

EPISODE V.

Reconstruction; In England and Morocco.

The months which immediately followed were too sad to be written of in detail. My Mother was wholly stricken; and for long it was not possible to help her in any effective way. Only her own courage could be of avail. The most grievous human pain is the inability to ease the suffering of a person very dear to one; and that pain I learned very fully.

At intervals I went to stay for short periods with old friends, who were kindly sympathetic. These included my friend at Packwood House, and in that lovely setting I regained some peace of spirit.

Eventually my Mother settled temporarily in Tunbridge Wells, near to our relatives there. I still retained a desire to return to Tangier, at least for a while. It was the happily discussed plan between my Father and myself that I should make trial of settlement there in my new scheme of living. I still wished to return and make this trial, for myself firstly, and then I hoped, for my Mother and myself together.

In due course I reached Tangier. I made my pied-à-terre in a very small hotel called the "Hotel Touring", and took most meals at a little restaurant called "The Hut". Although the hotel was simple, from my room I had a lovely outlook over the Bay.

Note. The proprietress of "The Hut", a buxom genial French woman, had a husband, a young man of rather striking good looks in a somewhat "Apache" style. This Jean was a sound young working man during the day, disappearing regularly to carry out his duties, which were, I think something to do with the building of houses. In the evening however he became quite a different creature, with an attractive and distinctly Faun-like temperament! Sometimes on special occasions when we were all gathered around under the light of lanterns - for "The Hut" did not boast electric fittings - he would produce a sort of banjo of his, and would sing - and eventually dance - with a fascinating display of talent. Some of his songs were, to say the least, a little "risqué", and his dances even more so; but all so full of natural zest of life, that it was only the gaiety and skill that seemed to matter: I have even seen two well-known and dignified matrons of London's "Society", smiling coyly but frankly at his antics - though perhaps, poor dears, naturally a little - (but unnecessarily?) disturbed about the innocent minds of the "younger generation" who were also present! There was one dance of Jean's reserved for occasions when the "dowagers" were not present, which was the very essence of Bacchic *joie-de-vivre*, and in this he was sometimes partnered with surprising spontaneous skilly by a young English girl, whose family I think would have been most surprised! Eventually we would all join in, and looking back, I think it must have been a peculiar scene, distinctly incongruous to the almost sedate respectability of some of those taking part! Dear me! what goings on! I really think young Jean must have been the God Pan in disguise, and have placed us under his spell! Jean also taught some of us how to throw knives at a target - but that proved too risky in unskilled company, and had to stop! In Tangier, so many things, even "pyjama parties" and similar nonsense, which in some other setting might have been unpleasing, in the Tangerine setting of those days were just gay and cheerful, and without any less agreeable undercurrents.

Friends of mine were also in Tangier, including Russell Stephenson, nephew of a one time Commanding Officer of mine, Air Commodore Fellows, who with Lord Burley assisted in the pioneer flight over Mount Everest. There were also Daphne and Iris Grenfell, and their mother Lady Lilian, my treasured friendship with whom has still survived these many years, and whose ~~cosy~~ house at Sunningdale is now the only

place in England I can still think of at all in the terms of a "Home". There were also Angie Belper, Lord Belper's young wife, the charming Abercromby couple, young Captain Drummond Moray, on leave from his Regiment, & Mary Crichton Stuart, daughter of the Marquess of Bute who had large properties in Tangier, — as in so many other parts of the world,— Lady Mary I met again in Athens, after her marriage to a British Diplomat.

Last but not least of the Ladies in Tangier was young Patricia Moore, Lord Drogheda's daughter and her pal Marie Seton, who had arrived together adventurously, off a small cargo ship. They were a remarkable couple, charming, and so brimming over with the spirit of adventure that their activities were at times somewhat startling and caused much pleasant stir, and sometimes even some degree of consternation amongst us! Sadly enough Patricia is now dead,— she died very young, and that gay spirit of hers did not bring her much response of happiness in the coming years. Patricia married Paul L., wealthy young owner of one of England's most magnificent castles. I knew him slightly in earlier days. He was then already a distinguished public figure, a notably eloquent speaker, and a public spirited organiser. He too was fated to experience little-deserved disasters in his life. I have not seen him for many years; and Patricia I last glimpsed briefly during a visit of hers to Cairo in company with her glamorous friend Barbara Hutton, another lady of sad destiny.

We also had many friends who owned delightful villas, and amongst these I remember especially Teddy Wolfe the already well known painter in the "modern style" — which frankly I do not quite understand

Louis Goulding the author, and Jim Wyllie connoisseur of Arab Architecture, objets d'art, and of the pleasant ways of life in general.

