

An Autobiography



Roberta Cowell's Story

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By Roberta Cowell

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To my parents, my doctors and nurses, Lisa, Douglas, Charles
and the Canon, this book is humbly and gratefully dedicated.

“So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them.”

GENESIS I. 27.

REUTER'S DISPATCH, April 17, 1954. (Salvator Mundi Hospital, Rome, Italy)

Professor George Randegger, M.B.E., head of Rome's leading International Hospital, where Roberta Cowell had spent three weeks, told Reuter:

“From the harmonic, physical and psychological point of view, Miss Cowell is now absolutely a woman.

“Her voice, mental attitudes and sexual attributes are entirely those of a woman.

“What is so extraordinary, making her case practically unique in medical literature, is that the change-over should come when she was an adult. It is not infrequent at puberty.

“She has obviously suffered hell, and she now needs all the sympathy that people can give her.”

Professor Randegger, confirming the existence of menstruation, said, “It is remarkable that menstruation began before any sort of operation had been performed.”

He added, “I understand Miss Cowell intends to devote her life to science. She will be able to give a most valuable contribution.

“She is of a high intellectual level, her father is a surgeon (Gen. Sir Ernest Cowell) and she herself has always been interested in medicine. When she first came to the Roman Catholic Hospital, the nuns who were to attend her were almost shocked. Now they are full of admiration of her character and her courage. They loved her and had the greatest sympathy with her.”

Preface

TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO a writer in a medical journal, dealing with the subject of sex-reversal, began by remarking that “the history of sex-reversal, founded on speculative thought, may be judged best by the human passions it has provoked.” I realized plainly when the present book was first projected, and feel even more clearly on reading it now, that to arouse passions of any sort was about the last idea in ‘the mind of the writer. Whatever purpose she had in mind from the first, and followed consistently, it was not that, as indeed her readers will perceive for themselves.

That there is a history of the subject at all is significant, though even today the fact is very imperfectly understood. It begins a very long way back, and my own first dim awareness of its existence goes back to the construe of a Latin poet in my distant school days. It is also one which demands careful disentanglement from masses of superstition and mythological accretions. That is a work which lies altogether outside the scope of this book: but the indication remains that it is not the problem that can be called new, but our attitude of mind to it, and the scientific knowledge and the surgical skill coming increasingly to our help in finding the answer to it. Our concern is with a new answer to an old problem; and it is quite essential that the new answer should have the broadest possible basis of solid fact. That is to say, evidence is needed, and evidence is what Miss Cowell has supplied, or at the least clearly indicated. That degree of qualification is perhaps necessary since part of what she has to say points the way into provinces of highly specialised research, where the surgeon and the endocrinologist alone can assess its value. Part again yields information, the full significance of which, as psychological data, can be appreciated solely by the trained observer in that field. Yet the general reader can hardly fail to be impressed by the dispassionate way in which the writer records her own observations of herself, and the courage with which she has faced the business of presenting them. Neither task can have been easy; but I fancy she would ask no better reward than the consciousness of having done something to furnish material for the medical psychologist and the geneticist, and to help toward a fuller knowledge of the psyche with its mysterious workings and of the biological foundations of intersexuality.

The matter does not end with that. There are very extensive moral and theological implications which I am deeply conscious I must try to think out. This is not the place for their discussion, and in any case there are many others far better qualified for that than I: but it is only fair for me to say that I owe a very real debt to the writer for the confidence and friendship she has given me since we first met some time ago. If her book brings me into touch with others who have had comparable experiences, the obligation will be greater still. There must be many such; and if nothing else had been gained, the openness of such a story as is told in these pages could be of immense help to them in their own struggle, which in the nature of things is likely to be a single-handed one. Reticence is a very desirable thing, but secretiveness can sometimes be a very dangerous one.

“The past is forgotten, the future doesn’t matter.” In one sense Roberta Cowell and I will differ amicably about that. In that sense the past is generously recorded and the future will show those people who will owe happier and more balanced days to one whom a correspondent of mine recently described as “this gallant lady.” And perhaps she herself comes very near the heart of the thing when she writes, “Instead of bawling . . . I spoke quietly.” She speaks quietly in this book—and calls for sober reading and sympathetic understanding.

Canon

A. R. MILLBOURN.

The Cathedral,

Bristol.

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Roberta Cowell's Story

CHAPTER 1

FOR THE FIRST THIRTY-THREE YEARS OF MY LIFE I was Robert Cowell, an aggressive male who had piloted a Spitfire during the war {WW2}, designed and driven racing cars, married and become the father of two children. Since May 18th, 1951, I have been Roberta Cowell, female. I have become woman physically, psychologically, glandularly and legally.

This incredible thing was not an overnight change. I had always known that my body had certain feminine characteristics. My aggressively masculine manner compensated for this, at least as far as normal men and women were concerned, but homosexuals invariably took me for one of themselves. I was not a homosexual; my inclinations, as they developed, were entirely heterosexual. I was horrified and repelled by homosexual overtures, and this loathing included any boy who showed the slightest sign of being a 'sissy.' I could be friendly with other men, but I could not bear any form of physical contact with them. It was impossible for me to stand having someone link his arm in mine, and even shaking hands was unpleasant.

Looking back now at my life as Robert Cowell, I can see how many of my ambitions, dislikes and prejudices came from my realisation of my physical abnormalities. I was passionately enthusiastic about motor-cars and motor-racing. It was the be-all and nearly the end-all of my existence. I did not suspect, until I was psychoanalysed in 1948, that racing was for me a symbol of courage, power and virility. Unconsciously I knew I was not a normal male, and I desperately needed my symbol as a reassurance. When I finally understood the full truth about myself, both mental and physical, that tremendous and all-pervading enthusiasm for motor-racing vanished completely.

From a very early age I had had a deep-rooted fear and hatred of monstrosities in any shape or form. This dated back to a visit to a little museum down in Sussex, when I was a very small child. There were some horrible things in glass bottles and show-cases and these affected me strongly. If I ever came across a book with an illustration of one of these things, such as a two-headed cat, I would fling it away from me, and feel violently ill. I made a tremendous effort to get accustomed to such things, but the phobia still remained as strong as ever. Because of this I had to give up my early thoughts of becoming a doctor like my father. I was also very squeamish about dissection.

This fear must have been due to an instinctive knowledge of the abnormality of my own body, because when at last my dual sexuality was resolved and I became a complete and normal woman, the terror and loathing of these things disappeared, leaving no trace.

As to my relations with women, I had known many girls, and I had a lot of fun getting to know them. My interest, however, lay in the search for the rainbow, and not for the pot at the end of it, even if it did contain gold. Once I had met the admired girl, and got to know her a little, I was off again on the chase. Sometimes I would meet a girl and make a real friend of her; once or twice I suspected, probably quite wrongly, that she was 'falling.' When this happened I would drop her like a hot brick and leave her severely alone from then on.

It is easy to see the reasons for this, and for the unhappiness of my unfortunate marriage. It is acutely embarrassing for me now even to think about my marriage, but its failure, and the falseness of my feelings for other women, should be recorded. When my female libido developed, it was a perfectly normal one.

I could probably have gone on as an apparently normal male, compensating more or less consciously for what I knew I lacked, and taking such obvious precautions against embarrassment as avoiding

communal dressing-rooms, if it had not been for a violent emotional shock I experienced after the war. This undoubtedly upset my glandular system, and my feminine characteristics began to grow more marked. I had to acknowledge the extent of my physical abnormalities then, and I finally stopped fighting against my femininity. I became a feminised male, then a boyish woman, and finally a feminine woman. It is extremely difficult for me to realise now that I was once a Spitfire pilot with a liking for pretty girls.

It has taken me three years to become entirely adjusted to being a woman. It was comparatively easy to accept my new face and body, although I feel sometimes as if my mind had been transplanted into another person. But it was not easy to accept my altered temperament or my new general outlook and interests. While I was still adapting to these changes, there were times when I would amaze myself by automatically reacting in a feminine and not a masculine way. Now that the adjustment is complete, I am contented with the kind of contentment I never felt as a male.

This is the story of how I lived and felt as a man, and then learned to live and feel as a woman.

* * *

My parents were both wonderful people. My father was a surgeon and a colonel in the Territorial Army. He was also an artist, sculptor, writer, lecturer, naturalist, and a good violinist. Mother was very interested in social work, and was a fine pianist and singer.

There were three children, two boys and a girl. We were of widely different temperaments, and this showed in everything we did. When Father allotted us little garden lots, in which we could each do exactly as we liked, my sister grew flowers, my brother vegetables, and I commenced furious digging in an attempt—unsuccessful—to reach the centre of the Earth.

We had a nurse, for whom I conceived a passionate loathing which I am sure was mutual. She was about fifteen feet high and seemed to have come straight out of the Book of Revelation. I was told that when I grew up I should feel only love and gratitude towards Nanny for looking after me so well. But when I met her a few years ago I was gratified to observe no noticeable diminution of my hatred towards her.

Ours was a strict religious and moral upbringing, and this resulted in my being rather anti-religious for many years. Sunday was always hell on earth. It dragged by interminably, shrouded in gloom. When I was very young, I had to go to morning service, and then to the children's service in the afternoon. The very moment I was old enough I was taken to evening service as well; off I went, in a tumbrel disguised as a motor-bus. Many and ingenious were the methods I employed to avoid going to church, but they availed me little. My nurse was the daughter of a missionary, and on Sunday morning her eye would gleam with fanatical zeal. When the great day finally came and I was considered mature enough to go to the early morning service in addition to all the others, my nurse's cup of joy was running over, but I felt as though I were having to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Church services were the epitome of boredom to me. I enjoyed them only when we were visited by an elderly Bishop, who gabbled the prayers at an enormous rate. There was always the chance that he might make a mistake or even, if we were exceptionally lucky, make a spoonerism. Another source of enjoyment was a preacher who had a loose tooth which caused him to whistle in the most fascinating way. Once we were visited by a gentleman who played the trombone in the pulpit. Occasionally we had a special evangelical service on a Sunday evening, at which the congregation was worked up with the aid of lantern slides and theatrical lighting effects into a state of mass hysteria. This sort of thing seemed to me to be definitely wrong in some way, but at least it relieved the boredom.

I was apparently expected to believe the Bible quite literally word for word, from the Creation and Adam and Eve up to the rider on the White Horse with the sharp sword going out of his mouth.

When you died there seemed to be two grim alternatives: either you went to heaven, and spent eternity wearing long white robes and playing a harp, which was your reward for leading a good life; or you were damned to everlasting Hell Fire, which was very unpleasant indeed. In order to avoid going to Hell you had to have faith, and 'believe.' I completely failed to see how I could have faith in something that I just did not believe in, and I did not see how I could possibly make myself believe in something which seemed to me to be unreasonable.

I was considered a soul damned to everlasting torment. But I was assured that I need not worry. Even if everything else failed, the day I faced eternity I should repent. It was a false prophecy; I tested it during the War when I was at the point of what was apparently certain death.

I knew most of the church services by heart, but only dimly comprehended the meaning of the words. What little I did understand often seemed unreasonable. Why was I a miserable sinner, asking for mercy? Why did I need to be delivered from evil? Was I really born in sin? I found especially difficult to understand why we should be conceived and born in sin. It just did not ring true, even though I did not know, nor could I find out, what the word 'conceive' meant.

Later it was made clear that although, most unfortunately, there seemed to be no way of procreating other than the conventional one, the operative word was procreation and most certainly not recreation.

When still quite small, I was given a scooter. I took this straight to the top of a fairly steep hill, and launched down the incline, making suitable noises which were intended to resemble the engine of a motor-cycle. On reaching the first bend my attempts to emulate the speedway riders' technique were unsuccessful. My unconscious body was picked up by a livid Nanny, thrust into a pushchair, and propelled homewards. *En route* we met an old lady, a friend of the family. By this time I had regained consciousness and I can still remember vividly how upset I was when she made some pithy comments about little boys who at the ripe old age of five still had to be pushed about in wheel-chairs like little girls.

In the usual English progression, I was sent to three schools. My kindergarten career was uneventful, except that I jibbed at such unmanly occupations as needlework and pressing flowers.

At my preparatory school, for boys only, I distinguished myself by winning a medal at a boxing tournament. I won on points by crying slightly less than my opponent. At this school I discovered, to my extreme embarrassment, that I had an aptitude for mathematics. Fortunately for me, the other boys soon realised that my success was very far from being attributable to swotting. It was simply that by some occult means I managed to get the right answers, though often I could not write down the step-by-step working. They were decent enough to forgive me for this, and I made up for it by being bottom of the form in most other subjects.

The next rung of the educational ladder was the public school.

By this time I had grown rather fat, and was extremely sensitive about it. Naturally, I was teased unmercifully. My first nickname was 'Circumference.' When I reached the age of fifteen, I slimmed down a little, but I was left with a large pelvis and feminoïdal fat distribution. This earned me the distinction of a new nickname, borrowed from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I was now called Bottom.

Public school added a large number of rude words to my vocabulary. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I managed to refrain from using them at home. I initiated my small brother, still at prep school, into their use, and he made quite a reputation for himself at a croquet party by letting out a

round oath when he missed the ball. I thought it most unfair that I was the one to receive the blame for this regrettably stupid lapse on his part.

We were at the age of earnest sexual education. Mine was furthered by a school friend who was a clergyman's son, and a veritable mine of misinformation. Some books on the subject were purchased, not without a good deal of difficulty, and surreptitiously perused by an anxious little group in an otherwise empty form room, with someone keeping 'cave' outside.

One morning, during the Latin class, a day boy suddenly gave a sharp cry and sped from the room, without even observing the formality of requesting permission of the master to leave the room. Through the window we could see him dash to the bicycle shed, and then pedal madly down the drive.

We were all most curious to know the reason for this odd behaviour, and many and varied were the theories put forward. It transpired later that the poor fellow had been reading in bed an epic poem on the subject of one 'Eskimo Nell,' and had completely forgotten that he had left it under his pillow until the Latin class. His frantic dash home was all to no purpose, though. His mother had found it.

My favourite sports at school were tennis and fencing, but I scraped into the school Rugger fifteen, as a wing three-quarter. The communal baths after games and turnouts were a source of acute embarrassment. I was uneasy among so many naked males and did my best to use the big bath when it was unoccupied.

I am naturally left-handed, but I was not allowed to write with my left hand. The result was that I became ambidextrous, and unable to write well with either hand. I usually played tennis right-handed, but could drive forehand on either wing.

When nature took away some of my rotundity at fifteen, I received in exchange a crop of pimples. My eyelashes grew longer and longer until I had to cut them to avoid comment. They were so long that they used to touch the glasses which I had to wear. I hated those glasses, which were supposed to correct my long sight. Someone told me about the Bates system, so I threw my glasses away and started eye exercises. There was a marked improvement in my eyesight, which became exceptionally good, and I have never worn glasses since.

I had a phlegmatic nature, and never lost my temper. I had many girl friends, and found them far easier to understand and get on with than boys. I preferred their company, but unlike the other boys, I never fell in love. The only thing that could really move me was good music, so I was careful not to listen to any.

A school friend who disliked music heartily surprised me one day by saying that he was off to a Promenade Concert. "I always thought you didn't like music," I said. "I don't," he replied, "but my parents insist on my going, so I am taking with me a good book and a pair of earplugs."

One thing I could never understand about schoolboys was their universal passion for stamp collecting. It always struck me as a complete waste of time, and seemed a remarkably stupid hobby. Personally, I sedulously collected match-box tops....

Among my other hobbies was photography. I was interested in film-making, and formed a film club at school. We made several short films on 9.5 mm film, and then decided to attempt a two-reel epic. The story was about gangsters and involved much brandishing of firearms. One of the boys had borrowed a revolver from his father - a most realistic-looking weapon. The thought that it might be loaded never seemed to occur to anyone. Whilst the others were firing off blank cartridges at each other he clicked the trigger and was rewarded by a most impressive report. The revolver almost jumped out of his hand with the recoil. At the same moment the soft felt hat of the boy whom he had aimed at fell to the

ground. As it turned out, we were lucky that it was not the boy who fell to the ground, because his hat had been drilled clean through by a live bullet! It had passed about an inch above the crown his head.

I was extremely annoyed; nobody had filmed this exciting scene. The boy who had been used as a target was very annoyed indeed; he had borrowed the perforated hat from his father.

From a very early age I had shown an aptitude for mechanical things. Between the ages of twelve and sixteen I spent most of my spare time, including a great deal of the school holidays, in engineering workshops, particularly the machine shops of Trojan Limited, of Croydon.

My ambition was to become a racing motorist, but I also wanted to design my own cars. Oddly enough, I never wanted to be an engine driver. Perhaps I disliked the thought of having to proceed along ready laid lines, without any choice as to direction and destination. I wanted to fly fighter aircraft, drive fast cars, and perform other feats. In my daydreams I would be the schoolboy's idol, heroically doing fantastically courageous things and then nonchalantly signing autographs.

I had immense enthusiasm and never doubted for one moment that I should ultimately achieve that which I so ardently desired. I was a devoted member of the school Motor Club. One of the other members was John Cunningham, later to become a famous test pilot. The club members would drive a variety of decrepit motor-cycles and cars around the school grounds. We were, of course, far too young to hold driving licences.

While still at school I joined the Officers' Training Corps, and eventually became a non-commissioned officer. We had field days, and an annual camp at Aldershot or Salisbury Plain. I did not enjoy these affairs very much; it seemed to me that the male animal became even more male and a lot more animal when away from home. Most unfortunately, I never managed to learn to smoke, but with practice I could drink beer without actually making a face. The shudder which invariably shook my small frame after a draught of the nauseating stuff was more difficult to hide. In order to make up for my distressing unmanliness in drinking and smoking, I managed (with the courteous assistance of the Regular Army) to acquire an enormous repertoire of extremely doubtful jokes. This made me acceptable to the *cognoscenti*.

Towards the end of my schooldays, a school friend and I spent most of a summer holiday visiting Belgium, Germany, and Austria. In Austria my friend purchased some small but revolting-looking cheroots, lighted one, and puffed away at it persistently. I was unable to think up a good reason for not indulging in this manly pursuit, so I lighted one and puffed away as well. My absence of relish was marked. A short while later I had my first view of the romantic Danube, but was too occupied in being sick into it to notice whether it was beautiful or blue.

We spent a few days in a little village on the Rhine. Nearby towered a forbidding-looking mass of rock. It was a direct challenge to our adventurous souls, and we decided that the very next day we would climb to the summit or perish in the attempt. No doubt the Germans would be amazed to discover that the two intrepid English boys had scaled the heights; it was quite obviously extremely unlikely that any mere German had ever managed to get more than half-way up.

We left at dawn, and after a hazardous and arduous climb, involving the use of a great deal of climbing equipment, we reached the summit about mid-afternoon. As we laboriously but triumphantly drew ourselves over the ledge on to the top, dead tired and aching in every limb, we were most annoyed to find what was apparently a Teutonic Sunday School treat in full swing. Small children were everywhere. To add insult to injury, not only was there a comfortable tea-house, but there was also a small mountain railway which ran merrily up and down the far side of the heights.

In Frankfurt I managed to get myself arrested for taking cine-camera films of Nazis drilling. I was put into a cell in the local police station, and was released a few hours later when I had ostentatiously destroyed some unused film stock. The films of the Nazis drilling came out quite well.

At this time my knowledge of the German language consisted of the very useful words "*Ein Eis, bitte*" (one ice-cream, please). Fortunately for me, my arrest encouraged me to learn German. The next time I was in Frankfurt my knowledge of the language undoubtedly saved my life.

