we could turn our weary steps towards the house and ideas of getting our boots off and settling down to high tea. There were always boiled eggs for tea after hunting. A wonderful treat. But father was adamant that we must look after those for whom we were responsible before we cared for ourselves, be they animals or men, and that was a lesson I valued in later life.

R.K. Unless one lived in, or very close to a town, cinemas were rarely visited (the films were silent, of course); there was no radio, or television to lure us indoors; and, as a result, we were out of the house most of the time (in the outbuildings if the weather was foul), and making our own games and amusements, in which we were ably helped by the various children of our own ages, more or less, -- and mostly female, but worthy companions -- who lived within a few miles of us. Among our divertissements was kite-building and flying, and there was one noble kite in particular, made of bamboo and brown paper, which stayed aloft for more than 24 hours, securely lashed to a gate-post, and the envy of lesser kite-makers. We constructed a raft out of railway sleepers, and launched it on the Power Station pond, to the dismay of all our parents, the pond

being deep and evil. We built a magnificent Pirate Ship in one of the fields, using a sturdy old swing, with its two massive uprights, for the masts, and from this our gallant but ferocious crew used to board passing merchant vessels (inoffensive passers-by), slaughtering the unhappy, and imaginary, sailors, but holding the rich owners prisoner aboard our ship until the ransom (a small gift of sweets) was either paid or at least promised. Our ship was sunk once, in an unequal encounter with several British Men of War, and we had to swim, vigorously, for a quarter of a mile to the nearest desert island, (a barn) where we were marooned for a considerable period -- fortunately with plenty of victuals on hand, such as breadfruit, yams, fish from the lagoon, cassowary birds, and so on, all thoughtfully hoarded there in advance -- in slightly different forms, of course.

B.K. Amongst the families we visited were Aske Hall a little to the north of Richmond, the home of the Marquess of Zetland whose hounds were mastered by Mr. Straker in those days. There was a big fig-tree in the conservatory there, I remember, which bore delicious purple figs, the first I had ever eaten. To the south of us near Catterick village was Brough Hall where Sir Henry and Lady Lawson lived with their two daughters and their sons Ralph and Billy more or less of our age. Lady Lawson was a Howard of Corby from Corby Castle in Cumberland. Sir Harry was a typical hard-riding Regency squire with a red face and, so everyone swore, a better nose for a fox than any hound. Put Sir Harry into covert, they said and he'll smell out yon fox before the pack can wind him. A great figure. He had a private racecourse in the park where on occasions we boys might be invited to lunch in his box while watching the racing. He was an accomplished tipster and Ron, more adventurous than I, once made quite a pile following his tips, only to have his pocket picked and lose the whole lot while strolling back to the stand. There was also a gravel pit in the park where, great excitement, a bronze cauldron full of Roman coins was discovered. Once cleaned, the cauldron (which seemed to me as big as a font), stood in the entrance hall at Brough and Sir Harry would from time to time present us boys with coins from it as keepsakes, alas all lost long, long ago.

It was via Sir Harry, in a way, that mother acquired her first dog. There was an old gypsy of surprising character, a protegé of Sir Harry and of father, whom we knew as Old Moore - nothing to do with the Almanac of that name - and who had his spread on land not far from Brough. His daughter Maggie Moore, a fine upstanding handsome person, had once been strong woman in a circus, so the story went. She used to drive round the camp in a drag with two horses. Old Moore had a great admiration for father and always addressed mother as Lady Kaulback whereas, curiously enough, he invariably called Lady Lawson, Mrs., not that she ever took exception to that so far as we knew. Anyway for services rendered in one way and another Old Moore presented mother one day with a really delightful, black Yorkshire Terrier whom we called William; a long name for such a very small dog. He was a splendid ratter and a great favourite with us boys. He used to go everywhere with us, but suddenly a year or

two later while we were away at school, he died. We were very upset. Old Moore also presented mother with a canary called Henry which used to fly in and out of the drawing-room window and perch on a tree at the end of the nearest paddock. One day he failed to return, a victim probably of some patrolling hawk. The dear old man was quite illiterate so when his wife died and he remarried he got his new wife to write the letter breaking the news. "This is to tell you" he said "that I have remarried. I would not have done so only I needed someone to look after me." We wondered what his new wife thought.