A strange personality who appeared upon this scene was Eric Muspratt, author of a then much discussed novel. He was a fine looking young man, very agreeable to meet when sober. Unfortunately however, alcohol, towards which he had a partiality, had an alarmingly explosive effect upon him. He was of very strong physique, and woe betide anyone who "crossed" him when in that explosive condition. I have seen more than once small cafe devastated as a result of his momentary annoyance.— always later regretted and duly recompensed. He had with him a charming lady as his constant companion. She was presumed to be his wife; but when it was learned that she was not, there was heavy disapproval in some pretentiously censorious quarters. I remember one quaint occasion when Eric and the lady arrived unconcernedly at the British Community Church on a Sunday morning, and seated themselves in the elite proximity of our Consulate General Pew! There was an almost audible gasp from the primmer section of the British Community present! Poor Eric, he was a good natured fellow, — and he died not very long after, his constitution undermined. The lady with him, a charming and interesting person, of good family but troubrous background, I met again in Cairo early in the last war. She was then occupied in war work, but lonely and not very happy.

Two interesting tours I did outside Tangier. The first was with Russel Stephenson, when we went by car into the Spanish zone of Morocco via Tetuan to Xauen. This small town is amongst rather rugged mountains. Being at a much higher elevation than Tangier, the climate was rather chilly, and in the small hotel we spent two somewhat bleak evenings. During the day we climbed the hillsides and found ourselves facing rather dramatic rocky views. We also explored the old Moorish

castle in the town. Spanish troops were much to be seen everywhere, and we found the general setting of the Spanish zone very unlike Tangier; more feudal, more primitive, and with the foreign military occupation much in evidence, though whether beneficially or otherwise we were not able to judge in so brief a visit.

My other tour was by myself, out to Rabat in French Morocco, where I stayed a few days. The modern city is reminiscent of pictures I have seen of Casablanca. It is a prosperous town with fine white buildings and broad palm fringed avenues. The way of life was very French, and only in the old city, within its encircling walls, quite distinct from the modern district, was there any sense of Moorish tradition and atmosphere.

A more intimately local side of my Tangier memories is my friendship with the Menebbi family, of Moroccan princely descent. In their fine old palace I experienced much excellent Arab hospitality, and young Sidi Ahmed Menebbi became a very congenial associate of mine; finally I remember the famous Sherifa, English born widow of a Moroccan chieftain. She lived then the retired life of a Moroccan lady, but had in her youth with her husband's help, done fine pioneer work for welfare and medical enlightenment amongst the Moroccan people. She was much beloved, but also a little feared for she had also developed the autocratic ways of a great Oriental Lady and suffered no fools, whether eastern or western, at all gladly!

Romantic stories

were told of her. It was said that as a young girl she came to stay with an English family in Tangier. She had lovely golden hair, and one day after washing this, she sat in the sunshine of her balcony drying it. The young Sherif happened to pass by, and so smitten was he by this golden haloed maiden that he could not rest until, overcoming long opposition, he eventually persuaded the beautiful young lady to

become his wife; and it is said that they lived happily ever after.

These latter days of mine in Tangier were not however without difficulty. By a strange hazard an old complaint, dormant since my boyhood, suddenly returned in more violent form than ever before. The Asthma to which I now became constantly subject was so acute that I had to carry always with me a hypodermic needle and the appropriate drug for use. My attacks were so sudden and violent that without an injection I could not even make necessary arrangements to return home when the onset occurred at some place outside. This caused me much embarrassment of course; and sleepless nights were tedious.

After a considerable period in Tangier, news reached me that my Mother's sister with her husband the Revd. Frederick Lewin, were returning to England for a visit from Australia. In our earlier childhood this Lady had been like a second mother to us, and while I was un undergraduate at Christchurch Oxford, it was Aunt Lily who looked after our home at Walmer while our parents were still in India. Some of my life's happiest memories are greatfully linked with her. It became essential for me to return to England to welcome her.

My voyage back to London was in company with Angie Belper and Pam Abercromby, and we made a very cheery trio on board the Japanese ship in which we voyaged.