School ended for me when I was sixteen, and that summer I entered for a series of tennis tournaments. In the first of these I came up against a well-known player in the second round of the Open. He beat me, but let me take a set off him. He suggested that we team up to play together in the doubles in some of the future events, and offered to give me advice and practice. Naturally I was pleased and flattered at his interest in my game, and it was arranged that we should meet for tea in a London hotel on the next Sunday to discuss arrangements.

He was staying in the hotel, and the tea was served in his room. To my complete horror it was soon apparent that the interest was not so much in my game as in me. I shot out of the room, sped downstairs, and never spoke to him again.

Looking back at the episode now I can remember that he was quite young and attractive. However, rather than have him or any other male lay a finger on me I would have died of shame and revulsion.

After this I wanted to appear as virile and masculine as possible. I bought myself a pipe, together with a box of matches and a packet of 'pipe refills.' My first essay in the art of pipe smoking was, very misguidedly, in a railway carriage. Inserting a refill into the bowl of the pipe, I put a light to it, and was rewarded with a nauseating whiff of smoke. After a few tentative sucks at the thing I lost my head and blew into it. The plug of burning tobacco shot into the air, creating alarm and despondency amongst the other occupants of the carriage, which appeared to be filled with experienced pipe smokers who seemed to resent the intrusion of a newcomer into their ranks.

The man next to me, however, proffered a few kindly words of advice. He suggested that the tobacco be tamped into the bowl of the pipe, and if I *must* use a 'refill' it was usually better to remove the paper from it first. He was then kind enough to offer me a Cigarette. I felt that in the circumstances I could hardly confess that I did not smoke, so I took one, inhaled vigorously, and a few minutes later was distributing my breakfast all over the outside of the carriage. I got out at the next stop.

The desired appearance of virility must have been enhanced by my clothes. Just as some men are always extremely elegantly dressed, so I was invariably revoltingly scruffy. I had a genuine dislike, bordering on hatred, of new clothes. I usually wore an old sports coat, spotted with gravy, chemicals, oil, and paint. My trousers had a series of horizontal accordion pleats, my shoes were badly trodden over, my socks flapped round my ankles, and my shirts were usually of a broad checked pattern, chosen to clash as far as possible with the rest of the ensemble. I never wore a hat, and when I wore a raincoat it looked as though it had been used as an overall on some particularly dirty work, as it often had.

Even amongst college students, not renowned for sartorial elegance, I was considered rather ill dressed.

My intention was eventually to become an automobile engineer, but it was essential for me to have a knowledge of aircraft construction principles and methods. I arranged to work through the shops of General Aircraft Ltd., of Hanworth. Starting in the detail department, I advanced to the service shop.

I also needed the practical experience of working as a mechanic on racing cars, but this was hard to come by. The problem was solved by turning up at the Brooklands race track with a bucket and a pair of overalls. I donned my overalls, filled the bucket to the brim with water, then carefully carried it into the paddock past a gatekeeper who prided himself on never letting anyone in without a pass. Once

inside it was easy to find someone who needed assistance, and I would often happily work throughout the night when a car was urgently needed for practice or a race.

The moment I was legally old enough to drive on the road I started competition work. After my seventeenth birthday I drove as much as I possibly could. I entered for the London-Land's End trial and then for other similar events. This was all excellent practice in driving in front of a crowd, and great fun, but it was only the first rung of the ladder. I decided to enter the R.A.F. on a short service commission. I should learn to fly, be well paid, and could go on motor-racing during my two months' leave.

I joined the R.A.F. as a pupil pilot in 1935. My initial training was at Desford, near Leicester. I was very proud when I got my commission; I was the youngest officer in the Service at the time. There was one drawback, however; flying made me feel extremely ill. When I left Tiger Moths, on which I had trained, and went on to service aircraft, my airsickness got even worse and I was stupid enough to mention it. The result was that I was examined by a medical board and was promptly invalided out. The log-book endorsement said that I was permanently unfit for further flying duties with the R.A.F.

I was not very upset about this; compared with motor-racing, I found flying a bore.

The day the final verdict came through from the Air Ministry I left Grantham training field. I put on my civilian clothes, climbed into my sports car, and started for London. Half-way home the oil-pressure began to fail, and an ominous clatter from the engine told that a big-end was disintegrating. There was a garage in the vicinity, but the proprietor refused to let me borrow his facilities and repair the car myself, even when I offered to pay whatever he would have charged to do the job himself. In those days I would never have confided my cherished engine to the ministrations of a garage, so the car was left there and a lift was thumbed to London.

The driver of a Bedford lorry very kindly took me to the metropolis. I was just about to get out of the lorry, and was wondering whether to offer him five shillings or ten, when he gave me a two-shilling piece. This may give some slight idea of the nattiness of my personal appearance.

The period from the end of 1936 until the outbreak of the war was mainly occupied by engineering and motor-racing. I studied engineering at University College, London, and drove racing cars in races and speed trials. Motor-racing proved to be all I had expected and more.

I was delighted to find that most of the drivers, irrespective of age and fame, seemed to be capable of behaving like over-grown schoolboys. I never actually found any of them using stink bombs, but few could have been trusted with a bag of itching powder or a couple of Chinese crackers.

Charles, a very well-known and successful driver, once turned up in the club-house at Brooklands with a dangerous-looking pistol. With a cry of "Hands up," he pointed it at a group of members, pulled the trigger, and, in perfect silence, a small pennant unfurled itself from the barrel of the weapon, bearing in large letters the word 'BANG.' This went down rather well, and later in the evening he was called upon to repeat the performance. He pointed his fearsome-looking at the group, now augmented by friends, who had all been told that something amusing was going to happen. This time when he pulled the trigger there was a deafening explosion and a cloud of smoke. Never have so many people jumped so high.

Perhaps Charles's finest effort was at Donington, on the occasion of the visit of the German Grand Prix teams. Before the race the cars were drawn up on the starting grid. Massed bands were playing, flags fluttered, the sun shone, and the vast stands built at the starting line were packed with thousands of people, eager to see the great spectacle. The drivers were lined up and introduced to the Duke of Kent and Herr Huhnlein, the German Sports-führer. The Duke got into a beautiful new twelve-

cylinder Lagonda, with Dick Seaman as driver, and the car glided away to do a lap of the circuit. Herr Huhnlein stepped into a magnificent Mercedes-Benz, to be driven around the course by Carracciola, the German champion. As the starter button was pressed there was a violent explosion and a cloud of black smoke from under the bonnet. Charles had put squibs on the plug leads. He was never known to have the slightest respect for personages.

It was during the practice period for the Donington Grand Prix, in which I was acting as a mechanic, that I had my first really narrow escape. I had been testing a Maserati, and had been driving it at maximum speed, about 140 m.p.h., down the long straight. It was all I could do to hold the car at all, which made it all the more unnerving when I was passed on both sides at once by a couple of Mercedes. They shot by doing at least thirty m.p.h. more than I was!

As I pulled into the pits, I slowed down to walking pace, using the full power of the brakes. One front wheel slewed inwards and the car stopped dead with a jolt. One of the two independent steering boxes had sheared a key, leaving one front wheel flapping loose. Had this happened a few minutes earlier I could hardly have survived.

Nineteen-thirty-nine was my third season of racing. I was just twenty years old, and from March until August took part in at least one event every week-end. May of that year was an especially busy month. One Saturday I was at Brooklands; the following day at Wetherby, near Leeds; two days later I was in Antwerp, practising for the Grand Prix the following Sunday, after which I returned to Brooklands for another race the same week.

During this period I kept three cars, maintaining them myself with little outside assistance. Naturally, I would often get very tired. One day I arrived home at Croydon at five p.m. after a meeting at Shelsley Walsh. I went upstairs to change. A wave of tiredness swept over me and I lay for a few moments face downwards across the bed, still fully dressed, with my feet on the floor. It seemed only a few moments later when I discovered I had dozed off. My watch told me it was seven o'clock, but somehow something seemed strange. I soon discovered what it was—it was seven a.m. *next morning* and I had slept for fourteen hours!

I had long since given up playing tennis, as it occupied too much time. To keep fit I used to skate at Purley ice-rink. My instructress was very keen on flying, so one day I took her up in an open two-seater. She clutched both sides of the cockpit and screamed loudly over the intercom whenever I banked slightly. "Take me down, take me down," she screamed, "I know I'm going to tip out." After a few minutes of this I turned the plane on to its back, and we hung by our straps. Hers were a bit loose, but she stayed in, and from that moment onwards enjoyed every moment of it thoroughly. I did all kinds of acrobatics, and only stopped when I felt too ill to continue.

It was about this time that I acquired a new and very beautiful girl-friend. Naturally I took her down to Brooklands to show her off, and she was a sensation. During a saunter around the paddock we stood behind the exhaust of a car which was warming up its engine, emitting the most delightful crackle and a wonderful aroma of burning castor-oil and nitro-benzene. I stood there, inhaling deeply with an "Ah, Bisto!" expression. Rather irritably, she said, "Do let's move on, and get away from this horrible smell."

In a moment my feelings for her changed entirely. Had she suddenly grown another head I could not have regarded her with more horror and dislike. I left her absolutely flat, then and there, and never saw her again. I have no idea how she got home, though I can hardly imagine her having much difficulty.

Throughout the war I carried with me, amongst my personal effects, a tiny bottle filled with racing fuel and oil. I would often sniff it, and would be wafted in my imagination straight back to the race-track.

CHAPTER 2

UNTIL MY ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE WAR, the nearest I had got to making history was the time I almost ran over Mr. Neville Chamberlain while he was crossing Parliament Square. The old boy was remarkably spry and leapt to safety. I ignored the advice of the other occupants of the car who suggested that I make the turn again and have another go. Perhaps it might have been better if I had...

In September, 1939, I was twenty, and the job I wanted—because it seemed to me the best and most responsible job to have—was that of a fighter pilot. I bombarded the Air Ministry with applications, requests for interviews, and telephone calls. Even though I knew I had been declared “permanently unfit” for flying after my short stretch as a pupil pilot with the R.A.F. in 1935, I persisted. It was three months before I was convinced that the Air Ministry didn’t want anyone with a medical history like mine, not at the moment, anyway.

I then approached the War Office. They gave me the option of an immediate commission in the Ordnance as a mechanical engineer, or I could join the Royal Army Service Corps and get commissioned through the ranks. I chose the latter as it seemed to offer more opportunities for advancement. In January, 1940, I enlisted and was sent to Aldershot for training.

The proceedings started on a slightly morbid note. When we were sent to the stores to draw our kit, we were each issued two identity tags. Someone asked the warrant officer why there were two. He was told, “Tie one round yer neck and the other round yer body, then when yer bloody ‘ead gets knocked orf we’ll know ‘oo it belongs to.”

It was this same warrant officer who was in charge of our first church parade. Each man removed his hat as he entered the church, except one, who forgot. He ambled down the centre aisle, looking extremely foolish in his new forage cap, which was slightly too big for him and was dead straight on his head. A stentorian whisper from the warrant officer reverberated round the church, “Take yer ‘at orf in the ‘ouse of God. . . runt!,,

In one way life in the barracks was very strange, and it was a way I never really got used to. The inevitable accompaniment to this kind of life is a flood of sadly imaginative bad language, but this was merely monotonous. The real difficulty for me was the lack of privacy. This was complete, and completely unpleasant.

In many other ways, the barracks reminded me of school. What we talked about and made much of was not our training but the offshoots of our training, such as ways of making army life go smoothly, and occasions when someone’s army life was very rocky indeed. Quite early I was told two golden rules by the more experienced. One was: Never admit you can do anything. The other was: Always look busy, especially when you have nothing to do. At first these rules struck me as being singularly stupid and inept, but it was not long before I realised that there was quite a lot to be said for them.

On parade one day the sergeant called, “Anybody here drive a Rolls-Royce?” I opened my mouth, then remembered Rule One and shut it again. An eager voice behind me said, “Yes, I can, sergeant.” “Right,” said the sergeant, “then you can double off and clean the latrines.” On another occasion someone who admitted to being a professional xylophone player was given the job of mending a vast heap of duckboards.

I used Rule Two to good effect after the sergeant caught me wandering around the barracks with nothing to do and condemned me to a few weeks of potato peeling. Once I was free again I went around with an armload of documents and an intent expression. After a week of this I managed to get

attached to a nearby training school as a workshop instructor, and I received a local, temporary, unpaid, but by no means unwanted stripe.

All of us developed a marked appetite for the absurd. I still am fond of the story of the man who received three days' compassionate leave because his house had been bombed with his grandfather in it. "It was the most amazing thing," he told us on his return. "The old boy was buried underneath the debris for three whole days and nights, but when they dug him out there was not a mark on him, not one mark."

We all expressed surprise.

"Yes," he continued, "he was perfectly all right. Dead, of course."

Anecdotes that made the army command ridiculous were especially cherished. We knew at once that something was up the time we were ordered out on special parade, and observed that our commanding officer was accompanied by the lady in charge of a detachment of the Auxiliary Territorial Service housed nearby. Two other A.T.S. officers were with her.

Slowly the little party walked up and down the lines of men, peering into each face. There were few who managed to avoid looking guilty. At long last all three A.T.S. officers identified a tall young soldier as being undoubtedly responsible for the dastardly crime, whatever it was. He was marched off, and later confined to barracks under open arrest. Steadfastly he refused to tell us what his 'crime' was.

Next morning he was up before the Commanding Officer. The charge was this: Section 40 of the Army Act; conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline, in that he did walk up and down outside the A.T.S. quarters after lights out, ringing a handbell and shouting the word "Crumpet."

I stayed at Aldershot until January of 1941, when my commission came through at last. It had taken twelve months instead of the fortnight which the War Office assured me was the longest it could take. I was posted to a unit in Cambridgeshire with the rank of captain, and there put in charge of mobile workshops.

In May of 1941 I married Diana Margaret Zelma Carpenter, a girl I had met some years before when both of us were at London University. She had the degree of B.Sc.(Hons) in Engineering, and was an automobile racer herself, in a small way. In spite of our mutual interests, I think we knew almost at once that the marriage was not going to be a happy one. We had about two weeks together before the War Office posted me to Iceland as Officer Commanding Heavy Repair Shops.

Iceland was full of fascinating surprises. I stayed at an army camp where every morning my batman would dip a bucket into a riverlet, and, lo and behold, it was immediately filled with boiling hot water, straight out of the ground.

When I was taken out to see the geysers I observed an earnest little group of senior army officers dismounting from their cars. Following them was an orderly carrying a sack. The contents of the sack were dumped into the aperture of the largest geyser, after which everyone retired to a safe distance. A minute or two later a jet of boiling water shot high into the air, and all were highly delighted. The sack had contained soap, which precipitated the eruption. They told me that the effort of the day before, when they had used a different soap, had been much more impressive. Tomorrow they would try again, with soft soap.

On the way back I was shown a lush growth of banana trees, in a greenhouse heated by a natural hot spring.

The island is forbiddingly bleak. It has almost no trees, and very little vegetation, which is probably why nearly every other shop seems to be a chemist's. It seemed to me that the Icelanders took so many pills that they should rightly have rattled when they walked.

There are very few towns, and even Reykjavik was less than imposing, especially to the Americans. An American sergeant was overheard, while standing in one of the main streets of the capital of Iceland, to ask the way to the nearest town!

The docks, however, were really alive. Something was always happening, and more often than not it was something that shouldn't. The dockers were remarkably adept at picking out crates which contained the more attractive type of cargo. A crane sling would be attached to a large, square wooden box, and the following instructions would be given to the crane driver: "Dahn a bit, dahn a bit. Not too 'ard, not too 'ard." Then CRASH. The box would crash from a height of about six feet, amid cries of "Too 'ard." The boards would splinter, the contents scatter.

A few minutes later everyone would be smoking a fat cigar.

I certainly did not envy the officer in charge of this job. He took it very seriously. A trailer was being carefully backed on to a small jetty by a Royal Army Service Corps driver, who obviously knew exactly what he was doing. "Left hand down," shouted the dock officer. The R.A.S.C. driver firmly put his right hand down even further and continued to back the trailer exactly down the centre of the jetty. "If you don't put your left hand down at once," shouted the officer, "I shall put you on a charge."

The driver obligingly put his left hand hard down, accelerated violently, and the trailer went clean over the edge into the water.

The officer apologised to the driver—he had not known that when backing a two-wheel trailer it is necessary to turn the wheel in the opposite direction to normal. The trailer was hauled up, and the status quo generally restored.

A few minutes later along came another trailer, with another R.A.S.C. driver towing it. He, too, began to back gently, and with the utmost precision aimed the trailer straight for the jetty. His judgment was superb. Most unfortunately the officer, who had now learned all about backing trailers in one easy lesson, noticed that the driver was on the wrong steering lock. "Right hand down," shrieked the dock officer. The driver took no notice. The officer thrust his head into the driver's cab. "Put that right hand down," he said. The driver obliged, and gently backed the trailer into the water. It was a four-wheel trailer, and when backing you must steer these the same way, and not the opposite.

One day a vehicle caught fire while refuelling, and a large fire extinguisher, of the foam type, was brought into action. The extinguisher itself immediately burst into flames and began to burn like a flame thrower. Some over-enterprising aircraft hand had filled the water compartment with an anti-freeze solution, consisting mainly of alcohol. This practice ceased forthwith!

My few months in Iceland were thoroughly frustrating. The Heavy Repair Shops had a vast amount of work to do, but my own duties were almost entirely administrative. Instead of getting into the war, I was further away from it than I would have been in England, and I was not even able to use my technical knowledge and experience to the full. I was still determined to become a fighter pilot. With great difficulty I managed to get transferred to the R.A.F., and I sailed for home.

Again I appeared before the all-important medical board, but by this time I was experienced. I had picked up some valuable tips on how to score well in the various tests. I could stand on one leg with my eyes shut for minutes at a time, could hold my breath for what seemed like hours, turning a pretty shade of beetroot the while, and could blow up the mercury column and hold it with the best of them. The board passed me for further training.

At the Empire Flying Training School at Anstey, near Coventry, I was taken up by the chief flying instructor. The purpose was to test my stomach, and evidently he had no intentions of using half-way measures. He went through a most alarming series of aerobatics. I turned pale green, but fortunately had the presence of mind to shut my eyes. When it was safe to open them again I was immensely gratified to find that the instructor had made himself so ill in the process that he was even greener than I was.

Following a routine practice, our group of pilots in training was photographed and a copy of the print was hung at the end of a line of similar photographs strung out along a wall. Only our rows of unsmiling faces were unadorned; all the others had either bowler hats or ellipses pencilled on. One of the instructors explained that the bowler hats had failed the course. The ellipses were haloes; those men had been killed. I resolved that no bowler hat was going to appear on my head, and no halo either, if I could possibly avoid it.

During my training at this field I saw the ignominious end of what must once have been a brilliant defensive scheme. In order to prevent enemy gliders from landing on the field after dark, a fleet of second-hand cars, bought for this specific purpose, was driven out on the field at dusk every evening and parked all over the landing ground. At first these cars had been driven under their own power; later one or more vital parts in each had been appropriated by persons unknown. A carburettor was missing here, a distributor there. First some had to be towed out, then all had to be towed. Finally they began to lose the very tyres off their wheels and had to be dragged out and back by tractor.

One night just after dusk a Bristol Blenheim circled the field. Ignoring the frantic shower of red Very lights from the control tower, he landed nonchalantly among the cars, taxied to the watch office, dropped a passenger, and took off again. After that no one bothered to drag the cars out at night.