Apart from William and Henry and of course the horses, we had quite a few other animals at Hipswell Lodge. There was Cicily Audrey Coffeebean Kaulback, (a brown and white nannie-goat who gave us milk) and her extremely odoriferous husband; there was a succession of lambs each spring, which used mysteriously to disappear when lamb with mint sauce time came round; and a flock of hens and Indian Runner ducks. Some of the earlier hens were given names, but this practise faded out after an inexperienced parlour-maid announced in the drawing-room that we couldn't have Kathleen for dinner as the chef said she had a diseased liver and had thrown her away ! We felt on the verge of cannibalism.

Animals we had, but we could scarcely be said to have farmed except for haymaking every summer to make the winter forage for the horses. That was the greatest fun and it took time. First the horse-drawn reaper had to cut the long grass, which was allowed to lie in the sun to dry and was tossed and turned by hand. Then the horse-drawn rake drew it into windrows, and finally it was put into cocks, all the men (and we too if we wanted) working with long wooden rakes and hay-forks. That altogether took about a week, and finally the cocks would be loaded onto wains and built into a great haystack in the barns, or if there were no room there, it would be built in the back paddock and the thatcher would come to roof it. All simply enthralling for us boys, especially sliding off the haystack to fall onto the mound of hay below while the thing was being built.

And so the time passed. November 11th 1918 came with the Armistice, and almost unbelievably there was no more war and no more rationing. We galvanated Norman the head groom and our nurse and dashed down in the trap to Richmond to buy all the fireworks we could, and had a terrific display that evening on the tennis lawn. Unhappily we children didn't know that rockets must be launched from a slipway of some sort, and, in our ignorance, we stuck them in the ground whence they dismally failed to rise an inch, but gave an unexpected and most impressive explosion at the finish.

A year later we were sent off to school. For some time we had had a tutor, a Mr. Cooper, a charming person from whom we learned happily and who joined in our games; but now Ron was 10 and I was 8 and it was time to go. Mother and father chose Stanley Harris's school, St. Ronan's at Worthing on the south coast, which was then outstanding amongst

prep-schools, and mother considerately took us down to see the place well beforehand. I can't say we registered much, but nurse Audrey who was with us promptly caught German Measles, and our short stay was inevitably prolonged as a result into several weeks, during which we were quarantined and had our first introduction to 'Marmite' then a revolutionary product. We thought it delicious.

When finally the time came for us to leave for school it was quite a business. There was no school uniform as such, but it was de rigeur to be attired in a sort of pseudo country outfit of knickerbockers, waistcoat, jacket, stiff collar and tie, topped on Sundays by a straw 'boater', itself ornamented with the dark blue and light blue school ribbon. For us two who had never worn anything more irksome than shorts, shirt and a jersey, this was purgatory. We survived, but father, alive to our misery, set out to persuade Stanley Harris to adopt something more in the style of our old clothing as school uniform, and to his great credit Stanley Harris did so. Oh the relief to us ! All other prep-schools quickly followed suit and have remained comfortably clad ever since. They should all have given a vote of thanks to H.A.K.