Soon after my return to London Russell Stephenson and I decided to give what we called a "Tangier Dinner". All our guests of very various sorts were to be folk we had met in Tangier. We hired for the occasion the whole of the tiny "Demos" restaurant in Soho. At that time I was living in a studio on the Embankment, which I had rented from Teddy Wolfe. There we all assembled for the priliminary apperatifs! The party included as far as I can remember, besides Russell and myself

as hosts, Pam Abercromby and her husband, Daphne and Iris Grenfell, Captain Drummond Moray, Lady Mary Crichton-Swart, Mrs. Nash and her husband, Lady Patricia Moore, Teddy Wolfe, Louis Golding, Marie Seton, and Mike Pakenham. It was a great success! and we ended at dawn dancing at the "Gargoyle"! I lately have found a little note of Patricia's to me, about this party. In happy memory of those companionable days to which Patricia added the special gift of her unique vivacity, full of a gay unexpectedness and charm, I record this small message of hers out of the past.

1 Park Row
S.W.1

May 24th 1932

Dear Jack (Patricia always called me Jack, I don't know why.)

Just to say that Marie Seton would love to be with us in the dinner party on the 31st. She asked me to write and tell you.

Have only been back from the Opera about five minutes, — "Flying Dutchman" — it was lovely.

Must go to bed now as I have to get up early in the mornin g. Au revoir. Don't forget to let me know the time and place of the party.

Patricia.

Strangely enough on my return to England my asthma left me almost as suddenly as it had come, which was indeed a vast relief.

After some initial planning, my little Mother agreed to share a flat in Tunbridge Wells. It was the top floor of a large mansion called "Ardmore" surrounded by an agreeable garden. There in due course we welcomed Aunt Lily and her husband, and the family reunion was made the more happily complete because my sister also arrived home on a visit from Buenos Aires. She with her family took another, and very attractive "maisonette", not far from us. My brother on leave from Uganda also joined us. It was a happy reunion, despite the sad awareness of our Father's absence; and the fact of another grim shadow in that my Father's sister was now stricken with the same illness which had taken him from us. Aunt Edie dwelt also at Tunbridge Wells at this time, in a comfortable home, which she had named "East Court". It was a largish house, but not so spacious as the country mansion, once family property, after which she had so bravely named it. Courage was indeed a basic quality in our Aunt Ediths make up— courage, integrity, and a strict regard for tradition. These shaped all her outlook, giving it a certain degree of severe rigidity, and yet great fineness and dignity, also. Mentally she had decided brilliance, as her acceptance in artistic and literary circles proved. In the awareness of her fate she showed no less courage than at any other time of test, which gave to what might have been morbid circumstances, an aspect of fineness and inspiration.

To meet my sister again was a great happiness to me, even though now, as a matron with an impressive husband and two fine little sons, she seemed just a trifle remote, and more inaccessible than of old, for of course she could not still be the eager yet hesitant young girl, viewing life with some alarm, who used to come to me for brotherly advise. I have always had deep affection, and much admiration for my young sister; and very early in life she showed her personal decisiveness by insisting while yet in her teens in taking part in the "war effort" of the 1914-18 years by working in a scottish aeroplanefactory, soon after I have joined the R.F.C. Hers was real hard work, in an arduous setting, but she followed right through. Later she again showed determination in insisting upon taking up a profession, somewhat to the consternation of her family, for such a decision from a feminine source was still something of a novelty in those days! However despite misgivings, her parents were not unsympathetic. Her temperament has always been something of a puzzle to us all,— not least perhaps to herself. Very sensitive, she sometimes yet attempted an attitude of coldness; romantically minded, she yet tried,— not very successfully! to be a cynic! She has however had a varied and interesting life, and her marriage to a somewhat dominant Australian brought her that sense of stability which has helped her to build up the fine personality she has now achieved. She has been a good mother, and a fine wife for a sound husband. Not least did she show her qualities of self discipline when, upon her husband's inheriting his great estates in Australia, almost at a moment's notice she had to readjust her way of life from the ease of her London ways and of her Spanish setting in the Argentine, to the comparatively brusque routine of living to which even the great land owners in Australia have to conform.

In Eric my brother I found still a stimulating companionship, despite the ten years difference in our ages. It is strange how much smaller seem these gaps of years as we all grow older! In height, talent, and achievement, my baby brother was already my superior,— though gentle and tolerant in avoiding any emphasis on this. My brother, after taking his degree from Christchurch Oxford, had become a District Commissioner in Uganda, and in this fine Service had done admirable work, combining with his interesting administrative duties, both big game hunting in Uganda, fox hunting when on leave in England, and much excellent landscape painting in many settings, and now a happy marriage. One is glad he had not accepted the original chance he had of entering the Indian Civil Service. One feels that, with the changes recent years have brought, much disillusionment and frustration might have come his way.