At Anstey we were taught to fly Tiger Moths, and were then posted to Cranwell for further instruction. At Cranwell my hoped-for career as a fighter pilot received another setback. I was put on to twin-engined aircraft—the preliminary to becoming a bomber pilot. It was pointed out that I would be less prone to airsickness in a bomber. I protested vigorously, and proved my point by going up in a twin-engined aircraft and being sick. After a while I went on to Miles Masters, single-engined fighter trainers, and was a step nearer achieving my ambition.

When I first started flying and found that it made me feel very ill, I used a variation of the Coué method of autosuggestion. Saying to myself firmly, “I will not be ill, I shall be perfectly all right,” I would get airborne and be very far from all right. Later some intensive reading made me realise that I was invoking the law of reversed effort. Instead of will-power, I tried using imagination. I would try to imagine myself as an iron-stomached individual, and did my best to keep this picture firmly in my mind’s eye. With the aid of a broad, tight belt, and generous doses of glucose, I managed to cope well enough. But I never completely got over the tendency to feel sick.

The Miles Master was much more complicated than the Tiger Moth. There was an elaborate cockpit drill to be learned. One day, after carrying out some flying practices, I was on the last leg of my approach to land when I saw a red flare. A cadet was always detailed to be on the aerodrome perimeter when flying training was in progress, and if anyone came in to land without remembering to put his wheels down, the cadet was to shoot off a red light.

I suddenly realised that the warning horn in the cockpit was nearly blowing my head off, which meant that I was about to land with my wheels up. I pushed everything forward, went round again and landed. Feeling a little shaky after almost making a complete fool of myself, I reached down for the lever to pull up the flaps. A raucous, shatteringly loud noise and two bright red lights informed me that I had pulled up the wrong lever and had started the hydraulic mechanism which retracted the wheels.

Like a flash I pushed the lever down again so quickly that the aircraft still remained on its wheels. Such behaviour was technically known as ‘finger trouble,’ and I had been very lucky indeed to escape being awarded the “Most Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger.” After this I always tried to fly with my finger well out.

‘Wings’ Parade came at the end of this course, and I was sent to an Operational Training Unit. Here I flew my beloved Spitfires at last. They were all I had hoped for, and more.

This last stage of training, I realised very soon, must have accounted for quite a few of the haloes pencilled in on the group pictures on view at Anstey. I had a very narrow escape from crashing into the sea during some air-firing exercises. It was a very hot, hazy day. The sky was the exact blue of the water. I lost sight of the horizon in the haze, and after making my attack on the target started to dive towards the sea, having mistaken it for the sky. Somehow I saw what was happening just in time. It was a nasty moment.

Another anxious moment came a few days later. I was not in the best of moods to begin with; two hours earlier a member of my course had failed to get airborne at the end of the runway. The plane crashed at high speed and ploughed through hedges, across a road, and into a wall. The pilot was very dead indeed. Apparently he had not carried out his cockpit drill properly, and had tried to take off with the airscrew in coarse pitch. This is like trying to drive a car away from a standstill in high gear, and then immediately trying to climb a hill before it has gained speed.

Now I was taking off in the same sort of aircraft, an unfamiliar type. The engine was detonating badly. A glance at the revolution counter showed that the airscrew had suddenly gone into coarse pitch of its own accord, although the pitch lever was fully forward. I was more than halfway along the runway and nearly at flying speed. Before I had time to throttle back and wait for the crash the pitch suddenly changed again into fully fine, I got airborne, and landed safely. The trouble had been caused by a minor defect, easily rectified, but not in time to prevent one man being killed and another forcibly reminded of the proximity of the next world.

Not every bit of carelessness had such unhappy results, of course. An expensive but otherwise amusing bit came to light one Saturday afternoon when aircraft were being shown, as they often were, to young cadets of the Air Training Corps. A Wellington bomber had been wheeled out and was being inspected. One of the cadets climbed inside and found the flare gun. Naturally he had to fire it off inside the fuselage, and the Wimpey caught fire and was reduced to a blackened skeleton. The captain of the aircraft was beside himself with rage, and was in favour of hanging, drawing and quartering the little lad responsible. His feelings at that moment were as nothing compared with how he felt when they court-martialled him for not having made certain that the flare gun had been unloaded!

My first day with this squadron found me in the unusual position of being comparatively neat and tidy while everyone around me dressed for comfort—though, I thought, not without a certain studied inelegance. The next day the wire came out of my cap; I undid my top button and never buttoned it again for the rest of my service career. I acquired the white turtle-necked sweater that was *de rigueur* for wear under the tunic. The desirable battered effect of the cap, I discovered, was obtained by flying with it crammed down the side of the cockpit. The ensemble was not complete if one was not conspicuously in need of a haircut, or unequipped with high black leather flying boots, worn with a map stuffed into them.

These boots were of a special ‘escape’ variety. The tops were designed to be cut off by means of a small knife which was sewn into the leather. With the tops removed they made an excellent pair of shoes. As I took a six, and the smallest size was seven, I had to wear two pairs of socks inside mine. Later on I was to be glad of this.

At that time the general feeling was that as long as we were well disciplined in the air what we did on the ground was not so important. This attitude embraced administrative work, too. Our squadron leader hated office work, but of course it had to be done. The adjutant would periodically give him stacks of papers to sign: reports, letters and orders. One day this notice appeared on the board: "I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I never read a damned thing that is put in front of me." It had been duly signed by the squadron leader.

Our aircraft deliveries were carried out by the Air Transport Auxiliary, a very fine group of pilots. A woman pilot of this organisation, holding the rank of third officer, was going to have a baby. They wanted to stop her flying when the baby was well on the way, but she knew the importance of the job she was doing and insisted on carrying on, claiming that there was nothing in the regulations to stop her. One day a notice went up on the board, stating that according to regulation No.35 she must cease all flying duties forthwith. Regulation No.35 was looked up; it read, "Third officers are not allowed to carry passengers."

We were in a busy sector where we often made contact with the enemy. Long hours would be spent at readiness; then a telephone call from 'ops' or perhaps a double red flare from the watch office would send us scrambling into the air in hot pursuit of the attacker. Every time we stopped an enemy aircraft we knew we had prevented British civilians from being bombed.

It was a great thrill to be able to take an active, personal part in the war. I had always regarded air fighting as a return to war as it should be, the object being either to kill or be killed. I do not think I was a particularly morbid person at this time, but it just never occurred to me that I might survive. Several of my closest friends were killed, and I regarded it as just a matter of time as far as I was concerned.

We never forgot, when we were in the air, that we were linked by radio to our excellent ground control. (Oddly enough, the Germans used a radio frequency very near ours, and we could sometimes hear German voices on our R.T.) However, on the first occasion that I needed ground control desperately, my radio packed up and I had to fend for myself.

I had been on a long-range mission with one other plane, which was shot down over the target. The weather closed in as I was returning to base and I was flying too low to use the radio. I climbed up through the cloud and called up the controller, but the radio was quite dead. I should have to find my own way home without radio aid.

It was only possible to estimate my position very roughly indeed, as the ground was quite invisible, but I set an approximate course for base and when my estimated time of arrival came, plunged down into the cloud, which filled the sky without any sign of a break. Down and down, visibility still zero. The altimeter finally showed two hundred feet above the level of the home base, which was at sea level, I knew. Still no sign of a break. By now I was flying in fully fine pitch, as slowly as possible, with wheels down and full flap. Without losing sight of the blind flying panel I tried to discern a break in the cloud out of the corner of my eye, but still no sign.

At length the altimeter showed *minus fifty* feet, and I still hadn't hit anything. Finally, still letting down very slowly, I caught sight of waves a few feet away, a very nasty moment indeed, and instantly climbed up into the overcast again. The altimeter reading was minus two hundred feet. I re-set it—obviously the barometric pressure had altered since I set the instrument on the ground before take-off, and thus a false reading had resulted.

The next problem was which direction to fly in order to reach land. I might be over either the North Sea or the Channel, so England lay somewhere between north and west, but which way? If I were over the Channel and flew west I might not hit land, and if I were now over the North Sea and flew north I

shouldn't strike land either. I flew west, and a minute or two later, cautiously descending again, saw dry land beneath. A drizzling rain was falling and the cloud was almost down to the ground, so I made a precautionary landing in a field which, as it turned out, was on the edge of a cliff. As I taxied the aircraft the engine spluttered and died. Fuel had run out.

A car drove up a few minutes later, and it was only then that I knew for certain that I had landed in England. When I notified operations by telephone that I had landed they were very upset because I had not been plotted by radar. "Perhaps," said the controller, "you were flying rather low?" I agreed that perhaps I had been.

Narrow escapes were a daily event, of course; we would go through them and then dismiss them, at least from our conversation. Luckily, other things were always turning up to break the monotony of danger, and provide subject matter for thought and talk.

One day, having just returned from a sweep, I was examining my aircraft for possible damage when I looked up and saw a pair of piercing eyes, beneath bushy brows, watching intently. They belonged to an elderly gentleman wearing R.A.F. uniform with stove-pipe trousers, and with the largest number of gongs on his chest and the most scrambled egg on his hat that I have ever seen. He seated himself on a shooting-stick and told me to carry on. He turned out to be Marshal of the R.A.F. the Viscount Trenchard, Knight Grand Cross of the Bath, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order and it was he who had founded the R.A.F.

The squadron flew off to an armament practice camp for some air-firing exercises. Exploring the local countryside one evening we came across an attractive inn. Drinks were ordered, but when the time to pay for them arrived, the cost was simply terrific. The manager was sent for, and he explained that the reason for charging five shillings for a single whisky was because Clark Gable was staying at the inn. The squadron leader, who was renowned for his 'line shooting' exclaimed, "Well, I'm Squadron Leader X., D.S.O., D.F.C. and bar, and have shot down twenty-eight enemy aircraft. Now put the price of the beer up four-pence. Clark Gable, indeed!" As he finished speaking, the great Gable himself, wearing riding clothes, entered. He proved to be a very good sort, and we afterwards met him several times.

There was an excellent rough shoot nearby, and I paid a visit to the owner to see if permission could be obtained to use it. His wife told me that he was bedridden at the moment, but that he would be delighted to see me if I cared to come up to his bedroom. I was ushered up into the bedroom, where the gentleman was sitting up in bed drinking a large whisky and soda. He was three parts drunk, and by the side of his bed was a large table laden with a vast number of bottles. I have frequently seen public bars with a far smaller stock. He offered me a drink and was most kind and helpful. It transpired that he was kept in bed by a severe attack of gout, caused by excessive drinking, and I could readily believe it when he cheerfully told me he expected to be confined to bed for some time.

Sitting round in the mess one evening we were drinking hock, out of tankards, when somebody said:

"Do you realise we are drinking hock?"

"Why not? It tastes as good out of a tankard as out of a glass."

"No, what I mean is that it's a German drink."

"So it is; still, don't worry—we're interning it, aren't we?"

I was never fond of dancing, but my flight decided to visit a local 'hop' and so, of course, I came too. Dancing with a pleasant-looking young girl, I noticed that her hair smelt very strongly of hospitals. On being asked if she were a nurse she replied that she was, but how did I know? I replied that I thought she must be a nurse because she had such a kind face, and obviously a very sympathetic nature. She tittered at this rather laboured compliment, and told me that she worked at the local children's hospital.

“As a matter of fact,” she said, “I’m on duty tonight in the ward.”

“How on earth did you manage to get here, then?”

“Oh, it was easy. I just put some dope in the cocoa, and there won’t be another peep out of the little b—s until morning!”

There was another occasion when I slipped up rather badly on my judgment. We were flying at the time from an aerodrome not very far from Aldershot, and a few of us decided to go to one of the local theatres.

During the first half of the performance a combination of boredom and thirst drove me into a small bar by the side of the stage. Sitting in the bar was a very charming young lady, sipping a lemonade with exquisite refinement. It appeared that she was one of the artistes, and that her act opened the second half of the bill. We talked for a few minutes, then she had to go to get ready. She said that my companions and I must be sure to be in our seats when the curtain went up.

She disappeared through a door which led backstage. The intermission came and I was joined by my friends. I told them that I had just met an extraordinarily nice girl —those were my exact words—and that we must be sure to be promptly in our places at the end of the intermission. She was probably going to do something very special for our benefit.

The orchestra played the opening music for the second half; we were all in our seats. The curtains parted. There she stood, wearing an R.A.F. hat and nothing else. A banner behind her proclaimed the words, “Salute to the R.A.F.”

For weeks afterwards I was sick and tired of being asked, “Met any more extraordinarily nice girls lately?”

One of the squadron’s duties was convoy escort, an interesting and sometimes exciting job, especially as some of the naval anti-aircraft gunners were not very good at aircraft recognition and frequently opened fire at us as we flew towards them. We used to make strenuous efforts to exhibit our distinctive ellipsoidal wing shape, and fire off flares which conformed to the colour of the day.

Arrangements were made for one of the squadron pilots to spend three days on a convoy. He expected to pick up useful tips and intended to have some heart-to-heart talks with some of the gunners on the subject of recognition. He was rather looking forward to the trip, he said, it would be a nice rest cure after the strain of operational flying.

The first day out from port his ship was torpedoed and he spent the night on a raft. He decided to stick to flying in future, it was more restful.

An onlooker on the ground sees an aircraft soaring high up in the blue and envies the pilot his bird-like freedom; but the pilot, trussed up in his uncomfortable and cumbersome safety equipment and with a difficult and sometimes strenuous job to do, may well be envying the man on the ground.

Aerobatics throw a very great strain on the body, and ‘blacking out’ was a rather horrible sensation until you got used to it. Contrary to general belief, aerobatics were not usually employed in air-fighting, although we were trained to perform them. If we dived on to a German aircraft from behind, he would usually stuff his nose hard down. If we copied this manoeuvre in a Spitfire the engine cut, so we had to do a barrel roll as we dived to keep the engine running properly. At very high speed this was quite an effort. Later we had injection type carburettors and this manoeuvre became unnecessary.

I rather fancied myself as an aerobatic pilot, and when I was asked to show off the paces of a new aircraft to some Very Important Personages I was highly gratified.

Before the exhibition I practiced all the more spectacular evolutions, which included doing a prolonged slow roll while flying at high speed at a very low altitude across the aerodrome. Special permission had to be obtained to do this.

‘When I came to do the show in front of the V.I.P.’s, I had just got the aircraft over on to its back when it began to shudder violently. I was just on the verge of a high speed stall. Somehow the evolution was completed, though I almost scraped the ground with a wing and badly frightened both myself and the onlookers.

What had happened was that the engine had fouled and lost power, and I was not going quite fast enough to complete the stunt.

The V.I.P.’s did not notice anything wrong, but the station commander told me that his heart almost stopped when I did that slow roll. I told him truthfully that the fright he experienced was nothing to the shock I gave myself!

Mishaps were usually attributed to the machinations of a tribe of tiny, invisible men called ‘gremlins.’ It was always a gremlin who unscrewed the throttle nut just as you were taking off and nearly caused a crash. If you approached the airfield at too high a speed hundreds of little gremlins would hold up the plane in the air and run like mad with it so that you were unable to land.

After the war gremlins were demobilised, and are now busily engaged in turning down the volume of the car radio when you drive under a bridge, or in holding up the fronts of strapless evening gowns.

We had a pilot who was an inveterate conniver and could always ‘fix’ anything. One day his new orders came through. He was to go to a place in the extreme north of Scotland, and he did not want to go a bit. Not a moment was wasted in getting down to work. He telephoned a friend at the Air Ministry, he sent a telegram to an uncle at the War Office. Letters, telegrams, signals, phone calls, all were sent in a frantic effort to avoid this posting to the wilds.

Then we gently broke the news that he was not really posted at all, it was all a joke. It cured him of conniving for at least three days.

Landing after a sortie, one of the flight commanders had forgotten to turn his gun-button besel ring to the ‘safe’ position, and he fired his cannon by mistake when on the last leg of his approach. This narrowly missed some of the ground crew, and they were none too pleased about it.

A week later he did it again, but this time we were ready for him. Shortly after he landed a telephone message arrived from the local police, saying that terrible carnage had been wrought by exploding cannon shells in a nearby town. More details were to follow. The worried flight commander anxiously waited by the telephone until it rang again. This time there were some details of the destruction and he was most upset. A few minutes later yet another call announced that a bouncing baby had been blown out of its pram, and was still bouncing. It was only then that he realised he was having his leg pulled.

When my first tour of operations was completed I was sent on rest, and for a short while taught air-fighting tactics at a training establishment not far from Swansea. The camp was in a rather remote spot, and life there seemed to be in danger of getting a little dull after the hectic excitement of a squadron.

Close by was a house belonging to some friends, a young married couple who very kindly allowed me to use their home. They were often away, and used to leave the front door key hung up for me in a shed in the garden. I used to come in sometimes in the evenings and sit by the fire; it made a pleasant change from the noisy mess, where the piano was pounded incessantly, often with the radio going full blast as well, and it was considered bad form to relax.

One evening three friends and I drove some miles away to the nearest large town and painted it a delicate shade of pink. Unfortunately the pubs closed at ten p.m. and we had nowhere to go. A kindly barman had sold us a bottle of whisky, and so I suggested adjourning to my friends' house to finish it off. When we got there no one was in, so I went out to the shed in the garden to get the key. For some mysterious reason it was not on the nail; however, it was a simple matter to open the front door, using a piece of celluloid from the front of somebody's wallet.

Glasses were produced and the corkscrew sought. When I came back to the lounge with that highly useful implement in my hand I discovered that the bottle had already been opened, by the simple expedient of banging it on the wall until the cork flew out. Most unfortunately the house did not seem to be very well built, and in the process of the banging operations the bottle had gone clean through the wall. Still, the cork was out, and one could always hang a picture over the hole.

We settled down to drink the whisky, utilising two glasses, a cut-glass bowl and a scent spray to drink it out of. Apparently if you drink out of a scent spray the spirit gets atomised, which is a good thing, though in all fairness I must say that I do not recommend it.

Next morning I telephoned the lady of the house at her office, and told her what had happened. She was glad to hear that we had enjoyed ourselves, but unfortunately she and her husband had now moved and had left the house a few days before. She had intended to tell me, but it had slipped her mind. We had therefore been trespassing. She promised to ring up her landlord at once and explain what had happened; everything would be all right then.

A few days later I had a telephone call from the station adjutant, who told me to keep out of sight for goodness' sake, because there was a police officer on the camp looking for me, with a warrant for my arrest for house-breaking. It appeared that one of the neighbours had recognized me as I left the house. The landlord had arrived the following morning, had been buttonholed by the neighbour, and the result was that I was now a fugitive from justice.

Once more I telephoned my friend, and she said that she could not explain what had happened. The whole story had been told to the landlord, who had quite understood. She gave me his address, and I went to see him, taking great care to avoid the police.

It seemed advisable to find out something about this landlord first, so I went to the pub nearest to his house and did some detective work. Discreet enquiries produced the information that his nearest and dearest friend was sitting in the far corner. I made his acquaintance, plied him with gin and peppermint, and learnt a great deal about his friend and my enemy, the landlord.

It took quite a lot of gin and pep to get to the truth of the matter, but at length I discovered that the landlord was really only a tenant himself, and was not allowed to sublet. When the real landlord had discovered the damage to the wall, and heard from the neighbour that I had broken into the place, he at once got in touch with his tenant. The tenant of course disclaimed all knowledge of the occurrence.