But clothes apart, prep-school life came as a big shock. St. Ronan's was probably better than most and standards of behaviour were very high but packs of small boys, like packs of dogs, are clannish and a stranger enters at his peril unless he knows the right genuflexions. I didn't and worse still I had pretty firm ideas of my own, with the result that I was quickly involved in a succession of fights, and had a hard row to hoe for the first two or three terms. Quite apart from this I didn't have the faintest idea what I was supposed to do there, and the masters did little to enlighten me. I enjoyed the games, (I understood them all right and did quite well), but for the rest, and to the dismay of my parents, I remained stubbornly bottom of the bottom form for the best part of that year until, in the summer of 1920, to everyone's astonishment I won the Divinity prize. That rather astonished me too, because it seemed so easy to remember Old Testament stories that I couldn't believe everybody else should not be much better at it than I. But anyway there it was. I was presented with a lovely leather bound volume of 'Favourite Greek Myths' emblazoned with the school arms, and with that prize the penny dropped. I suddenly understood about work. Divinity and maths became my subjects and I seemed to get prizes in them most years, though my progress up the school was lamentably slow and I spent almost a year in each form. Ron on the other hand seemed to have had no such troubles. Unlike me he started well above the bottom and rapidly rose to the top, where he remained until he took the Common Entrance examination to Rugby and, outstripping all competitors, passed straight into the scholarship form.

At the beginning of that first term mother and father did their utmost to soften the impact of school on us poor exiles so far from home, by sending loving presents carefully timed to reach us day by day to take our minds off our plight, and by writing daily letters which helped us a lot.

Once we had settled down and got over our initial home-sickness, our school days were generally happy, due in part to our being fairly good at games at a time when this counted for a great deal amongst boys. It gave us status. Ron was in the XV for his last two years 1921 and '22, and also in the soccer XI. In athletics he won the Victor Ludorum in 1922. I was much the same; the XV in 1922, '23 and '24, soccer XI in '24 and the Victor Ludorum the same year. Neither of us shone at cricket, but Worthing was small then and one could walk out across the railway lines to the Downs quite easily during an afternoon, which was great fun, country all the way. Then there was bathing in the sea on hot week-ends, so we found plenty to do in the summer term.

Worthing was a long way from home in Yorkshire, and after our first term or so at St. Ronan's we were allowed to travel down to London alone, equipped with delicious beef and chutney sandwiches. There were attendants on the Great Northern and North Eastern long-distance trains of those days, and father having made it his business to know them, we were put in their charge. This meant travelling in some comfort and though the journey of about four hours seemed endlessly long to small boys, we at least had the freedom of a first class compartment to ourselves where we could each stretch out on one side, have a table brought in, and eat our sandwich lunch in seclusion. Arrived in London we would be met by some kind person, taken from King's Cross to Victoria and be handed over into the charge of Mr. Harris or Mr. Vinter on the school special. Only the compulsory visit to the dentist in between cast some blight on our mood, but this was cleared by a little present, and I think we both enjoyed our travels.

A big change in our lives came in 1924, when father's appointment to G.H.Q. Northern Command ended, and he was called to rejoin his regiment in Burma. Ron was already at Rugby by then and I was in my last year at St. Ronan's. Mother, with great self-sacrifice, stayed in England to look after us, while father went East. We moved from Hipswell Lodge (so far as we boys were concerned, at least) with heavy hearts. It had been our home for ten years, almost all that we could remember, and we had been very happy there. Inevitably much was lost in the move including, to our great grief, the 'Iron Engine', a clockwork No. 1 gauge London and North Western Railway model train with engine, tender, carriages, rails, points, cross-rails and even small plaster model passengers to sit on the seats which father had had as a boy in the 1880's. It had been greatly treasured and we never learned what became of it.

Mother now took a flat in London, where she was close to things that interested her, but it was too small for all of us and London was no place for boys, so for our holidays we would mostly go to France, where father joined us during the summer of 1925 but that was the only time we had him with us until he came back to take command of his regiment in England in 1927.

For our first holiday in the spring of 1924, advised by Miss Eakin the French mistress at St. Ronan's, we went to stay as paying guests with friends of hers at their house Porte d'Arcy near Fère en Tardenois, Aisne, in country still devasted by the Great War which had ended only six years before. There was a gaping shell-hole in one of the walls of the wing we stayed in, scantily covered by a flapping tarpaulin. There were wood fires, no running water or electric light, and our nightly baths were taken rather shiveringly in a wide, shallow tin basin which was stood in front of the log-fire in our sitting room, meagrely filled with hot water from kettles. It was hardly luxurious and the food was disappointing, but we boys enjoyed the place. The debris of war lay everywhere and, most noticeably, all the trees in that heavily wooded country-side were dead. Killed by the gas, people said. For my mother, her brother Roy and our cousin Charlotte Kaulbach from Canada who were with us, it must have been drearily boring. We were some distance from the village of Fère itself and apart from the ruins of the old chateau there was little of interest, but for us two it was a wonderland. Old guns, broken rifles, bayonets, empty shell-cases and dud shells, even occasional remains of corpses, there was excitement everywhere and why we were neither of us blown up a dozen times I shall never understand. We appreciated little of the dangers and happily collected the debris with abandon. But somehow we were spared and our stay in the old battlefields remains a happy memory.

That summer we went to St. Jacut in Brittany, a wonderful discovery of mother's who had heard of it from some friend. St. Jacut remained the focus of our summers each year from then until eight years later, when we had both left Cambridge and gone to wider fields. There was no running water, no electric-light, no indoor sanitation, but there was the little fishing village with its two shops, Josephine's and Tardivelle-Puel; there was sea, fresh air and islands, the ruined castles of Le Guildo and La Latte, great headlands and bays for the exploring, and fish and lobsters, langoustes and octopi to be caught and carried home in triumph to the kitchen. It was glorious and the fishermen - because fishing in sail boats was still an industry then - were happy to let us go with them for a consideration and, in later years, when we were known, to hire us their boats. That was how we came to make the great expedition in 1928 when, for a month, we and six friends lived on the unoccupied Ile Argo, mostly as I remember on rabbits which we trapped, honey, and ants which got into the honey no matter what steps one took to cover it. We slept in the open under the stars and I rowed daily in the dory, across the mile or so of bay, to St. Briac to fetch our fresh water.

St. Jacut was chiefly a French resort, but a few English families had discovered it and with three we made close friends. The Butterfields from Hong Kong, whose two boys were at Downside and who stayed with us at the Villa Adam et Eve - so called after the identical twin elm trees nearby - the Sykes boys who were at Rugby with us, sons of Sir Percy Sykes, the author of the standard history of Persia, and who lived across the bay of Lancieux at St. Briac, and the Seligmans from Wimbledon who rented the

Petit Chatelet on the quayside of the Grand Port (the winter harbour). With them we spent our days planning expeditions, sailing, fishing, canoeing, exploring ruined chateaux and one notable haunted house, and getting sunburned. It was a splendid life and when one summer was over we looked forward avidly to the next one to come.

Ron and I landed up at Rugby somewhat by chance. Father had given us the choice between Rugby, Harrow and Charterhouse all of which he had carefully inspected and considered. Winchester he had also visited, but had excluded because he thought the site unhealthy. We chose Rugby largely, I believe, because it was the home of Rugby football. Anyway Rugby it was and I believe, looking back now, that the choice was a lucky one. Rugby was still the spiritual leader of the Public Schools then as it had been in Dr. Arnold's days a hundred years before, and both scholastically and morally it gave boys a very good start. Life there was hard and took some getting used to, but it was good. I think we worked more than schools do now with six, or seven periods and several preparations every day. Games were played in the afternoons three days a week - rugger in the winter and Easter terms, and cricket in the summer - and there was one scripture lesson and a prep on Sundays. In summer there was also an extra period before breakfast - much loathed by us - to take advantage of the early daylight, and throughout the year there were prayers or chapel twice every day. A great deal of our work was done in our little studies. These were a splendid institution, much prized, and the centre of our existence. Very small, shared (at least in one's younger years) with a mate, they were one's refuge and lair, warmed by a coal fire over which one was permitted to brew at week-ends. The favourite delicacies were toasted-cheese made on a shovel under the grate, and Nestlé cafe-au-lait, a sickly coffee mixture based on condensed milk onto which one poured boiling water.