The police were informed, and the warrant issued. When my friend contacted the man she supposed to be the true landlord, he was afraid that the fact of his illegal subletting would become known, and so did not pass the true facts on to the proper authorities.

Armed with this knowledge, I interviewed the false landlord. I told him that unless he told the police what really happened so that they would drop the charges against me, I could not be responsible for keeping his secret. He agreed so quickly, and seemed so agitated, that I think he must have had a lot more to hide than I realised.

CHAPTER 3

THE REST PERIOD WAS OVER, and I reported for duty with a fighter squadron which was going to take part in the invasion of France.

We lived under canvas on an airfield in the south of England, at least we were supposed to, in order to 'harden' us up, but we did not take very kindly to this idea, and many of us preferred to sleep in London in comfortable hotels, arriving at the camp first thing in the morning. We thought that it was a good thing to enjoy luxury while we could still do so, anticipating that we would have hard living forced upon us soon enough—and how right we were.

The squadron motto (unofficial) was *Nil illegitimus carborundum*, which roughly translated means 'Don't let the blighters grind you down.'

We were expecting to do some very high altitude work, so I had to undergo a decompression test. The test took place at Oxford, and I was put into a steel chamber—the air pressure inside being gradually reduced to simulate high altitude conditions. When we got to the equivalent of about 30,000 feet I had bad pains and had to have the pressure increased. Another attempt was made, but I still couldn't cope, I definitely got 'bends,' due to nitrogen bubbles in the blood.

On arriving back at the squadron they asked me if I'd had the test and I said I had, and that was all there was to it. I flew regularly at 40,000 feet without any trace of the 'bends.' I suppose the medical people must have forgotten to notify the squadron that I'd failed the test.

Naturally, when eight miles up, the pilot was completely dependent on his oxygen supply. If that failed he would quickly lose consciousness. We had lost two pilots who just flew away and never came back, and their loss was attributed to oxygen failure.

One day I was flying alone 40,000 feet over the Belgian coast. It was a perfectly glorious day. I could see for two hundred and fifty miles. Far below a day-bombing raid was taking place, and away in the distance the Isle of Wight was clearly visible. Next thing I knew was that I was flying along a very long, very straight road, only a couple of hundred feet up. I had no idea where I was, or how I got there. Now and again light flak would open up at me, and once I flew over a town and all hell broke loose. It was exactly like a dream, I had no sensation of danger or even of reality. After a while I realised I was being called on the radio. Climbing a little I spoke to the controller. He realised what had happened and 'talked' me back to base. Apparently I sounded exactly as though I were drunk. I had experienced a complete oxygen failure and the miracle was that I had survived. I was unable to read my compass or set my directional gyro, so he told me to keep the sun on my left and fly steadily, giving me further directions as I got nearer home. The radio conversation had been listened in to by the squadron, and I expected to get my leg pulled unmercifully, but not a word was said, except that they were glad to see me back.

My best friend at this time was Woody. He was very tall and dark, with a fierce little moustache and a great deal of charm. A first-class artist, he intended to specialise in technical art after the war. Very much a ladies' man, he would somehow manage to give a girl the impression that he was possessed of infinite attraction. I can see him now, returning to the mess ante-room after answering the fifth telephone call from a girl that evening, grinning all over his face, and saying, "Poor little moths!"

When D-Day came, Woody was an early casualty. He was shot down straight into the sea, just off the Normandy beachhead.

Very soon we were under canvas alongside an airstrip in Normandy. There was quite a lot of fighting on the ground and sometimes we felt much safer in the air. Most of us had dysentery badly, but morale

was very high. We used to fly drop-tanks full of beer in from England, and Camembert cheese soon found its way on to the tables of London hotels.

When we were first flying from the beach-head we slept under canvas, at least we had tents, and as soon as the dysentery got better we slept in them. As we moved across France it was sometimes possible to get into billets, and on one occasion we found ourselves sleeping in a very elegant château. Only the previous night our beds had been occupied by Luftwaffe pilots.

There was a fine ballroom, and obviously the only possible thing to do was to have a party. Preferably a party to end all parties. This it very nearly did.

Drink was no problem at all. Someone disappeared with a jeep and turned up a few hours later with a vast quantity of assorted wines, spirits and liqueurs. Obviously it would be only polite to ask some of the local ladies to come along, and in a burst of over-enthusiasm someone asked the mayor and mayoress, together with a few other important locals.

There was a young ladies' finishing school in the neighbourhood, and our commanding officer invited the mistresses and girls to come along to this very select ball we were giving. To avoid the possibility of a woman-shortage, the M.T. officer sent a couple of motor coaches down to the town, and they came back filled with the more friendly type of girl.

The atmosphere at the beginning of the evening was hardly conducive to conviviality. The company was arrayed in disapproving groups, all glaring at each other, and the evening appeared doomed to complete failure. Then the champagne cup was served. This far-from-innocuous beverage had been made from constituents of an unprecedented variety and potency. True, the taste was nauseating, but the results were admirable. The company thawed like the proverbial snowball in hell, and an excellent time was had by all.

The headmistress of the finishing school gave orders for her girls to be taken home before they were finished entirely, but fortunately the M.T. officer could not understand her, and shortly afterwards she gracefully passed into merciful oblivion. I had the pleasure and privilege of seeing someone bite off the tie of an Air Marshal, and the mayor, who was having the time of his life, was heard to assure the company that the Luftwaffe never gave parties like this.

The following morning I was asked if I would mind flying a couple of U.S. Air Force pilots back to their base. They had crash-landed a Flying-Fortress on our airfield the night before, had of course attended the party, and now wanted to return home.

We climbed into the Auster, and one American said to the other: "You know, I've never flown in one of these before". His buddy replied: "Me neither". "That's an odd coincidence", I said, "Me neither".

We all laughed heartily and I really believe that the American thought I was kidding. However, I soon freed them completely from any such illusions.

Taking a look round the cockpit, there seemed to be one or two unusual features. The throttle lever was a knob which had to be pulled in and out and worked in the reverse direction to that of my Spitfire, the wheel-brakes were worked by little buttons on the floor, and, of course, there was no flap lever to worry about.

I started the engine, which sounded like a bag of nails to me, taxied out, and then I opened the throttle fully, and we started the take-off. Although I had never flown in one of these aircraft before, I had always had the idea that they needed a very short take-off run. This particular plane seemed to be the exception, which was a pity because the crashed Fortress was at the far end of the field and would have to be cleared.

The tail came up, but we were still far from reaching flying speed. I gave a push to the throttle, and the roar of the engine promptly died. I had closed it by mistake. Hastily I re-opened the throttle and somehow heaved the aircraft and its three petrified occupants off the deck. For several long moments it seemed that we were not going to clear the Fortress, but we did, and slowly we gained height.

I set course for the American base, but the indicated air speed seemed very slow. We were flying straight and level on full throttle and only doing about seventy-five miles per hour. The Fortress pilot in the seat behind me tapped me on the shoulder, and licked his dry lips: "Tell me," he shouted, "do you always fly with full flap?" He pointed out of the window, and there I could see the flaps were fully down, in the landing position. There was a long lever just above my head, on the left, which I had overlooked when familiarising myself with the cockpit lay-out.

I raised the flaps, trying rather unsuccessfully to look as though I had intended to anyway, and finished the trip with a landing which was more of an arrival than a three-pointer.

Now and again we would help out the security officer by giving a hand with the censoring of letters. I was greatly intrigued to notice that it seemed customary to put strange combinations of initial letters on the back of the envelope.

F.I.N.L.A.N.D., H.O.L.L.A.N.D., I.T.A.L.Y., S.W.A.L.K.—all very mysterious. Apparently they referred to the phrases: 'Friendship is never lost and never dies,' 'Hope our love lingers and never dies,' and 'I trust and love you.' S.W.A.L.K. always seemed to me to take a lot for granted from the censor, who had to stick down the envelope. It stood for 'Sealed with a loving kiss'. B.O.L.T.O.P. I never did fathom.

Near one of our airfields was a ramp which had been used by the Germans for launching flying bombs. A friend and I decided to have a good look at this, and we borrowed a utility truck and set off. Leaving the truck at the roadside, we explored the site, and suddenly, without the slightest warning, there was a deafening explosion, and I was knocked flat on my face. About fifty yards away I could see my companion. He had stepped on an anti-tank mine and exploded it. Incredibly enough he was only slightly injured. Both eardrums were perforated, and he had to come off flying, but his body was only slightly cut and bruised. Our utility truck, several hundred yards away, had the roof blown clean off!

Paris was just being liberated. Accompanied by three other members of the squadron I set off in a jeep to see the fun. It was a long drive, and dusk was falling as we drove into the city. We were greeted by members of the Maquis, who wore armbands and brandished a selection of firearms. They told us that Paris was now free, although we might still run into a certain amount of street fighting.

Everyone seemed to be overjoyed to see us, and we were well and truly fêted, despite the fact that the public electricity supply was cut off. Once we got mixed up with some street fighting, and the headlamps of the jeep were shot out, but little damage resulted. It was an unforgettable night.

We had a lot of fun with the Frenchmen translating R.A.F. expressions into literal French. *Piece of cake*, *round the bend*, *wizard prang*. They found the last particularly difficult to comprehend until they learned that the engine of a Spitfire was called a 'Merlin.'

In return we were taught some useful phrases of *argot*, which years later came in handy for dealing with French taxi drivers.

We arranged to rendezvous at dawn at the Avenue George V, but only two of my companions returned to the jeep. We were just debating whether to leave the third to his fate when we heard a breathless shout and he came running at top speed towards us, hotly pursued by an irate Frenchman who brandished a bottle and seemed to hold a grudge of some sort. We swung our prodigal aboard and hastily started on the long drive back to the airfield.

On the very last trip of my second tour of operations my aircraft received a direct hit from flak, full in the engine. I was on a low-level attack, and was east of the Rhine. The engine cut dead and another shell tore a hole in the port wing. I was too low to use a parachute and I was convinced that I'd 'had it.' I was obviously going to have a very high-speed crash, and even if I survived I would get some very rough handling from the German troops. I could hardly expect them to behave in a particularly civilised manner towards the pilot who a few moments before had been killing their comrades with cannon shells.

So this was it. Well, at least I had the satisfaction of discovering that in the face of death I felt no desire at all to pray. I felt an absolutely certain conviction that this would be the very last thing I should ever know, that beyond lay complete, perpetual oblivion.

The plane was almost, but not quite, out of control. I jettisoned the cockpit hood and managed to pull out of the dive just before I hit the ground. A few moments later I was a prisoner, having had a miraculous escape.

The German troops were well disciplined and behaved perfectly. I was taken to a farmhouse under a strong guard, having sustained only minor injuries. So began my adventures in Germany.

CHAPTER 4

FOR A FEW DAYS I WAS HELD IN THE FARMHOUSE. I was put up in a loft containing a dirty straw palliasse, a vast number of rats, and some very affectionate lice. Food was practically non-existent, but one of the guards, a friendly Austrian who was convinced that Germany was 'Kaput,' used to smuggle me in a little of his own food. Usually it was a rather weird-tasting stew, full of garlic.

The Austrian was a trombone player, and at night often used to play in the band at the officers' mess, not far away. Jazz was considered decadent, and therefore forbidden, so it was years since he had learned anything new worth playing. It was to my advantage to keep on friendly terms with him, so I wrote out a simplified piano score of all I could remember of a tune called "Getting Sentimental Over You," which makes an excellent trombone solo. For good measure I couldn't resist putting in a few bars of "Colonel Bogey," a popular song which was one long, effective sneer at the Nazis. My stay at the farmhouse ended before my score had been arranged for the full band, so I never found out whether those German officers ever recognised the trombone playing "and the same to you" at them. But the possibility was pleasant to think about—childish, perhaps, but it cheered me up a bit.

My idea was to escape when they took me away from the farmhouse, since I was now comparatively near the frontier and any move would bring me a long way further inside Germany, where escape would be a thousand times more difficult. The friendly Austrian gave me advance warning the night before I was to be taken away, and answered my questions about the local topography. He then asked me my address in England, and said he would write after the war. Surprisingly enough, he did. He is now a member of a broadcasting band in Vienna.

That last night in the farmhouse I slept even less than usual. At dawn in came the sergeant. "Raus, raus," he shouted, and I jumped nervously to my feet. The escort fell in outside, and I was marched off up the road. I knew we had to pass over a small railway embankment; as soon as we reached it I vaulted over the low parapet and dived into one of the viaduct tunnels.

My object was to cross underneath the railway line through the tunnel, but unfortunately I had picked a tunnel that did not go right through the embankment and I was easily caught.

They put me into a car for the second stage of the journey. In one way, it was a pleasant and satisfactory trip, because it demonstrated the complete air-superiority of the Allies. One of the guards had to ride on one of the front wings of the car, lying at full length on his back and scanning the sky for our aircraft. A line of our rocket-carrying Tempests came over. There were about six of them, flying in formation abreast and about one hundred and fifty yards apart. There were frantic cries of "Achtung" and my captors stopped the car and piled out almost before it had stopped. They told me to stay inside, but they crouched in a ditch with their guns trained on me in case I tried to escape.

One of the Tempests peeled off, and I rather expected him to shoot up the car, perhaps with cannon fire—it was hardly worth a rocket. Then another, and another, peeled off and I saw that they were attacking a ground target a little distance away. I am not sure what the target was, I think it was a flying-bomb site. There were many round there.

When the attack was over the Germans got back into the car, trying to look as though they had intended to get out anyway. I asked them where the Luftwaffe was, but they never told me.

The next transfer was to a train. My escort was a heavily-armed private soldier and a sergeant in charge. I knew they had been waned to take particular care that I did not escape, and so was slightly surprised when we reached a small station and they both got out, leaving me alone in the compartment. I should not have been so unsuspecting. I opened the door, of course, and dropped down on to the railway line, but I had hardly taken more than a few steps when they opened fire at me from the window of the next compartment, where they had been waiting in ambush. I managed to take cover by dropping behind some rails, so I was still undamaged when they caught me again. This time they were taking no chances. They handcuffed me, and took away my flying boots. I was very glad then that I had on my two pairs of socks.

The handcuffs came off when I was delivered to a small transit camp. For a few days I was shut up in a small room with fourteen other prisoners, mainly British and Canadian officers and men. Each day we received one very small dark brown loaf to be divided amongst the fifteen prisoners. We managed this with the aid of a penknife which someone was clever enough to have retained.

As the senior officer, in rank if not years, it was my doubtful privilege to cut up the loaf into fifteen equal portions. This was a very lengthy process, and everyone in the room watched me closely. First of all the loaf would be cut exactly in half, then each half would be bisected, and so on until I had sixteen equal slices. We each then had one slice and the ceremony was repeated with the slice left over. This left a tiny square, one-sixteenth of a slice in size, and this was given to the man who was deemed by the majority to have the smallest ration.

Two more prisoners arrived, but most fortunately for me I left the same day, and was put on a train for Frankfurt. At least I avoided the problem of having to divide the loaf up into seventeen equal pieces.

We arrived at Frankfurt just as an air-raid was starting. We all had to go to a shelter, the first time I had ever been in one. I was not very anxious to be recognised as an R.A.F. pilot. Unfortunately the German civilians noticed me, but incredibly enough I was not molested. In my halting German I told them that I was not a bomber pilot, but a fighter pilot. I told them I hated air-raids, which was quite true, and that my mother and father had recently been killed in a raid on London, which was quite untrue. It seemed to do the trick, and the angry growling died down. Somehow I don't think my escort would have worried very much if I had been lynched.

I wonder what would have happened to a Luftwaffe pilot discovered in an air-raid shelter in London during the blitz.

I noticed that when my guards bought themselves sandwiches at the railway station they had to give up food coupons for them. They all seemed very badly off for supplies generally; even the bandages which covered my minor injuries were *ersatz*. They were made of crepe paper and kept slipping. The coffee, which was the only drink I was given, tasted as though it had been made of acorns. Most probably it had.

From Frankfurt I was taken to the main interrogation centre, where I was to have a very unpleasant time for six weeks. I was searched on arrival and the search was most certainly not lacking in thoroughness. It was interesting to observe that they knew exactly where to look for many of the more secret gadgets we carried. Two of my buttons were magnetised so that they could be used as compasses. They found these, and also another tiny compass I had hidden under a wound dressing.

I was put into a tiny cell, containing a plank bed and a very small, thin blanket. After a preliminary interview, when I gave my name, rank and number, I got three weeks of solitary confinement. The first week was absolute hell. I had never sat still before with nothing to do, and the days passed incredibly slowly. I had no idea how long it was going on for, but sincerely hoped it would not be very much longer. By the end of the first week I began to get accustomed to it and after three weeks I was quite prepared to continue indefinitely. I would ponder on deep, philosophical questions, such as “Who am I, and what is it within me wants to know?”

I later discovered that someone else once spent fifty-three years in deep contemplation on this particular problem, without finding the answer, so perhaps it is not surprising that I failed to solve the mystery myself.

I had no idea how long the solitary confinement was going to last, and I never discovered whether it was a punishment for my attempts to escape, or whether it was a method of trying to soften me up so that at my next interview I should be a little bit more talkative.

Suddenly I was sent for and informed that I was now officially a prisoner of war, coming under the Geneva Convention. This meant that they were not going to interrogate me any further.

Next followed a few days in a transit camp. One night we had the usual air-raid warning, and Mosquito pathfinder aircraft flew over and neatly ringed the entire camp with target-marker flares. This caused consternation among the bomber boys, some of whom sweated visibly. The fighter pilots maintained that as we had been picked out as the target we were obviously in the only safe place for miles around. Everyone knew that when it came to accurate bombing Bomber Command just hadn't a clue. Soon the main force was overhead, and bombs fell all around, but not one fell inside the camp. Some months later, in the prison camp, I met a pilot who had been shot down on this particular raid. He said that in the briefing they had been given the exact location of the camp, and it had been carefully marked out by the pathfinders to avoid killing any of us.

I was moved again. In a mass exodus, one hundred and fifty officers and men, mostly British and American air-crew, were marched to the railway station. We were packed into one coach of ten compartments, each intended to hold eight people. This was to be our home for the next five days and nights. Once more I was very glad of my slender knowledge of the language. I was made interpreter, a job which gave me an opportunity to stretch my legs on occasion.

We organised a glee club of about ten voices, mainly Americans who had learned part-singing at college. I can never hear “Down in the Valley” or “Grandfather Clock” without vivid memories of that journey.

One of the prisoners, fresh from England, told us how the newspapers had recently reported that a Member of Parliament, travelling on the night train to Scotland, had complained to the House that the

travel authorities had forced him to give up his reserved berth to a German prisoner of war, a Luftwaffe pilot. This made us think a bit....

Miraculously, a few Red Cross parcels appeared, otherwise there would have been no food at all.

After a great deal of shatteringly vigorous shunting, and after having been attached to a series of freight trains, we arrived at our destination. We were in the prison camp, official prisoners of war at last.

It was a strange environment in which I found myself. For a time I was regarded with suspicion, as were all new *Kriegies* (an abbreviation of the German word for prisoners of war). Later I met several fighter pilots who had 'got the chop' from my own wing, and they vouched for me. I might so easily have been a spy. There was certainly enough undercover activity going on in the camp to keep several spies fully engaged, and now and again one was discovered.