Our uniform clothing was deplorable and utterly unsuited to our calling. Black jackets, striped trousers, stiff collars and black ties to which was added a Coke Hat (Bowler to you) at the beginning and end of term. To this dreary city outfit senior boys, who were in 'Hall', could add an umbrella, thus completing the bank-manager's image.

School rules and customs were clear and strictly enforced. This made for a happy state of affairs where each of us knew exactly what he could and could not do. There was thus no envy, no argument and no intrigue, a point which modern academicians with more 'liberal' ideas might well ponder. Position, responsibility and privilege went together and thus reinforced the authority of the senior boys on whom fell the unhappy lot of ensuring that all ran smoothly. Their status was considerable and never questioned. They could award extra fagging duties, or lines, or caning. This last was in two forms: for relatively minor offences, a few strokes with a swagger cane on a pyjamad bottom at bedtime; and four, six or more strokes with a full cane for serious offences, but these, known as "Quad Beatings" because they were given in the open quadrangle, had to be supervised by the Head of House and be given stroke and stroke

about by two prefects. It was all very controlled and orderly. Much has been written and more has been said in recent years by reformers about the evil consequences of corporal punishment, so I should like to stress that none were observable to us at the time, or later. Indeed we always felt that far from brutalising the victim, caning was an enlightening and chastening experience, and it was common opinion that prefects who themselves had been caned in their time were far more considerate in all their awards than those who had never gone through the mill. The latter were distrusted and generally disliked, which should give reformers food for thought. Caning was disliked, but not feared and it was customary, when one was punished with lines, to ask to be caned instead. This was an accepted practice, the current rate of exchange being one stroke with a swagger cane for every fifty lines. None of us, I think, if asked would have recommended the abolition of caning. It was convenient, quickly over and effective, and it was a real deterrent to the wilder types of behavior that we would otherwise have allowed ourselves. We might not have expressed it in such words at the time, but our feeling was that considerate and civil behaviour. in the young is not innate, it must be instilled by painful experience. I am sure that this is as true today as it was then.

Fagging was another established part of school life of which we thought no ill. As a fag one learned to serve and to make oneself useful to one's elders, and the system played a valuable part in painlessly preparing us for later life. To me it is strange that it should have attracted so much adverse criticism recently. I sometimes wonder whether its critics themselves ever had first hand experience of it. It was by no means arduous, and the tips and other benefits which the fag received went a long way towards eking out one's pocket money and to providing those longed for and otherwise unobtainable luxuries at the Tuck Shop.

Tuck Shop was not, in fact, a school expression at Rugby. In the olden days Hobley's (or earlier Hater's) in the High Street used to be the provider of all good fare. But after the 1914-18 war a school tuck shop was built near the Speech Room and thither we repaired, whenever funds allowed, for coffee and cream, strawberries and ice-cream in the summer; or just plain stodge. We were almost always hungry. To us the place was known as the Food Shop and, apart from whatever cash we had brought with us at the start of term, usually one pound, we were all provided by the school, and charged of course on the term's bill, with one shilling a week, distributed on Fridays and known as the Saturday Bob. This was a happy arrangement as, however spendthrift one might have been, there was always this little coming along at the end of the week.

Apart from Food Shop we had a few other words in our special school vocabulary. A bath, (our's were curious, circular, cast-iron tubs about a yard in diameter), was a "TOSH", and so was the swimming bath. The same word is used at Harrow, curiously enough. A lavatory was a "TOPOS", pure Greek of course that one; and then there was that wonderful word "FUG". This, like the German word Zug, could be made

to mean almost anything. 'A Fug' for instance could, as in ordinary parlance, be a thick atmosphere, but it could also be a biscuit, particularly that dull Osborne variety provided for us free and known as the House Fug. The verb 'Fugging' also meant to clean. One 'fugged out' a study and one 'fugged' the brass buttons on one's uniform for parade. It was indeed a most useful word and to my sorrow has never yet been generally accepted into our language.

Ron and I early determined on our careers, he to be a doctor and I a soldier. This choice meant some specialisation for him in botany and biology which I think he found dreary. Anyway it had cured him of his ambition by the time he left for Cambridge, and he switched over to mathematics, diplomacy and exploration instead. My own choice demanded no specialisation at school, though I did for a time also specialise in mathematics, like Ron, but the Army required a high physical standard, and here suddenly it was found that I was lacking. Dr. Symie, the school doctor, pronounced my feet to be flat; while Commander A.G. Street, R.N. our director of physical training, noticed that I had both a pigeon chest and a pronounced curvature of the spine. The two pundits gave as their opinion that I was most unlikely to measure up to the exacting standards required of an army officer, and I was dismayed. But help was at hand. Father - what a wonderful person he was to have behind one - had got to know Commander Street well, and so the latter offered to take me for special remedial exercises and, as my bones were still young, to try and mould them into a more acceptable shape. Accordingly, winter and summer, three times a week for three years, I made my way each evening down Hillmorton Road and across the Close to the gymnasium, there to go through my exercises for an hour under Street's watchful eye. It was drudgery, but it did what he meant it to and I am eternally grateful to him and to father for their care. When the time came, I passed by army medical unquestioned.

Sportwise we both did reasonably. Ron was in the Cadet Pair for shooting his first year and won the public schools' cup at Bisley; he was in the Shooting V111 each year after that from 1924 to 1928 and was Captain his last year; he was in the XV in 1927/28 and also Victor Ludorum in 1928. I won the Laurie Cup for shooting in 1927 and 28, was in the XV in 1928/29 and was Captain elect of the XV for the season 1929/30, but decided it would be preferable to go up to Cambridge instead, a year early.

In 1927 father returned from the East to command the 1st Batallion of his regiment at Aldershot, and once more we were all together, able to some extent to resume the old Hipswell Lodge life of riding and other field sports, combined with two months at St. Jacut each summer.

Ron left Rugby at the end of the summer term 1928 and I one year later. Both of us went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, which had been Stanley Harris's college and was in those years the leading athletic college, and winner of so many inter-collegiate sports that it was almost

embarrassing.

I had only been up for a few weeks of my first term when there came the great shock of father's death. I had rooms in Silver Street at the time and was woken in the middle of the night to hear Ron shouting from the street below. There had been a telephone call from Scotland; father was very ill; we must go north; the train would leave in two hours time; he had the exeats; I must pack and meet him outside the college gates. There were no taxis; we walked in the dark and it seemed a long way to the station, lugging our heavy suitcases with aching arms. We reached Glasgow that afternoon and were motored to General Allason's house near Dalry. Father had died suddenly the previous evening while changing for dinner. They had not liked to tell us over the telephone. He was lying in his coffin in mother's room looking quite unchanged. We said goodbye to him; one can't quarrel with death, and as we stood there it came home to us that the loving and guiding hand of the master that we had been able to rely on for so long had passed the baton on to us and the full responsibility of life was on our shoulders now. It made a deep impression. All our sorrow went out to mother who must start life again alone, and we could not be much help. Father was cremated. A year before when he had visited me at Rugby he had said that he did not expect to live long and, as we walked down the street together, he told me that he would like his body to be disposed of cleanly in this way when the time came. He did not want it to litter the earth any longer. Uncle Roy Townend came up for the funeral and some of father's friends from the war years at Catterick who lived nearby. When the ceremony was over Ron and I and Uncle Roy took father's ashes in an urn and scattered them on the moors he had so loved. It was a blustery night and the wind whipped them away across the heather into the darkness. We pictured him with his humorous smile watching and approving what we did.

We returned to London the next morning and thence to Cambridge, while mother returned to the heart-breaking task of closing the Aldershot house and moving out. She took a flat in London and remained there, with two moves, until 1940 when her flat was destroyed by German bombs.