In our particular camp, Stalag Luft I, up near the Baltic between Lübeck and Rostock, the supply of Red Cross food parcels was very limited indeed, and the meagre German rations were almost uneatable. It was very difficult at first to think about anything other than food. We used to sit around, describing meals we had eaten, and meals we intended to eat in the future. We dreamed of food, we argued about food. We kicked ourselves for having refused second helpings in the past. It seemed impossible to read a book without coming across mention of food. Sometimes we would try not to think about eating, but this was about as effective as deciding not to think about the pain when having a tooth drilled by some particularly sadistic dentist.

Clothing was another luxury in short supply. Most of us arrived in the camp with nothing except the clothes we stood up in; often these were torn and burnt.

Scene: A small room in one of the huts. Several newcomers are talking to a senior officer. Enter a recent arrival. His trousers were burnt away when he was shot down and he is wearing a pair of long woollen khaki underpants. "You are improperly dressed," says the senior officer, and explains: "No spurs."

One man was alleged to have baled out carrying a ready packed suitcase, which he had thoughtfully, if pessimistically, brought with him in the aircraft in case of emergency.

A few clothing parcels got through from home, and some came from the International Red Cross. One unfortunate, after waiting nearly two years for a clothing parcel, at last received one. He opened it in eager anticipation and found—white tie and tails! His relatives had thought he might need the dress suit "in case you want to go to a party." There was not even a bar of chocolate in a pocket.

A hand-knitted sweater was received by a grateful airman prisoner through the Red Cross. The woman who had knitted it had enclosed her address, and the recipient used up one of his precious letter cards to write and thank her. Months later came her reply: "I am sorry to hear that you received my sweater, as I had knitted it for a *fighting* man."

This sort of thing was unfortunately not rare. People at home were amazingly thoughtless and cruel. A pilot whose aircraft had been shot down in flames over Berlin had been the only member of his crew to get out alive. Months later in the prison camp he received a small parcel. It was from some of the relatives of his dead comrades, and it contained just some white feathers and a tin of rat poison.

A wife wrote, "I am as happy as can be without you," and the unfortunate recipient of this information had to wait many months until the ambiguity was resolved.

Equally ambiguous but less disturbing was the letter from a kindly aunt who enclosed a calendar and wrote, "I hope you find this very useful as it has several years on it."

A flying officer's wife wrote saying she was sure he wouldn't mind, but she had lent his golf clubs to a German prisoner of war, who had become an honorary member of the local club. He wrote back saying that on no account would he lend his precious clubs to a blasted goon, and she was to get them back immediately. His letter was forwarded to the golf club and he received a letter from the committee telling him that, owing to his unsportsmanlike behaviour, he was no longer a member.

The camp was enclosed by the usual mass of barbed wire. High wooden watch towers were spaced at short intervals around the enclosure, and these were manned by guards with machine-guns. About four feet inside the barbed wire mass was a single strand. Anyone going beyond this strand was shot at, and the guards shot to kill.

Two squadron leaders, one of whom had been a prisoner for several years, the other a recent arrival, shared a room. They discovered they were both married to the same girl. The next morning, exercising in the compound, the newcomer solved the problem by touching the wire. He was instantly shot dead.

Our living quarters were wooden huts that had been divided into small rooms. Each room housed eight occupants. After a few months in the same room, men would get on each other's nerves, and when they could stand the propinquity no longer would move to other rooms. Each man seemed to have a repertoire of about three stories, which he would tell over and over again until warned, kindly or unkindly, to shut up or get out.

Some had strange stories to tell of how they were taken prisoner. Two had fallen out of their aircraft without parachutes and lived. One of these had landed in a pinewood and had slid unharmed between two trees; he had a document confirming this from a German officer who had witnessed the incident. The other had not been so lucky, landing in deep snow and shattering both legs, but at least he was alive.

The most unusual story was that of a young American. His story was that he had been learning to fly in Florida, and during a solo training flight over the sea had been shot down by machine-gun fire from a submarine. They had fished him out of the water and taken him back to Germany as a prisoner.

The camp had evolved its own economic system. The basis of the currency was one cigarette, and an elaborate system of barter was built up. If you had some lemon curd in your half of a food parcel but preferred jam, you could go to a trader. He would take your lemon curd and give you jam, but as the former was worth ten cigarettes and the latter only eight, you would have two cigarettes change coming to you, less one, which was the trader's percentage and chargeable on all transactions.

You could sell your watch for cigarettes and buy food with them, or you could save up your food and buy a watch. Everything had its price.

From time to time the occupants of a hut would be turned out into the compound for the best part of a day, while the Germans searched for escape material, signs of tunnelling, concealed radios, or other illegalities.

After one such search a guard told us that one trader was found to have a stock of over 100,000 cigarettes!

We divided ourselves up into "combines" for messing purposes. Each room had a small iron stove. When there was anything to cook we cooked it on the stove, when we had any fuel. One or two prisoners became interested in cooking and were very adept at producing wonderful dishes out of the oddest ingredients. Their efforts were rather wasted because we were so hungry that it did not matter how the food was cooked or served. We had no difficulty whatever in eating raw potato peelings.

Food was served in cups and plates made of used tins from food parcels. Often they were very well shaped, and the edges were all carefully stiffened by being rolled over wire. The wire, in some mysterious way, had been magically spirited from the barbed wire enclosure.

Our daily bread ration consisted of two small slices. One day someone discovered pieces of broken glass in both of the small slices of his daily bread ration. Everyone carefully inspected his own slices, and several more bits of glass were found. A complaint was put in, and it was discovered that the German baker had recently lost some relatives in the bombing at Hamburg, so by way of retaliation he had put a few pieces of broken glass through the mincer, and used it deliberately in his bread-making. He refused to say how long he'd been doing it, but promised to stop forthwith. No one seemed any the worse, though we were always a bit worried after this when anything we were eating crunched.

At one period we had no Red Cross parcels at all, and all the cats in camp vanished, never to return. We ate them. Unfortunately we had no fuel either and so they had to be eaten raw, but there is very little that you cannot eat if you are hungry enough. One officer remarked that when the folks back home asked him how he had been treated, he would now be able to tell them that he had had a taste of the cat!

In the American parcels there were large round tins of a very creamy milk powder called "Klim." A favourite dish was known as "Glop." Based on Klim, it included condensed milk and anything else that was either sweet or sticky, or preferably both. After a good deal of saving up of ingredients, together with some careful bartering, it was possible to make a cake. As there was no flour, crushed biscuits were used, and dried prunes were used as fruit. The whole was topped with icing made of Klim and tasted quite wonderful.

Some of the 'combines' were adept at making 'Kriegie Brew.' This extremely potent fluid was double distilled from carefully hoarded prunes, raisins and sugar. On New Year's Eve, 1945, we were shut up in the huts at dusk as usual with guards and dogs patrolling. Just before midnight we were horrified to see the swaying figure of an exceedingly inebriated prisoner approach the foot of one of the watch towers by the wire. Searchlights were turned on him, and at any moment we expected to hear the machine-guns open up. He shouted up to the box:

"Do you speak English?"

"Yes, a leetle."

"Well, then, f * * * you!"

Turning, he ran like mad to the hut, hopped back in through the open window and all was quiet again.

It was interesting to observe the way in which different people adapted themselves to their environment. Some would be obviously hating every minute of their captivity. They could never settle down, never read a book; they just paced ceaselessly back and forth, or plotted some fantastic escape scheme that could never work. It was very unsettling to be in the company of these restless ones.

At the opposite extreme were those who apparently relished the opportunity of catching up on their education, and would spend every waking moment poring over books. People would get crazes; they might suddenly decide to take up pig-farming, study books on the subject, and talk and think of nothing but that wonderful pig-farm which would make their fortunes after the war. Then the pig-farmer-to-be would meet someone who knew all about it, cold water would be poured on his ideas, all his plans would be jettisoned, and he would cheerfully decide to become a veterinary surgeon. This would keep him quiet for weeks until the next craze.

One ingenious soul managed to become completely absorbed in transforming a heap of Klim tins into a clock. One tin, filled with water, made the weight which drove the clock, and other tins made the

wheels. Each tooth of each wheel, of course, had to be cut by hand. The clock, mechanism and all, was made entirely out of tins, wire and string.

When it was completed the very proud constructor insisted on showing it to everyone until it became a bit of a bore. Several of us gravely marched into his room just before the hour and said we had come to hear the clock strike. He was rather crestfallen, and had to admit that it did not strike. We told him that a clock that did not strike was absolutely useless—anyone could make an *ordinary* clock. We had thought there was something *special* about it. That day he started working on a striking version and was still hard at it when the war finished.

Many people were studying philosophy and religion. For years I had tried to avoid church parades—usually unsuccessfully—on the grounds that, I was a Buddhist. I even had “Buddhist” on my identity tags. Now I discovered to my surprise that much of my faith, such as it was, actually coincided with Buddhist teaching. One man, a deep-thinking university graduate, shot down in the early stages of the war, had spent years studying religions for purposes of comparisons. I was surprised to learn from him that seventy-five per cent of the world’s population believes implicitly in reincarnation.

In general we were tolerant of one another’s foibles, or learned to ignore them. A small group of spiritualists were an exception to this rule, in spite of their impressive séances. They were so unpopular in their hut that their neighbours made every effort to put an end to their activities.

The least unsettled of all the groups were the bridge and poker players. They would carry on marathon games for days at a time, and seemed quite oblivious of their surroundings.

A popular method of passing the time, for the rest of us, was by holding debates. Once we had a debate on a vital aspect of Woman. The subject of the debate was “That this house considers that the advantage of the pneumatic quality of the fat ones exceeds the advantage of the agility of the skinny ones.”

The camp was a breeding ground for so much gossip and speculation that by comparison a country village would seem like a Trappist monastery. Every day the most incredible rumours would be circulated by the worst-informed and nastiest-minded grapevine that can ever have existed since time began. One such rumour had to do with the ‘bad treatment’ of the Russian prisoners kept in one section of the camp. Certainly some of the senior officers amongst them were forced by the Germans to clean out our latrines, a filthy job if there ever was one. This was the nearest we ever came to substantiating information that came over the grapevine.

We habitually referred to the Germans as goons, until one day one of them discovered exactly what a goon was. He found a picture of one, and was by no means flattered. The Camp Commandant was informed, and shown one of the American comic strip cartoons containing the horrid figure. The edict then went forth that anyone referring to a German as a goon would be severely punished.

A few days later one R.A.F. officer incautiously and rather too loudly spoke of a guard as a goon. He was hauled off before the Commandant. After a bit of quick thinking, the officer explained that, far from being a derogatory term, G.O.O.N. was a recognised abbreviation for German Officer Or Non-commissioned officer. He got away with it, deservedly, we thought.

We Kriegies en masse must have been a stimulating sight for a newcomer. Almost everyone sported some variety of eccentric headgear, not only highly coloured but fantastic in shape or size. The really startling effects, however, were achieved by those who combined their original millinery with carefully cultivated whiskers. There were large black beards, bifurcated red ones, long wispy flaxen ones, exaggerated mutton-chops, and one phenomenon of Nature that looked like nothing so much as an explosion in a mattress factory.

Many men shaved their heads. The theory was that shaving would stimulate growth, which it never did, but the by-product was worth having—it saved the trouble of keeping the hair free from ‘mechanised dandruff,’ our name for head lice.

A squad of Kriegies was always at its most spectacular on the morning roll-call parade. There were always a number of very ‘regimental’ types who somehow managed to appear absolutely immaculate, brown kid gloves and all, and who gazed with a disapproving eye at the raggle-taggle collection of hirsute oddities who lounged nonchalantly in very crooked lines. I can even remember seeing a figure on parade in pyjamas, carrying a cup of cocoa and reading a book!

The two officially organised occupations in the camp were the courses of lectures, classes, and practical work, and the camp theatre. I conducted a class in Automobile Engineering for seventy to eighty pupils from January, 1945, until we were released. I never took part in the camp theatre. I was asked to play a female part in one play, but I refused without hesitation. Accepting the role, letting my hair grow so that I would make a realistic appearance on stage, would have been a public declaration of homosexuality. Somewhat the same problem had faced me once before, while still at school, but at school I had been virtually ordered to put on skirts, and everyone had known I could not refuse. At camp, it was important to make my stand perfectly clear, and I had no doubts about where I stood—I had no homosexual tendencies whatever; I was masculine, I thought, in every way that mattered.

It was a favourite joke in the camp to say, “Home before Christmas or homo before Easter,” but there was really only a very small amount of overt homosexuality. In some cases, the homosexuals formed their own ‘combines.’ As always, they had made things more difficult for me by taking it for granted that I was one of their number.

One day, while tramping round the compound in the thick dust for exercise, I was approached by a tall, very handsome man. He really was strikingly good-looking, and he asked me if I minded if he walked round with me. As we talked he took my arm. I resisted this at once, then apologised and explained that I had a ‘thing’ about such contacts. He expressed some surprise, as he had been absolutely convinced that I was a homosexual. He freely admitted that he was one himself, although married to a very beautiful girl, an American model, and they had a child. He had been a prisoner for over four years, and had escaped several times, once almost reaching the Swiss frontier before being recaptured.

We became very great friends, though always absolutely platonic. He came into my hut, and joined my combine. We would spend long, happy hours discussing every subject under the sun together, had a very great deal in common and were absolutely *en rapport*.

Then one day, without preamble, he announced that on April 18th he was going to die. Naturally I was quite worried about this as he was not the sort of person to joke about such a serious thing. He was absolutely convinced that on this exact date he would pass on. It was not that he particularly wanted to die, just that he was certain he would.

It was a long while before I went to sleep on the night of the 17th, and I woke very early the next morning. The shutters were open, and across the room I could see him, lying in his top bunk on a thin straw palliasso, with his one threadbare blanket over him. He seemed to be breathing, though, and I thought I had really been very stupid to worry about him. The other occupants of the room woke up and gazed enquiringly at me. I gave them the thumbs up sign and they seemed relieved. The figure in the top bunk still lay peacefully, then suddenly sat up. For a moment it was impossible to grasp what had happened. He was not dead, but he might just as well have been. His soul had left his body, but the body still lived. He was raving mad.

For some time before this we had been hearing the sound of bombing in the distance, and in the middle of April the distinctive rumble of artillery was added. The Germans became more and more

worried, and we became more and more cheerful. Finally came the day, May the 5th, when the goons withdrew and the Russians arrived.

Weeks earlier we had begun to hoard the Red Cross parcels. Now we descended upon our store of food with loud whoops of joyous anticipation, and broke it open. Now at last we could have that gargantuan meal that we had all looked forward to for so long. Back in the hut we opened two food parcels and planned a menu. Soup was the obvious first course, and we each sat down to a homemade tin plate full of hot soup. Not one of us could get more than halfway through it! We were so unused to food that our stomachs could hold no more. We didn't want to eat another thing. Two Kriegies, who decided to stuff themselves anyway, died that night.

The Russians brought us some fresh meat, so fresh in fact that it walked in, saying "Moo."

The slaughtering and cutting up were carried out by an American ex-cowboy. The meat was then inspected by an R.A.F. officer who was a government meat inspector in civilian life, being a qualified veterinary surgeon and sanitary inspector. The expert declared the meat quite unfit for human consumption. It was then cooked and eaten. It tasted wonderful, although it could have done with a little more cooking. The cowboy said, with his mouth full, that he'd known meat worse than that get better.

An R.A.F. officer said, "This is the first time for four years that I can honestly say I have eaten better than my dog at home."

The Russians were a mixed crowd. The officers were very pleasant and easy to get on with, but some of the private soldiers were horrible creatures. They had dull, slab-like faces with Mongolian eyes, and one or two looked as though they were fugitives from the zoo.

There were a lot of very young non-commissioned officers. They appeared to be about sixteen years of age, but were probably nearer twenty. They had smart uniforms, with epaulettes and cords. Each of them carried an enormous revolver, and more than once I saw a young N.C.O. brandish his gun at one of the more recalcitrant of his squad.

I only saw one Russian atrocity, but it was a terrible one indeed. An officer was actually driving about in a German car, a front-wheel-drive Adler, which was minus the back wheels.

Not far away from our camp was an airfield, and one glorious day, after a week of anxious waiting, we saw a formation of B 19s orbiting the landing ground. We knew that before many hours had elapsed we should be home again.

So back to England by Flying Fortress. I promptly had three baths, one after the other. I had scabies and had lost forty-nine pounds in weight.

CHAPTER 5

AS A FIGHTER PILOT AND AS A PRISONER, 'after the war' had been a fantasy of freedom, food, gaiety, safety. I had never seriously considered how I would earn my living. Now I was demobilised, and I faced the problem with bewilderment. In the next year or two I went through several experiments in setting up small businesses, none of them with conspicuous or consistent success.

I met a man who seemed to have all the qualities of an ideal business partner. He was a little older and a lot wiser than I was. He was extremely clever and had a highly developed sense of humour. We decided to set up a small automobile engineering business specialising in experimental and prototype work. But we had only a very small capital between us. It was impossible to find suitable premises, and

so we decided to build our own. The obstacles were endless. Government ministries, town planning ordinances, even neighbours seemed to be conspiring to stop us. But we acquired a plot of land, pulled up all the trees with the aid of a tractor, and built our own little factory. We did this with the aid of only one labourer. I should really have said that my partner, with one labourer, did most of the building. I helped as much as I could, but my real value to the enterprise was in getting some manufacturing orders.

Incredibly enough, we managed to get the business going on quite a sound paying basis, but as soon as this was true our premises became too small. Everything else that could possibly go wrong went wrong as well. I had a severe attack of jaundice with a haemorrhage, and was working away looking like a Chinaman with pickled onions for eyeballs when my partner developed polio. His wife, who had been a nurse, did a wonderful job in looking after him, and he made an almost complete recovery in a very short time. There was very little residual paralysis.

When the business outgrew our factory, we decided to dissolve the partnership, and I acquired control of another small company. The problem would not have been so simple to solve if I had not been unexpectedly lucky in settling the matter of my housing. I had bought a rather horrible house, with the aid of a first and second mortgage; covering the outside with cement paint changed its appearance so much that I was able to sell it at a substantial profit.

I now repeated this trick. I bought an ugly, unattractive house cheaply, devoted the winter to making it a lot more charming and a lot more expensive, and sold it very profitably in the spring.

In my new business venture I made use of a scheme I had worked out while in prison in Germany: a new design for a racing car to compete in the Grand Prix. The Ministry of Supply gave us a permit to build a team of four cars, and I arranged with some big manufacturers to help us by supplying components and technical assistance. I received no financial aid.

The B.R.M. was then being conceived, and my intention was to produce a rival car which I believed would be superior. The engine was laid out as a three-stage supercharged flat twelve-cylinder engine, with Aspin rotary valves. The chassis was of very advanced design.

My main business was moved to Egham, Surrey. A few weeks afterwards I went into a local hairdresser's shop. The shop was fairly well filled with a representative section of the local male inhabitants, so I sat down to wait my turn. Suddenly the proprietor spotted me. "Good heavens," he said—in what seemed to me to be a very loud voice indeed—"if it isn't Flight Lieutenant Cowell! Last time I saw you there was a warrant out for your arrest."

Every head in the shop turned to inspect me. I hastily explained that the warrant for my arrest had been due to someone else's misunderstanding with his landlord, and the charges had been quickly dropped. The hairdresser had been in the R.A.F. at the time when I was on rest, and he had worked in the officers' mess. His remark must have been louder and more convincing than my explanation, because the incident certainly didn't do my reputation much good. For weeks afterwards mothers would clutch their children to them as I passed. The rumour that a dangerous criminal was in town spread like wildfire.

In 1946 motor-racing started again, and I took part in every possible event. I drove a variety of cars, including Alta, E.R.A., Maserato, Lagonda and Delahaye.