In those days England was still on the gold-standard and undergraduate life reflected the settled, prosperous conditions. Everyone paid for themselves except the scholars; college gates closed inexorably at midnight; rules were strictly enforced; 'Protests' were unheard of; academic standards were higher and the undergraduates were more mature than today's students; malefactors were sent down on the spot, and those who failed to reach the required academic standard could expect no sympathy. No one disagreed with this. There were about six thousand undergraduates at Cambridge then, as against four thousand at Oxford, and life was spacious and decorous, though few of the buildings in college had baths, none had running water, and to find a lavatory one might have to cross several courts. Still no one took such drawbacks to heart. Coming straight from the restricted opportunities of school it was a wonderful life; but all too easy

to loose one's way amongst the diversity of attractions clamouring for one's attention. By half way through their first term most had realised that they would have to stick carefully to a rigid programme if they were to survive. A popular formula was to attend every lecture and supervision without exception, to put in at least one hour's reading five evenings a week, and one hour's work before breakfast daily. That having been achieved one indulged in outdoor sport most afternoons, invited one's friends to breakfast in one's rooms on food sent up from the college buttery, and took a couple of evenings off each week for theatre, carousal or simply passing the time. With such a programme one could manage to obtain an honours degree without much difficulty and still have a marvellous time; but the really enthusiastic would also attend Reading Parties organised by their tutors during the vacs, or even come up for the Long Vac term.

Sports and games were taken seriously and demanded a lot of training if one wanted to be considered for a blue. Those who excelled might hope to be elected to the Hawks Club if they were lucky enough to have represented the Varsity in their chosen sport. For those who were more inclined to Field Sports there was the Pitt Club, which was limited to two hundred members and which supported three packs of hounds all mastered and officered by undergraduates. These were the Drag, which often hunted foxes across the Fitzwilliam country as a change from dragging; the Cambridgeshire Harriers; and the Trinity Foot Beagles, to cater for every choice. There was probably the best partridge shooting in the world at Six Mile Bottom for those who were lucky enough to be invited; splendid wildfowling on the Wash, at Wells and on the Blakeney marshes; Polo, and the Newmarket Races, to which the Pitt Club added its own University Steeplechase Meeting at Cottenham each spring. Several of the better heeled members of the Club, with really good horses, also rode as G.Rs at open meetings around the country, terminating, if they were lucky enough to have their entry accepted, with the Foxhunters' Chase over the Grand National course at Aintree on the day before the big race itself.

Apart from the Pitt and the Hawks there were other clubs and associations catering for most interests. Entertainment was mostly masculine. We gave breakfast parties in our rooms, gave birthday parties and celebrations at our Clubs where there were private rooms for such pleasures, dined at our Clubs or in College Halls where the food was surprisingly good and gowns were always worn, as indeed they were for all lectures and other formal occasions. At week-ends when women friends joined us, or over May Week, we used to give dinner parties in our rooms with four, or five courses ordered and sent up from the Buttery with liveried college servants to wait on us; or we would take our cars and drive out to some delectable hostelry such as the Tally Ho! at Trumpington, or the Fox and Balls at Kentford near Newmarket, where one could be certain of getting tips for the next race meeting.

Cars were still quite a rarity at the Varsity then and there were no

parking problems, but University statutes forbade their use between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. This might be awkward on occasions, so some had chauffeurs who, of course, could drive at any time, while others, more ingenious, (like Ron and Denis Conan-Doyle) purchased a taxi in which, suitably disguised, they could escape all but the most intimate proctorial scrutiny. Life was very full and pleasant and one managed to wedge a surprising amount of activity into a short eight week term.