This made a considerable difference, of course, to my way of life. The atmosphere surrounding me was always high tempo and quick change; the strain had to be relieved by practical jokes and highly appreciated anecdotes.

My favourite pub at this time was The George at Dorchester, near Oxford. Its proprietor was the late “Curly” Dryden, ex-R.A.F. Squadron Leader, a racing motorist and a great friend.

Calling at The George one day I sent my companions in to have a quick lunch while I stayed outside to do some adjustments to the car, which had experimental rotary valves. They soon emerged after a quick lunch, and had a special sandwich, wrapped in paper, for me to eat on the journey.

We drove off, and the sandwich was unwrapped and passed to me to eat while driving. I took it without shifting my eyes from the road, and was just about to take a large bite when it suddenly struck me that the thing seemed rather thick. I stopped the car and had a look at it. The sandwich consisted of two slices of bread; in between them was spread-eagled a dead mole, with its little pink feet sticking out between the slices!

I raced my ‘stable’ of cars in England, Ireland, Jersey and on the Continent. Every event was an adventure in itself. Often the most exciting part was the journey to and from where the race was held. We had an epic one-day dash to Switzerland with a large van, and there were several occasions when we had to fly.

Before each race we would get telegrams from well-wishers, often of a somewhat cryptic nature. We were completely stumped by one wire addressed to my racing partner. It ran: “You have forgotten your sanitary stopper. Have posted it to you.” The telegram as originally telephoned read: “You have forgotten your Saint Christopher.” But it had been phoned in by an excited French girl, and so a slight error had crept in.

Somehow I was restless and dissatisfied, even though the business was doing reasonably well, and assets were gradually being amassed. I could see that a definite pattern of behaviour marked the year or two since I had been demobilised. I was always “busily seeking in a continual change.” There would be an aim, usually connected with money or some other form of power. I would go all out to get it, and think of nothing else. The ambition would be achieved, and then some still more attractive objective would loom up. In turn this, too, would be reached, and then lose its glamour.

I had immense drive, immense enthusiasm, but I was always using this drive to “build up a front.” Superficially, my life seemed full; actually it was pointless and empty.

Later I was made to realise clearly that this pattern was a frantic effort to show the world at large how masculine and assertive I could be. It was an attempt to make up for what I knew, deep down inside me though not consciously: my nature was essentially feminine and in some way my world was out of joint.

Usually I left myself no time for introspection; I would push my vague dissatisfaction into the background and plunge into a new activity. The system had worked well all my life, but now it was failing me. I got an inkling of the depth of emotion that can lie below the surface of the conscious mind when I went to see a film called *Mine Own Executioner*.

In this film the hero gets shot down by flak while flying a Spitfire. The scene was photographed and directed very realistically. I knew it was done with the aid of a studio mock-up of a Spitfire cockpit, with back-projection of the ground and the flak, but for a moment I was back again in the cockpit, with the familiar mirror above my head, and that bulbous Perspex cockpit hood with its ball-ended rubber jettison handle.

As the aircraft was hit and crashed in flames, I felt all the pent-up emotion released that I must have experienced when my own plane was shot down. But this time I was an observer, and was not armoured against emotion by my preoccupation with what I had to do. Now I felt the full impact of

stark terror. Fear that I would be burnt alive, fear that I would be lynched by the soldiers, fear that I would be terribly injured by the crash.

It was a full hour before I was able to pull myself together and walk shakily out of the cinema.

Perhaps the real turning point came after I made a stroll in the garden of Tulley House, Kildare, during a short stay in Dublin. It was an authentically Japanese garden, laid out by a Japanese gardener who had come to Eire years before especially for this purpose. The dwarf trees in it were all four to six hundred years old.

Aside from this, the garden seemed to me rather haphazardly laid out and not very interesting. One of the gardeners stopped me as I was about to leave, however, and asked if I had been shown around properly. I told him I thought I had seen the main points of interest, but when he guided me through the garden I found that I was wrong. Every single plant, as well as the garden as a whole, had a symbolic meaning, and for me an added significance.

The garden was designed to tell the story of a man's life, beginning before his birth and ending after death. We started at the Gate of Oblivion, and saw the cave representing the womb. Then we went along the narrow path representing Life. One or two ways turned off from the main one to represent Temptation. Then came the dark tunnel of Ignorance, and from this we passed into Light.

So far all up to this point had been in shadow. Now came the schooldays, climbing up from Ignorance to Knowledge, with little stone beacons of the spirit to light the way. Up and up we went until the world was spread out in front of us.

There were pitfalls, represented by unguarded holes. There was the path of Vigilance, where care was needed; then a descent to the level of the other roads. The path through Life was rough; it was marked by stepping-stones, each different, each representing a year.

Then came a choice of ways. There was an easy, decadent way. There was a narrow, single way. There was a Bridge of Expectations that one could cross to reach the Isle of Joy and Wonder.

One had the choice of marriage, or the Geisha house. If marriage was chosen, the path led along the Bridge of Engagement to the Bridge of Marriage.

The Bridge of Engagement consisted of two halves, reaching out towards each other, while the Bridge of Marriage was two spans combined. A stone table covered with elaborately arranged flowers symbolized the wedding feast. From here on the path was much wider. First came an exquisite stretch called the Path of Honeymoon, then came a wishing well, and after that a parting of the way—the first quarrel. For a time, thereafter, the paths were divided, for the couple were going their separate ways. Between the two paths were high rocks representing the difficulties of marriage. The paths then met, and the couple were together again.

Together they climbed the Hill of Ambition. The path was hilly here, and each hill was a set-back. There were disappointments, too; at one point the path seemed to be leading to the Wishing Well, but when the end of the long journey was reached, the Well was just out of reach across some water.

The climb of Ambition grew steeper. The paths separated again, to represent another quarrel, and then were rejoined beyond the summit of the hill. The Height of Ambition was set on a hill of solid rock. From there one could see all over the garden, either backward in retrospect or forward to the future.

Then came the Turning Point, and from there on the path went downhill into Old Age, with the light of the spirit still burning in its stone beacon. Past idols and devils, past an easy bridge to the wishing well, across the bridge of the Span of Life. Now the symbolic couple reached the lovely garden of Peace and Contentment. There was a stone chair for the old lady, and a path for the old man that led

on stepping stones across the green lawn towards the final beacon of the Spirit in the hills beyond. And at last under the weeping willows to the Gates of Eternity.

What a contrast, I found myself thinking, between the orderly life portrayed by the garden, and my own purposelessness and indirection! And even when I compared my own situation with that of the people I knew— a much fairer test than trying to measure myself against a simplified abstraction—my restlessness and unhappiness stood out.

I used to sum it up, in this early spring of 1948, by saying that all was far from well with my life. My marriage had been unhappy; in spite of our two little girls (the elder born in July, 1942 and the younger in August, 1944) there had been an underlying air of falseness about it. It is difficult and painful for me to say much about this marriage. But it must be clear from the way we lived— our house was at Hove, in Sussex, and I worked 53 miles away, commuting by car seven days a week, with a weekly trip to Manchester, 290 miles away, thrown in—that the two paths of marriage never joined for very long in our case, and that the rocks between them were very high indeed. By 1948, we had separated, although the divorce decree was not made absolute until 1952. Our separation ended the marriage, but my depression continued. My physical well-being disappeared, too; something seemed drastically wrong somewhere, and I was losing a good deal of weight.

It was very plain that my feelings and emotions were badly tangled up and in need of being straightened out somehow. After giving the matter a great deal of careful thought, I decided to consult a psychiatrist.

From books and careful questioning I had learned that there are three main ways of treating mental—and this includes emotional—disorders. One is by searching the unconscious mind, through psycho-analysis or a similar system. This involves a series of sessions with a psychiatrist who assists the patient to unearth the real cause of his illness, which is deeply locked in his unconscious. There is also the shock treatment method, which makes use of either insulin or an electric current. Or there is the surgical method, involving actual severance of brain tissue.

The obvious method, for me, was psycho-analysis. Shock treatments and surgery are drastic procedures, and are used when drastic measures seem essential. On the surface, at least, I seemed to be hardly neurotic; I had only generalised and not acute symptoms. But my faith in psychotherapy was not very great. What I needed, I thought, was the right man who would use the right method for treating my particular trouble. I did not think the analysis could proceed very far if I had no confidence in the methods used, or the person using them.

Few subjects have aroused more controversy than psychiatry, and few sciences have given rise to so many schools of thought. I rejected the Jungian school; Jung does not seem to have brought anything new to the therapy, and I was not sympathetic towards his strongly mystic strain. I also decided against Adler's psychology, which is dominated by the idea of using the neurosis for personal advantage. Jung says that a man's main urge is to feel secure, while Adler says he wants more than anything else to feel significant. Both Jung and Adler base their psychologies on theories which escape from sexuality.

Freud, to put it as simply as possible, says that man wants most of all to be loved. In no way does he minimize the importance of sexuality as the starting-point for emotional illnesses. I did not have to be told, as so many people do when they finally seek treatment for depression or for a neurotic symptom, that the underlying cause of my unhappiness was sexual. I knew that only too well, and I had no doubt that I ought to see a Freudian analyst.

The man I consulted was a Freudian and at the top of his profession. He was a brilliant writer and I had read many of his books. It might have been better, perhaps, if he had been a complete stranger to

me in every way. But I was made so confident by his outstanding ability that I was certain he was the best choice I could make.

He was a little older than I had expected him to be. His attitude was utterly impersonal, but that may have been the effect of his Freudian technique. Like all Freudian analysts, he was careful to efface his personality. We did not shake hands, and he always sat where I could not see his face.

He was not at all surprised that I had no real manifestations or symptoms of neurotic illness. Admittedly there was a certain amount of actual conflict going on. But as I understood it, the real conflict was a struggle between instinct and ego—the dynamic energy of primary urges clashing with inhibiting elements that denied those urges expression.

I would come into the doctor's inner office and immediately lie down on my back on a couch. Somewhere behind me the doctor would be seated, pen in hand, open notebook in the other. I had to say the first thing that came into my head. For the first few sessions (each lasting an hour) only matters of immediate importance were mentioned. Gradually, through association, I began to bring in thoughts of the past. The sound of the doctor's pen scratching in the notebook was a distraction at first; soon it became almost a reassurance, for at least I knew he was not asleep.

Often, in these sessions, it would seem as though a thought were being pushed forward towards consciousness, as sometimes a half-reluctant volunteer is pushed forward to the front ranks of a crowd by his fellows in the rear. I soon learned to ignore the volunteer, and catch hold of the pusher, realizing that often the deep-lying urges of the mind push a less hidden thought forward into consciousness in the hope that the more secret urge will never emerge to the level of consciousness at all.

My shyness quickly disappeared with the use of this technique. I produced a mass of material, including episodes I had completely "forgotten." My memories began to govern my moods; remembering a happy event would make me feel happy; recalling an unhappy episode would be a dogged struggle, reluctant and full of resistance, leaving me miserable and depressed.

I learned to remember the dreams I was so sure I never had. I would write down my first waking thought, and trace that back until I recaptured the elusive dream. After a good deal of practice, aided by hot lobster and cheese sauce for late supper, I became an adept at recollecting the half-phrases and split-second tableaux from which so much could be learned about the contents of my unconscious mind.

Very few of the dreams were naive and easy to interpret. Most of them had to be divided into separate scenes and parts. I would give my free associations for each part, until the elements could be reassembled and the real meaning of the dream found. Often the apparent significance of the dream was found to be misleading; the real and important meaning of the dream was almost always a box within a box within a box.

By the time I had had about thirty hours of analysis I began to feel that here lay the answer to my problem. It was going to be a very long time indeed before the analysis was completed; it would probably be a year and more even if I went several times a week. But it seemed worth while, and although the going was often hard I realised that progress was being made.

The expense was considerable, but it was a small price to pay for the chance of becoming a happy and properly adjusted person. In fact, this was usually my thought whenever the receptionist, at the end of every tenth session, handed me my account, and I sat down in the doctor's outer office to write a cheque on the spot.

At the end of my thirtieth session, before I left the inner office, the doctor handed me my account himself. He said, "I expect you will find it more convenient to pay in cash. You know how it is these days." As he uttered these words he was suddenly no longer the brilliant medical scientist whom I looked up to and respected. My respect for him vanished as though it had never been, and I walked home alone with my illusions shattered.

I never went back. Weeks passed. I realised, of course, that the incident had a much deeper significance than appeared on the surface. My reaction was part of the transference situation which is an inherent and valuable part of every analysis. In the 'transference,' the patient transfers to the analyst traits actually belonging to a person he has loved or hated in the past, and unconsciously behaves as if the analyst actually were that person from his past. I do not know what role I had unconsciously assigned to the doctor, and of course I cannot know what meaning my unconscious mind found in his request. Whatever that meaning was, it is obvious that I rejected it violently. My conscious reaction to his actual request was that my idol had shown his feet of clay, and I was finished with him. But if my unconscious reaction to the unknowable unconscious meaning of his remark had been less strong, I might very well have been able to cast off my conscious reaction. In any case, I was always certain that anyone else I might go to would be likely to be wanting in technique in comparison with the master.

I still wanted to be analysed. I met one man who I felt could help me, but he was off to America in a week's time. He recommended two possible analysts. The first of these I tried unsuccessfully. Both atmosphere and attitude were all wrong, and got worse. The second doctor was a very clever Scot, blessed with immense patience and seemingly unlimited understanding. He was just the man.

The Scot was not so orthodox a Freudian as my original analyst had been. He started me off with a lot of tests. One of them was the familiar word test, in which both my associations to a list of words and my reaction time were measured. Another was an ink-blot test, in which I wrote down what the shapes shown on a paper suggested to me.

Freud wrote, somewhere, that the three most terrible shocks to mankind's self-esteem were Galileo's revelation that the earth moves round the sun, Darwin's discovery of evolution, and the discovery and demonstration that man is not the master of his own house—that he is impelled by his own unconscious mind.

The biggest shock to my self-esteem was my discovery, through these tests, that my unconscious mind was predominantly female. The evidence of the tests was far too forthright to be denied. And, as the analysis proceeded, it became quite obvious that the feminine side of my nature, which all my life I had known of and severely repressed, was very much more fundamental and deep-rooted than I had supposed.

Like all people who have just entered analysis, I had made my own diagnosis of my case—and my own prognosis, too. I had confidently expected that the analysis would uncover, and clear up, an unconscious fear of losing my masculinity. I expected to find traces of the Oedipus complex and signs of repressed conflict between animal instincts and moral upbringing. My diagnosis, in short, was as technical as I could make it—and as wrong. I did not expect to find that, freed of repressions, I was psychologically a woman!

The analysis ended. I was very far indeed from being a happy or well-adjusted person; if that was my aim the analysis had been a total failure. Buried memories had been unearthed, thus releasing emotions of fear and hostility, but the peace and well-being of my mind had not been increased. I had not been a neurotic person in the accepted sense of the term before the analysis, and my treatment had been more in the nature of a character analysis than the usual scientific removal of psycho-neurosis. The final

result of the analysis was to show me the real nature of my problem; I knew I would have to find the solution elsewhere.

In this unhappy time, the two possible solutions seemed to be either continuing with life, in the certain knowledge that I was going to go on being desperately unhappy, or putting an end to it all. I envied the insane, who had at least escaped from reality, but I was sane and knew that I had to face the facts.

I did believe that I had a soul, a tiny share of the life force, that agglomeration of vital energy that we, for want of a better term, call God. I believed that when I died that drop of life force would go back into the well of the Universal Soul.

One of the basic principles of nature is to create much more than is needed for her primary purpose. According to Ouspensky, one of the chief signs of racial degeneration is a weakening of the distinguishing marks of the male and female. In my own case, my secondary sex characteristics were poorly developed, and I had some female characteristics. It seemed to me that here was a strong moral argument for putting an end to my life.

The only argument I could find in favour of continuing my existence was the possibility that as time went on I might become better adapted to life, and might become a useful member of the community.

Gradually I became aware of another possibility: my intense death-wish might be due to some residual psychological trouble which might resolve itself in time.

I decided that I would leave it for a year, during which time I would do everything possible to make a go of things. If at the end of twelve months I still felt the same, then I considered I should be justified in taking my own life.

Several months went by in almost unrelieved misery. I tried everything I could think of to pull myself round. Alcohol was a failure; my troubles were far too deep-rooted to be affected by drink. Benzedrine and amphetamine acted as depressants. I was unhappy in company and when alone; I decided it was much better to be alone because at least one did not spread depression and gloom.

Sometimes I would meet a happy and contented person and feel a little glow of reflected pleasure from the contact. I was immensely grateful to such people for being what they were.

Sometimes I would find relaxation and satisfaction in sitting by the side of a river, watching the water as it flowed.

My only sure escape was through music. I never went to concerts, because the emotions which the music aroused were almost too great to bear, but I loved the piano. Hour after hour I would play Beethoven, Handel, Chopin, Bach, losing myself in a sea of harmony. As soon as I left the piano my depression would return.

One day I played squash in the R.A.C. with a Wing Commander friend. As we changed after the match he observed, "You know, you really ought to wear a brassiere." These words, meant as a joke, made me decide to try and find out just how feminine I really was, physically. They were also the reason I never again used a communal men's changing-room.

A few days later I was in the Harley Street consulting-room of a famous sexologist. He was very kind and understanding. After hearing my story he gave me a thorough physical examination. Then I learned something about myself which made a great deal of difference to my acceptance of my situation.

He gave it as his considered opinion that my body showed quite prominent feminine sex characteristics: wide hips and narrow shoulders, pelvis female in type, hair distribution and skin female in type. Other

female traits included the absence of laryngeal relief (no Adam's apple) and a tendency of the lower limbs to converge towards the knees.

My breast formation was examined and judged to be typically feminine though very little developed. The recent development, I was told, was due to an alteration in gland balance and perhaps in gland structure. The cause might possibly have been a series of emotional upsets. There seemed to be some degree of hermaphroditism present; how extensive the hermaphroditism was could not be decided without a more detailed examination and laboratory tests. There was a possibility that some of the internal organs might be female.

After giving me his opinions, the specialist explained how a human body could develop these abnormal characteristics. Until its seventh week in the womb, the human animal is bisexual, possessing rudimentary organs of both male and female types. In the normal course of events, a masculinising or a feminising impulse then takes over, and the organs of the corresponding type continue to develop, while the organs of the opposite type remain rudimentary. In every male, therefore, will be found fully developed male organs and vestiges of female organs; every female possesses fully formed female organs and vestiges of male organs.

But sometimes, though rarely, and for reasons that are not yet fully understood, something goes wrong, and a boy or girl may be born with a vital portion of his or her sexual anatomy incomplete or even entirely missing.

Sometimes, owing to faulty development, a child who is to all outward appearance a normal female may prove at puberty to be a male, and an apparently male child may prove to be a female.

In my own case it seemed that some feminising factor had been at work. This knowledge raised my morale very considerably. The intense shame I had felt began to disappear. Once I realised that my femininity had a *physical* basis I did not despise myself so much. I now knew, of course, that I was physically abnormal, but I could accept a degree of involuntary femininity without losing self-respect.

My problem was still the same, but it had changed its shape. What I needed, now, was a new background and a new occupation, where I could be myself, expressing the femininity I had always repressed, without either losing self-respect or becoming a social outcast.

One thing was certain. I had not the slightest desire to swell the ranks of the gentlemen of no particular gender. It is true that I had become a little more tolerant in this direction than I had been in the past; this meant, however, that had I met one I would have refrained from actually kicking his spine up through the top of his head. Perhaps this new tolerance came from the new personality I had developed as a result of the cumulative effects of psycho-analysis and the discovery that I was physically abnormal, but my general attitude towards these gentlemen was exactly as it had been.

I knew it was most desirable that I should allow some of my innate femininity to express itself, if I could do so without becoming effeminate. I thought I had found the way when I took over control of a small company which was formed to design and manufacture women's clothes, both theatrical and *haute couture*.

I was not dropping motor engineering; I intended to continue with it, and even do a certain amount of racing, if that was feasible, but I had lost my tremendous enthusiasm for cars. For the time being, I was combining engineering with aesthetics—they are not so far apart as one might think. In spite of my own sartorial inelegance, I knew more than a little about line and colour. Our small staff was headed by a very experienced and celebrated woman designer, who was also a director, and she designed the bulk of our collection, but several of my designs were also produced. My position was that of managing director.

I had assumed that it would be a very great handicap to have little or no knowledge of the practical side of dressmaking, but as it turned out I soon learned all I needed to know about cutting and making, even though I was not able to spend much time with this business. Now and again, in my ignorance, I would make a mistake of the type referred to by the R.A.F. as a ‘monumental clanger’; these would send the workroom staff into fits of mirth.

One of the worst of these was over raglan sleeves. I suggested that we get in a few yards of raglan in case we wanted to make some! (A raglan sleeve, of course, is a *style* of sleeve.)

Gradually I learned about gilets, peplums, darts, toiles, petersham, plackets and a vast number of other esoteric technical details. The work was pleasant, but the customers were often exasperating. I stayed out of sight as much as possible, making few personal contacts.

Doing this sort of work was, to me, a public admission that there was a feminine side to my nature. It would be remarked on, I thought, except in certain circles, and so I moved to a district where there was a preponderance of artistic people. This was only a passing phase for me, and I never really fitted into this type of society, although I had many friends among them.

One friend in particular now became very important to me, and she still is. I had met Lisa during my period of abject misery before I discovered that there were physical reasons for my developing femininity. We had both been staying at the same hotel in London, and became firm friends at our very first meeting. There was a strong, though rather strange, affinity between us. We spent every possible moment in each other’s company, until she had to leave London. Now she had found a new job, in London, and we saw as much of each other as our respective business commitments allowed. I told her everything there was to be told about myself, and she was remarkably understanding.

There were many effeminate men and mannish women among the artistic people Lisa and I now saw. I rather liked most of the women, but I never got over my instinctive dislike of the ‘pansies.’ There were too many incidents like the one I witnessed at a dance in one of the artists’ clubs. One graceful creature with shoulders like a hock bottle was dancing with a girl. She stumbled and fell heavily. He made no effort of any sort to help her to her feet, but continued to dance by himself. “The show must go on,” he explained.

These people were ‘different,’ but not as different as they were rumoured to be. Once, several of us were sitting in the bar of a well-known public house when a heavily-moustached figure entered, with a friend. He scrutinised the faces of the company, then turned to his companion and said, “Where are all the queer people we’ve come to see?”

Little by little I was overcoming my understandable reticence about my problem. It was still very difficult for me to discuss my case impersonally or casually, but I was lessening my resistance to having it investigated scientifically. I was now determined to discover as much as possible about my body, and to try and solve the mystery of my femininity.

An appointment was made for me to see one of the leading authorities on intersexuality, a man who had written many books on the subject. I got hold of some of his books, and began reading them. In the first one, I came across a reference to “loathsome feminised boys.” I went straight to the telephone and cancelled my appointment. To my way of thinking, a medical scientist should completely suppress his own personal feelings and regard his cases with scientific detachment.

My case was taken over by a brilliant woman doctor, a specialist in glands. I was examined by two gynaecologists, a professor of anatomy, two general practitioners, and another endocrinologist. After all these examinations and tests, it was decided that my case was a very unusual one indeed, and apparently unique of its type—certainly unique in British medical history.

What seemed to surprise the experts was not so much that I was so feminine, but that I was so masculine. They thought that my body had begun to change quite a long time before I became aware of it, probably about ten years before they saw me.

My case had certain resemblances to that of a Frenchman, Raoul Hurpin. This case, previously regarded as unique, dated back to the First World War. Hurpin was in the French Army. His trench was demolished by a shell, and he was buried alive in it. He was rescued, suffering from shell-shock, and remained in the hospital for three years before he was pronounced cured. But in the meantime his experiences had worked a transformation in him, and he had become a woman.

As a young soldier, he had been noted for his many affairs; in fact he had been something of a Don Juan. One of the girls he had known in these long-past days now started the French equivalent of a breach of promise action against Hurpin, in order to establish the paternity of her son. This had to be done so that the boy could take up a government post in the provinces when he completed his military service. But the alleged father was now a woman! Hurpin admitted responsibility, but pleaded that his change of sex made it obviously impossible for him to marry the woman. Medical testimony was given, and Hurpin was declared the father of the child.

Proceedings were then taken to secure official recognition of the change of sex. The record shows that Hurpin eventually married a workman.

The most important difference between my case and Hurpin's was the difference between the medical science of thirty-five years ago and the medical science of today. My doctors had hormone therapy, sexual plastic surgery, and surgical endocrinotherapy in their arsenal. There was no longer any need to stand by helplessly while nature took its course. Development could be either arrested or encouraged.

Most people do not know this, but there exists a fundamental legislative principle with regard to intersexes; it was laid down by the Roman jurist Ulpianus. The prevailing sex, according to this principle, should be accepted socially and legally. If the sex cannot be determined, then the pragmatic sex has to be accepted. Once this is established, the problem is to help the intersex conform both physically and psychologically to that sex.

My position was this: I could choose whether to spend the rest of my life as a man, or as a woman. Or I could leave things as they were, in which case I should probably have become more feminine as I got older, though this was by no means a certainty.

By now I had accepted the fact that nature had originally intended me to be female, but for the purpose of some grim joke had supplied me with male organs. Although I was tremendously upset and embarrassed when I realised this, it explained a great deal about my nature and character that had always been a puzzle. It explained why I had always been as aggressively masculine as possible, it explained why I had always felt more at home with women than with men, it explained why I had an instinctive dislike of the male body.

Male hormones and some plastic surgery on my chest would have removed any physical ambiguity about my sex. But this, I felt, would only turn me into a virilised woman. On the other hand, there would be a vast number of problems to solve if I decided to go the other way and become more feminine. None of the doctors had any knowledge or experience of a change from adult male to female, although the reverse was not uncommon.

I could not possibly live as a female unless I became very much more feminised than I was. Since I had no desire to become a freak, this meant starting the complicated treatment, and taking my chances as to its outcome. The entire treatment would take several years at least.

This meant that there would be social and financial problems to solve, too. The matter would of course have to be kept secret. I would have to do a great deal of careful planning, neighbours and human nature being what they are. And I would have to have money enough to pay for surgery and treatment, and also to start over again in a different environment when I finally made the changeover from trousers to skirts. I would also have to allow for an indefinite period during which I would be unable to work.

I was certainly going to need a fair amount of personal drive to go through with the metamorphosis, and I had to face the fact that as I became more feminised I might lose my initiative and cease treatment. This was a risk, but not the only one. There was the possibility that when it was all over I might not be socially acceptable as a woman. There was the possibility that I might become an invalid. There was the possibility that the burden of such a secret might be too great to bear—that is, assuming such a secret could be kept at all. There would undoubtedly be psychological problems to contend with, beginning with my reaction to the strain of waiting to see exactly what was going to happen.

During the war, fortunately, I had developed a very successful technique for not worrying about things. I just took it for granted that almost certainly the very worst would happen, and then on the rare occasions that it did not I was not surprised.

Anyway, in this case there was a definite possibility that things might turn out as they were intended to. I hated the thought of surgery, but I would forget this fear in speculating about how the operations would influence my body and my mind. If and when I became a woman, would I be attracted to men, or to other women? Or would my instincts be dormant?

There seemed to be nothing to lose and a great deal to gain, both in future happiness and in scientific knowledge. Here was an opportunity for me to tread a path as yet untrod. Hopefully and fearfully I started down the path.

CHAPTER 6

THE WOMAN DOCTOR who was in charge of my case was an exceptionally brilliant and clever person. She was an endocrinologist—gland specialist—and was certainly a wonderful example herself of the efficacy of hormone treatment and proper diet. Her skin was clear and unlined, and her general appearance and manner was that of a woman of about thirty. In actual fact she was well over fifty!

When this wonderful woman became seriously ill some months after I came under her care, she arranged to go on seeing me several times a week in order to watch my progress. One night she had a serious heart attack, but she thought not of herself but of me. She sent for one of the leading gland experts in the country, and he promised to take over the supervision of my case in the event of her death, which at the time seemed imminent.

Fortunately she recovered and continued to look after me herself, though I was often sent to consultants.

My first treatments were a shock, though not a physical one. I had of course not realised just how expensive hormones would be. The initial dosage was intended to implement the natural flow of female hormones in my body. Biological tests had already shown that I had an abnormal—for a male—supply of female hormones; the tests had verified the possibility indicated by the presence of secondary female characteristics in my body. But the tests had also shown that I was producing male hormones, apparently from the adrenals. The extra supply of female hormones was expected to stimulate my own development of female hormones, and also to counteract the effect of the male hormones I was secreting.

The glandular balance of the body, I discovered, is a very delicate and complicated matter indeed. My treatment had to be supervised most carefully. A close watch was kept for any sign of unpleasant symptoms; these could easily develop if the glands were affected in the wrong way.

In a very few weeks the effect of the gland treatments became externally noticeable, in a striking way. Almost overnight I acquired an unusually good complexion. Previously the texture of my skin had resembled that of an old, rather weather-beaten orange. Now it improved remarkably; it became almost as smooth and soft as the skin of a child.

This was not a change I could keep to myself, unless I could find a camouflage. Luckily, I discovered that the peaches-and-cream effect was noticeable only when the skin was thoroughly clean; an hour or so after washing the effect was not nearly so marked, and fortunately it was rarely noticed.

I began looking younger. From early adolescence, I had always looked older than my true age. When a podgy twelve, people often took me for sixteen, and at seventeen I could pass for at least twenty-one. I had never found this disturbing; in fact, I had done my best to foster the appearance of senility, and at the age of twenty-five had been taken for over thirty-five on more than one occasion.

Now, however, I began to shed the years. I did not become aware of this until it was brought to my notice one day in a London club.

A man whom I had once known quite well, but had not seen for twelve months, came in with his wife. They sat down opposite me, some distance away. I greeted the man, but he either failed to notice or did not remember me. He looked in my direction several times, and it seemed that he and his wife were discussing me. At length he came across to me and asked rather diffidently if I were my younger brother.

“No, of course not,” I replied, “you know me, surely.”

“Good heavens,” he said, “it *is* you. What has happened? You look at least ten years younger.”

He was completely taken aback. His wife came over and at first she, too, refused to accept my assurance that I was the same person she had met a year before. Both of them were amazed at the change in my appearance.

I had had no warning of this; the people who saw me regularly noticed nothing. The change had evidently been so gradual that it was apparent only to observant people who saw me only at intervals. I should not have been surprised at this, for even in such major disorders as acromegaly and myxoedema, where the face is disfiguringly affected by glandular imbalance, the unfortunate patient is often unaware of the considerable changes which have taken place in his appearance. But photographs, taken every few months, will show the tragic changes dramatically.

I was much pleased and cheered by the unexpectedly rejuvenating effect of the treatments. The next alteration was also unexpected; I became very much less muscular. This was especially apparent in my forearms and wrists, which had always been unusually strong. I had been able to hold out a service rifle in each hand, at arm's length and parallel to the ground, without letting either rifle drop. I would hold the rifles by their muzzles, just behind the foresight. But now my wrists and arms became noticeably slender, so slender in fact that several people observed and remarked on it. From then on I had always to keep my coat on in public. By this time I was invariably wearing double-breasted jackets to conceal the development of my figure.

Most of my body hair now disappeared, and at the same time the hair on my head began to get thicker and stronger. My beard gradually became loosened, but it was nearly two years before it vanished completely.

Even my appetite changed! I had always been fond of carbohydrates and sweet things, but now I developed a marked craving for fattening foods and confectionary. I remembered a recipe for a self-cure recited to me by my much-hated nurse when I was a child: she had rid herself of a predilection for a certain type of cheese by buying a pound of it and eating the whole lot straight off. I decided to adopt the same method to rid myself of my constant longing for sweets. Purchasing two pounds of chocolate creams, I bravely ate the lot. Unhappily, the last one tasted even better than the first. Not only had the cure failed hopelessly; I had now become a chocolate cream addict! There was a tremendous struggle before I could tear myself from the road to aesthetic ruin.

There were other changes that I could not gauge by looking in the mirror, changes in general appearance and demeanour. Throughout my life I had been approached by homosexuals, who seemed to assume that I was one of them. This had always bewildered me, although I finally answered the puzzle by assuming that they somehow sensed my innate femininity. Certainly my manner and appearance could not have been the reason; I was far from being effeminate. Now I began to receive approaches from normal men.

In the past I had sometimes come across a girl who was obviously interested in me, but girls were not interested in me any more. Fortunately for me, I discovered that I was not very keen on women anyway, so I was not at all disturbed. My entire point of view had evidently shifted. I went to see a revival of a film which had attracted me very much some years before, and it was interesting to notice that I was now regarding the women in the picture in a different manner from that which I had previously adopted towards them. I could clearly remember how closely I had watched one girl in particular, the first time I saw the film, and how attractive I had thought her. Now, instead of concentrating on the general effect she made, I found myself analysing her good and bad points. I could not understand why I had once considered her fascinating.

I had entirely lost interest in women, but I was not interested in men either. My life at this time was asexual. I still cared very little about my appearance, aside from two considerations: I naturally had to smarten up slightly, since I was in the clothing business, and I had to dress in a way that would not attract attention. But I still hated wearing a new suit.

No matter how inconspicuously I dressed, I still attracted attention of a rather embarrassing kind at times. Waiting in the foyer of a large London cinema, I heard a woman say to her companion, "You remember I was telling you about pansies? Well, there is one over there." Both gazed fixedly in my direction and I turned around to see this interesting sight. There was no one else around and I suddenly realised, to my horror and confusion, that *I* was the "pansy" referred to!

In a chemist's shop one day I wanted to buy a pair of rubber gloves. The chemist said, "Sorry, madam, there are only men's sizes left."

I approached a paper and magazine seller in Sloane Square. "What do *you* want?" he said. "*Woman's Own*, I suppose?" As a matter of fact I had intended to buy *Vogue*, but I hastily changed my mind and bought *The Aeroplane* instead.

Once, Lisa and I were leaving a large store when I was accosted by an elderly lady, who told me in no uncertain terms that I ought to be ashamed, going round dressed in trousers and with my hair cropped short!

One of the doctors I had to visit from time to time was a young gynaecologist who had a consulting practice in Wimpole Street. He was keenly interested in my case and helped me in many ways. In return I gave as much detailed information as I could about everything that was happening to me. He made many pages of notes, which he intended to work into a paper.

He took the notes home one evening, with a photograph of me, and began writing up the case. His young wife—he had only been married a month—saw the photograph and asked who it was. The doctor explained that it was a man who was undergoing treatment. “Man, my foot!” exclaimed the wife, and seizing the portrait tore it into shreds.

These and many other incidents showed me that it was necessary, whether I liked it or not, to resign myself to the fact that I was now midway between the two sexes. I could no longer be a convincing male, but I would have been equally unconvincing had I tried to live as a female.

Waitresses and shop assistants, now, would occasionally call me “Miss” or “Madam.” Curiously, this would happen more often on the Continent, and especially in France, than in England.

Often the observant person simply found himself with a problem he couldn’t solve. I sat opposite a couple in a railway carriage. They were obviously interested in me and puzzled by my appearance. Leaving the carriage at a station, I returned for a moment to retrieve the newspaper I had left on the seat. A debate was in progress, the woman insisting I was a female and the man that I was a male.

I preferred to steer clear of children and elderly ladies; they were too observant, or at least too outspoken in their remarks. I often heard a child say, “Doesn’t that man look like a girl,” or “Look at that girl dressed as a man.”

People who took me for an effeminate male usually regarded me either as an amusing curiosity or with active hostility. I found, especially as my figure developed, that I had to be careful to avoid a tendency to hold my hands away from my body and to move them in a feminine fashion. It took practice, but I learned to steer a middle-of-the- road route, and keep my mannerisms as noncommittal as possible.

Sometimes, of course, this was beyond my power. A telephone call from my bank one day announced that they had received one of my cheques which had been unmistakably forged. I went round to see it, and it was perfectly genuine. I had written it myself only a few days before. The manager pointed out that my writing was very different, and on close examination I had to agree with him. It was now rounder and neater, and had acquired some flourishes.

It was inevitable, I suppose, for the tremendous changes in my nature and character to be reflected in my handwriting. My assertiveness and personal drive had been slowly but perceptibly diminishing. This was particularly noticeable in business, and I now began to make arrangements to part with my fashion interests. My engineering interests had already been disposed of; much as I loved this work it was clear that I would have to give it up. I knew I could not stay at it much longer and continue to conceal my physical changes, and it was out of the question to go on with it in the future. I had decided that it would be necessary, when the treatments were over, to assume an entirely new identity.

In my own mind, I had assumed this new identity already. Previously I had regarded myself as a man, with a very regrettable tendency towards femininity which had to be suppressed at all costs. Now I thought of myself as a female with a dwindling masculinisation. This new attitude was a protection against embarrassing episodes and remarks; when people called me “Miss” or even when they couldn’t decide whether I was a man or a woman I would take it as proof that I was gradually becoming more feminine. The only question was: to what extent would this virility of mine dwindle in the end?

I was still getting intensive treatments. Nothing new had been discovered about my case, although a new line of research involving heredity had meant delving into my family background. It transpired that one of my aunts had been born with a congenital absence of vagina, but otherwise there was no sign of any sort of abnormality at all.

The treatments did not always go smoothly, and some of the effects were very varied. On some days I would feel an almost incredible sense of well-being, bordering on euphoria; happiness would surge

within me so that I almost quivered with a strange mixture of excitement and pleasure. On another day I might feel absolutely prostrated, and so weak that I had to get up and dress in easy stages. It would be almost too much of an effort to move about sufficiently to keep my self-winding watch going.

Twice I had very mild attacks of amnesia. On each occasion I was out walking when I suddenly realised that I had no recollection at all of the last half mile or so. I must have continued to walk automatically, but for some reason my conscious mind had just stopped working, as though I had been asleep. It was a very unpleasant experience, and I dreaded a recurrence, but there were only these two attacks. They happened within a few days of each other.

I was steadily putting on more and more weight, and my craving for the wrong sorts of food increased. Obviously something drastic had to be done about it, and I started to diet.

This was the first time I had ever attempted anything which could possibly be classified under the heading of 'beautifying.' For the first time, but not by any means the last, I found myself confronted with a mass of conflicting advice. Expert opinion advised no eating between meals, other equally expert opinion advised plenty of eating between meals, in order to avoid getting extremely hungry. Lots of water, no water. Take exercise, it slims you; take no exercise, it makes you hungry. Eat no butter at all, it's very fattening. Some butter is essential; it stops you from getting too hungry and helps you burn up other food. Vegetables and fruit are essential to the slimmer; cut out vegetables and fruit completely, a fluid-free diet is required. Drink milk. Never touch milk. Eat no bananas. Live on bananas! So it went.