But University life was far from being all play, as many discovered all too sharply when they were rusticated or sent down for failing their exams. We had to work. Ron and I in our first years both read the Mathematical Tripos Part 1, but we weren't very excited at the prospect of continuing with another two years of the same thing and both decided to change. Ron chose History, while I, with my army career in view, read what was called Military Studies. This had a wide scope modelled on the entrance examination to the Regular Army Staff College at Camberley for which I would later be studying, as the coveted suffix 'p.s.c.' (Passed Staff College) was then the rare and sole opening for promotion to high rank. For the Cambridge degree the subjects covered were Military History, Strategy, Law, Economics, Psychology and Military Organisation, Administration and Engineering. I loved it and so I prospered, and when in my final year I ran somewhat short of cash, I was able to turn my studies to good effect by agreeing, for a fee, to tutor five other army candidates, all of whom were in the same year as myself but who found the syllabus rather too much for them. To my astonishment and to my infinite pleasure they all passed and duly entered their regiments. It had been my first practical success in life and those were my first earnings. It gave me a lovely feeling.

At the same time I was able to take two subsidiary studies, one in Astronomy and the other in Archaeology. These were not degrees, the studies only lasted one year each; but they were both subjects that interested me and I wanted to know more about them. What I learned was to be the source of great pleasure during my later travels.

As a final preparation for my career I also joined the University Officers' Training Corps, spending two years in the Royal Artillery Battery with an annual two-weeks summer camp on Salisbury Plain firing live ammunition with horse-drawn 18 pounder guns; and one year in the Cavalry Squadron which of course was still horsed in those days. And I took a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Territorial Army, and as such was posted for some months in the summer of 1931 to the 3rd/6th Dragoon Guards at Colchester, where I served as a regimental subaltern. I had already been a Cadet Officer of the O.T.C. Infantry Battalion during my last year at Rugby, so when I entered the regular army I had behind me some experience of all the three main arms. This background was to stand me in good stead years later.

Discipline at Cambridge on the whole was strict and well administered. The authority of the Proctors went unchallenged; they were an

obvious necessity and no one resented them, but that is not quite the same as saying that anyone welcomed their attentions. It was a custom that undergraduates should wear a gown and square after dark and if one were caught without these adornments while returning from one's club or whatever it might be, one's fleetness of foot was often the best answer, helped, if one were fortunate, by a judicious tip given at the end of the previous term which served to slow the pursuing 'Bulldog's' feet. This was often most effective, so much so that on one memorable occasion when the fugitive, thinking himself already safe, had dropped into a trot, he was electrified suddenly to hear a hoarse and familiar voice whisper in his ear: "Get on Mr. K. Sir! If you don't run a bit faster, I can't 'elp catching yer!"

Should one, scorning flight, surrender to the Proctor in his cap and gown, with his two 'Bullers' in their top-hats and morning coats, the fine was six shillings and eight pence; but if one were luckless enough to be apprehended while in flight, this was doubled to thirteen shillings and four pence; sums which, I believe, had remained unchanged since the beginning of time.

For other offences the usual punishment was 'Gating' for a number of days, which simply meant that one had to be in one's digs or college by 10 o'clock each evening and not emerge again until the gates were officially opened the next morning. More serious punishments were Rustication, or even being Sent Down, but these were rarely awarded except for failure in one's work. Even Ron (for the famous Hector Mappin affair in 1928 which made the banner headlines in the national papers next morning), was only gated for the rest of that term; and the only miscarriage of Justice as we saw it, that ever occurred was the tragic affair of poor Adrian Seligman when his sporting effort to win a bet by photographing his senior tutor in his nightshirt misfired, and he was abruptly sent down. It was the general opinion that that was far too severe a punishment for a well planned escapade which only by the merest chance went wrong, but Adrian's was the only fatality amongst my acquaintances, and generally the dons were very tolerant towards our high spirits. Perhaps we did not appreciate this at the time so much as we should, but it came fully home to me a year or two later when Ron, about to set out on his first expedition to Tibet, gave his leader the name of Jock Lawson, our late senior tutor, as a reference. 'Most unwise' would have been my counsel, had I been asked, but Jock came up trumps. "Thank you for your note" he replied to Captain Kingdon-Ward's enquiry, "it has been my pleasure to get to know Ronald Kaulback well during the three years he recently spent at this college and I can confidently recommend him to you either as a companion explorer, or as a buccaneer, or probably best of all as President of a South American Republic."

Need I say more?