My hunger was pathological, not genuine. It was decided to try to reduce it with drugs during the diet period. Benzedrine had no effect at all. Amphetamine did lessen my appetite to some degree, but it had a peculiar side effect.

I was driving fast in an open sports car, wearing Polaroid glasses, when I noticed spots of what appeared to be rain on the lenses. I whipped off the glasses, and discovered that there was no rain. I slowed down and tried the glasses again. It was exactly as though drops of rain were falling on them. I borrowed a pair of non-Polaroid glasses from my passenger and the strange effect ceased. It was not imagination, but there was no scientific explanation that I could find.

By dint of cutting out obviously fattening foods, under careful medical supervision, I managed to streamline my figure to the correct proportions. The distribution of the comparatively modest amount of fat had become very different, and was now typically feminine. My chest and hip measurements were greatly increased, and my waist as much narrower.

A definite change in the functioning of my mentality began to become apparent. My mental processes seemed to be slightly slower, and at the same time I also showed signs of greatly heightened powers of intuition. It had been expected that the change of hormone balance might very well be manifested in changed mental processes, but I realised that it would be impossible to differentiate between the effects of mental and physical changes.

Whatever the cause, I quite definitely began to be intuitive. This evidenced itself in many ways. The first time it happened I was walking along when I suddenly saw George-P., a man I had known well during the war. A moment later, with my second glance, I saw that he was not in the least like George-P. Ten minutes afterwards I ran into the real George-P. The same sort of thing happened several times—too often to be attributed to coincidence.

Sometimes when the telephone rang I would get a feeling that I knew who was calling, and I would be right.

I also developed one super-feminine quality—the ability to blush. This appeared for the first time when a man offered me his seat in the Tube. Embarrassed and quite at a loss, I turned a rosy red.

Fiction, except for the works of P.G.Wodehouse, had rarely interested me. Now I found myself reading stories and novels of all kinds with sustained interest. I could be intrigued by almost any good story, and my library, up to that time a collection of almost exclusively biographical and technical books, grew appreciably.

In general my nature was becoming milder and less aggressive. I found it difficult to summon up will-power when required. I certainly needed all the will-power I could muster in order to keep my weight down. I would have an occasional gargantuan meal and then starve for a day or so afterwards. It helped to keep a written record of all I ate; solemnly written down, the list was so forbiddingly long that it assisted in reducing the intake. Another ‘gimmick’ I employed was borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. I kept a large, unopened box of chocolates in a drawer, and somehow the knowledge that it was there and was going to stay there unopened helped me to pass sweet shops without excessive drooling.

I was still busy with my dress business, as the arrangement I had made to sell it fell through temporarily. One pleasurable aspect, when I found the time, was to go to a dress show, and sit near the model’s entrance. This enabled me to see the hasty, last-minute snags being coped with, and to hear the muttered imprecations and see the smiles being switched on and off like electric lights.

Often, when I answered the telephone, I would now find myself unconsciously pitching my voice higher than its usual range, which was between tenor and baritone. This happened at the dress shop when I spoke for some time to Mary Morris, the actress, one of the many well-known personages who favoured our small concern. Mary Morris told a mutual friend afterwards that she found it impossible to tell whether she was speaking to a man or a woman. The voice could have belonged to either.

As the months went by I learned more and more about dress designing, and about human nature as well.

One of my discoveries was that women can be just as jealous of each other as men can, which is saying something. They can also be very nearly as catty, though their cattiness often lacks the aggressive drive of the male. But for really supreme cattiness I think a real ‘pansy’ is impossible to beat. To hear two ‘pansies’ discussing a third can be quite an education in itself, especially if they are all ‘theatricals.’

I still tried to avoid meeting clients, in the dress shop, but I had no hesitation about meeting new people in a different atmosphere. After reading a book on ethics which interested me very much, I wrote to the author. The publishers forwarded my letter for me and I received a reply. We exchanged several long letters and he asked me to meet him for lunch.

He was a good deal younger than I had expected, and wore a full beard. His hair was beginning to thin and had receded at the temples. He was a very masculine type, not bad-looking. Apparently he was a misogynist, and appeared to have a low opinion of women.

After lunch we sat talking over coffee, and he lit his pipe. We were discussing the connection between sex and intelligence, I, of course, maintaining that given equal opportunities, women can be the mental equals of men. He disagreed violently.

Then came the surprise, a surprise so shattering that the scene will be crystal-clear in my memory for the rest of my life. He sat there, sucking at his pipe and toying with his coffee cup. He was silent for a minute or two, and I was idly wondering how long that beard of his had taken to grow.

Suddenly, “I don’t really see why I shouldn’t tell you,” he said, “but five years ago I was a woman.”

Such a possibility had never entered my head for one moment. As I looked at him now it seemed absolutely and utterly fantastic, quite unbelievable, but I was not then fully aware of all that modern medical science could do.

He had been born as a perfectly normal girl, physically at least. Mentally he had felt like an interloper in his own body. He hated anything feminine, and was a gawky, desperately unhappy child. He was by no means bad-looking, a brilliant scholar, and an outstanding athlete. He wore men's clothes whenever possible, and was frequently assumed to be a man.

One day a doctor friend suggested that he might be helped by hormone treatment, and gave him a supply. The results were more than satisfactory. Years later, after intensive therapy and some thirteen operations, he was legally certified a man. His case was by no means unique, he told me, citing other cases of women changing into men.

Although the final result was so satisfactory, he had endured and was still enduring immense hardships. For a long time he had lived on an income of five pounds a week, out of which he had spent exactly half on hormones. Even now he had to have constant medical supervision. He still suffered intermittently from hypoglycaemia, which is caused by a deficiency of sugar in the blood.

He was immensely strong, even for a man. I found it impossible to imagine him as a girl. He was as genuine a man as any I have met.

Towards the end of my stay in the limbo of the intersex, Lisa and I went out to lunch in a large and crowded Oxford Street restaurant. We sat at a table with our backs against the wall so that we could get a good view of everybody. It also allowed everyone to have a good look at us.

The reactions to us were more than obvious. People would look at me, then look away, then look again, this time very much harder. They would whisper to their friends, who would also turn and stare.

I was wearing a blue double-breasted blazer, grey worsted trousers, brown leather shoes, grey socks, a cream shirt and a dark blue tie. My hands were completely uncared for, and my hair was cut short. I was far from being dapper. Though reasonably clean, my clothes had plainly not been pressed, and I could not possibly have been considered a dandy.

It is not difficult to lip-read the words "pansy" and "woman," and it was obvious that nearly everyone in the room was arguing about my sex. The waitress did not help matters by calling me "Miss" loudly.

After this experience I kept out of such places as much as possible, and if I could not avoid entering one, I sat in a corner.

It has always seemed strange to me that the average person, though doubtless fundamentally very sympathetic and understanding, varies so much in behaviour towards people suffering from a disability.

If a man is blind he can be assured of kindness and sympathetic consideration from all. If he is deaf many people will make fun of him, and if he has a speech impediment some sadists will even burst out laughing.

During the war I was in a bar with a fellow pilot whose face showed that he had been shot down in flames and had been burned. One lady found it impossible to stand the sight of him, and we were asked to leave. Naturally I refused to go, and sent for the manager, but the psychological damage had been done. As it happened, it was the last leave he ever had in London, or anywhere else. He went back on to flying and was killed.

I was glad indeed that I was passing through a temporary stage. Many people were extremely kind and pleasant to me, but an equal number would go out of their way to treat me as though I were an unpleasant, perverted freak. They had no hesitation in making their attitude abundantly clear, perhaps

because they considered that I had no feelings at all, perhaps because they wanted to hurt me as much as possible.

CHAPTER 7

NEARLY TWO DIFFICULT YEARS had now gone by since my hormone treatments were started. Periodically I had been examined and re-examined; now I was due for the most important examination of all. A specialist was to give his independent opinion of my status; the course of my entire future depended on his judgment.

To put it mildly, I was not very calm about this. As my appointment drew near I became more and more jittery, and on the morning of the day I was to see the specialist I was in an advanced state of dither. This was less significant than it would have been several years before; now that I had lost physical strength I could not as easily control my body in moments of stress. I blushed easily and often; my teeth had a tendency to chatter; on one occasion, when under a considerable nervous strain, I had actually found my knees knocking together! It was a very odd sensation. Now, waiting until it was time to keep my appointment, I forced myself to lie down for ten minutes and relax completely. After this I felt much calmer, much more able to control myself.

I was met by one of my own doctors at the specialist's office, and we were both ushered into the specialist's presence. I was examined very thoroughly; X-rays and laboratory test findings were brandished and consulted. Then I was told to dress and both doctors withdrew to the next room.

I put my ear to the door. "There is not the slightest doubt whatever," the specialist was saying. "The patient is quite definitely not a man—she is undoubtedly a woman."

As I finished dressing I was trembling with excitement and happiness. Now I was within sight of my goal; I had nearly done with the hardships and restrictions of belonging to no sex, of not daring to behave as I wanted to or to dress as I felt I should.

The first step was to have my birth legally re-registered. A new birth certificate was issued upon submission of sworn medical affidavits, and I became legally a woman at the beginning of 1951.

What remained to be done involved a series of operations. Although my sex was now predominantly female, there was still a lot of the masculine in my body. I was definitely a woman, but just as definitely an abnormal one. The general pattern of change in my body had been well established, and the physicians were certain that I would remain abnormal until nature's mistake had been put right surgically, and all traces of masculinisation removed.

The first operation was to take place a few months after my decisive examination. The surgeon who was to perform the operation was world-famous. I had heard a great deal about him; his kindness was proverbial, but so was his way of being remarkably outspoken when he felt so inclined. As I waited to see him for a preliminary consultation and examination, I felt more than nervous; I was prepared for the worst.

A receptionist ushered me into his consulting-room, and indicated where I was to sit. The room was of medium size, beautifully but simply furnished. Against one wall was a three-way mirror. Nearby was a couch. The door was directly behind my chair, which made me feel still less at ease than I had been in the waiting-room. The surgeon had the reputation of being a very fine artist, so it rather surprised me to see no pictures or photographs. Later I saw that there was just one photograph in the room. It stood alone, in a silver frame, on a table far in a corner. It was the portrait of a king, a gift from him to the surgeon to whom he owed so much.

The door behind me clicked, and in came the man on whom my hopes for the future rested. He was kindness itself. In a moment I was completely at ease. We had a short talk, and then he called an assistant and together they examined me and discussed technical details.

No operation of this kind had ever been performed in England, or in the world, as far as they knew. A special technique would have to be evolved.

I left the surgeon's office feeling happy, confident—and impatient. When I got home I wrote a letter to the surgeon, telling him how happy I was that he had taken the case, and how much I looked forward to the completion of the operation, which I hoped would be done as soon as possible. The dry, rather brusque reply I received shook me thoroughly. I was told that it was quite impossible to rush things, that I should have to have two and perhaps even three operations, that I must be very patient and stop trying to bully my surgeon. I was very careful, after that, not to show any signs of impatience. This, of course, was exactly the effect the letter was intended to achieve!

For the time being I had to continue to dress as a man for part of the time—at business, primarily. But there was no reason why I should not start getting used to wearing skirts, as long as I could do my practicing discreetly. Of course I didn't want anyone not in my confidence to discover that I was leading what was more or less a double life. If the discoverer had a melodramatic imagination, I might be suspected of some criminal activity, or even of spying for a foreign power. I liked these risks much more, to be frank, than the risk that the truth might be guessed, and I might get unwanted publicity.

I did not start experimenting with woman's clothes until after I had moved into another district, and stopped seeing the circle of people I had known in the previous two years. Lisa and I took a house together. I acquired a small wardrobe and an assortment of make-up, and I began to discover what a lot there was for me to learn.

This must have been a trying time for Lisa. She was living with two people: a gloomy and depressed one in trousers, an infinitely happier one in skirts. One of the trickier problems she had to face was the matter of pronouns, but she never made a mistake. In public, at any rate, she always remembered that I was "he" when in trousers and "she" when in skirts. I was certain that sooner or later she would be bound to give the show away, but no, not once.

One evening we went out for a short stroll. Soon after turning into the main road we met a woman who lived a few doors away. She spoke to Lisa for a few minutes, and was introduced to me. Lisa explained that I was the sister of the man who shared the house with her. The woman accepted this explanation without surprise, and I was very glad to notice that my appearance aroused no particular interest or comment. Still, it was clearly a risky thing to allow myself to be seen in the neighbourhood sometimes in trousers and sometimes in skirts. Sooner or later someone would be certain to recognise me; people who had swallowed the "sister" explanation would begin thinking it odd that "my sister" and I were never seen together.

Lisa found an ingenious way out of this quandary. She knew a show-girl who was a bit taller than I, but otherwise looked just like me. Aside from the difference in height, it was difficult to tell us apart when we were both in skirts. She was an excellent sport, and readily agreed to be seen round the district with me on two or three occasions. For these public views I of course dressed as a male, and she wore some of my more distinctive woman's clothes.

I took her into one or two local shops, including the newsagent's, a hot-bed of gossip if there ever was one, and introduced her as my twin sister. My neighbours little realised, seeing the "sister" again a few days later, that they were actually looking at me wearing those very same distinctive clothes! Thanks to this scheme I managed to lead my double life without discovery.

It was only after this little play had been successfully played out that I suddenly recalled my genetics. *Identical* twins must always be of the same sex; twins of opposite sexes generally look no more alike than ordinary brother and sister. In making this mistake I was in good company, however. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare introduced a pair of twins of different sex, Viola and Sebastian, who also looked precisely alike.

Twin-sister or not, I kept away from my home district as much as possible while wearing skirts. My walk was the one characteristic I could not disguise at all, and I was afraid it would betray me. During the war I had come across the case of an agent who had his appearance and identity completely changed, but was still recognisable by his walk. After endless experiments with different types of shoes and after much conscious practice in varying his gait, it was found that the only way to make his walk really unrecognisable was by operating on the tendons of his leg.

A date was finally set for my first operation, nine months after I had been legally re-registered as a female. My feelings about it were mixed, and I heartily wished it over, but not because I was worried about the success or failure of the surgery. I had complete confidence in the surgeon. What disturbed me was that I would be going to the nursing home as a female. It would be my first real excursion of any length, as a woman, into the outside world, and I was not at all sure how I would be accepted.

My double life was not over yet, however. I still had to be able to appear in trousers when necessary. My hair had therefore to be kept short. When in skirts, I wore a hair-piece, deliberately made longer than the prevailing fashion.

In skirts and with my hair-piece on, I arrived at the nursing home on the evening before the operation. I left my luggage and slipped out to a nearby café for a cup of tea with Lisa. We had just seated ourselves and ordered when, to our horror, we noticed through the window a mutual friend who had known me when I was a male. He entered the teashop and sat down at a table close to ours, but somehow failed to recognise Lisa and apparently did not recognise me. My tea tasted like ink and we left at the earliest possible moment and went back to the nursing home.

Lisa and I were shown to my room, which was filled with beautiful flowers. The sight cheered me up a lot, and my morale certainly needed raising in view of the ordeal I knew I had to face. Lisa had sent the flowers.

My nurse came in. She was a dear, and I took to her at once. Looking at my companion and myself, she tactfully asked which was the patient. I was put to bed, and then had to deal with a stream of callers. Doctors, surgeons, friends had to be coped with. Finally I was left in peace. As soon as I was alone I knew that I was scared stiff. I was off on an unknown road to an unknown future. And I was the first human being to tread this unknown road.

So many things could happen. The operation might not succeed. (After it was all over I learned that several of the experts present thought the operation could not be performed, and others thought it might be performed, but that the results would not be satisfactory.) I might be desperately uncomfortable afterwards; I might be in great pain. Perhaps the story would leak out, and life afterwards would be impossible.

Soon enough, I told myself, I would know the answers to all these questions. In the meantime I could do nothing but relax, hope the worst would not happen, but not be too surprised if it did. And so I went to sleep, thinking that this was the last night I should have with my body in its present form.

Next morning. A prick in the arm and I become drowsy. I lie there wondering what it will be like when I wake up. I wonder if I *shall* wake up? I'm not afraid now. Another prick in the arm, and I start whirling into the vortex of unconsciousness. Then I am awake, and feeling rather sick. The nurse is

instantly alert. She tells me that it is now early morning of the next day. The operation took six and a half hours, and was a brilliant success.

The backs of both hands and the top of one foot are swollen and blue from repeated injections of anaesthetic. Below the waist I am firmly bandaged. A little rubber tube fitted with a clip emerges from the folds; this is the end of a catheter. My body feels as though all my internal organs had been removed. It is strange but not uncomfortable; there is no pain.

Later in the day I was visited by my surgeon. He removed the catheter and some packing. He told me that the operation to correct the congenital absence of vagina was completed. Perhaps a tidying-up operation would be needed at some future date, but it was too early to say.

There was still no pain, and only minor discomfort from swelling, but as soon as possible I was put into a hot bath, and the swelling was reduced. Everyone I encountered was kindness itself, and I was quite at ease. The stitches were taken out, a few at a time. Some were excruciatingly painful, being in a terribly tender spot, but finally, with extreme care, the last of them was removed. Less than two weeks after my admittance to the nursing home I was back in my own house.

Ideally, it would have been best at this stage to have gone right away and started life afresh somewhere else. This was impossible; I had to stay in London to be near my doctors. But the operation had made a tremendous difference to me psychologically. I now had a self-assurance I had lacked before my metamorphosis was complete; I felt different enough to be able to face the awkwardness of my position with what I can best describe as aplomb. I now broke away from all activities which had to be carried out in trousers. It was by now almost impossible to pose as a man, anyhow; the masquerade was repugnant to me besides, as I felt that I was now truly a complete female.

The first operation had changed my body completely, beyond recognition, and my personality was now entirely a new one. But my face was still fundamentally the same.

It was certainly a lot younger-looking, and far softer than before, with a definitely feminine cast. But it was still patently the face of Robert Cowell, especially in profile. There was an ever-present fear that I might meet someone I had known in the past who would recognise me.

The plan, therefore, was to have my face drastically altered by surgery. This would remove all residual traces of masculinity and relieve me of the fear that I would be recognised. Incidentally, I could be made better-looking.

Facial plastic surgery had always seemed to me to be a particularly gruesome branch of medicine, and I was not looking forward very much either to the operation or its immediate after-effects. It was going to be very strange to lose the last trace of my old self, and I could not help wondering whether I would be happy with a new face.

So it was with rather mixed feelings that I returned to the surgeon's consulting-rooms again for another exhaustive examination and a discussion of exactly what was to be done. The decision was to give me a new upper lip, reshape my mouth, and shorten my nose. The shape of the proposed new nose, which had just a hint of a tilt at the tip, was outlined on the side of my existing nose. It was to see, with the aid of the triple mirrors, that this change alone would improve my looks immensely.

Once more I arrived at the nursing home on the eve of an operation, and the next morning I looked at my familiar face in the mirror for the last time. I received the usual injection to make me drowsy; then came a prick in the arm, and when I awoke again it was all over.

My face was a mass of adhesive plaster, metal clips, stitches and plaster-of-Paris. Each day a few clips and stitches were removed. My new upper lip felt as big and soft as a pillow, and I had the makings of

two superbly black eyes. After five days came the eagerly awaited moment when the plaster cast was to be taken off my new nose, and I would be able to see it for the first time.

I was in a frenzy of impatience. At very long last off came the plaster, and I took a look. The nose looked wonderful, slightly *retroussé* but otherwise perfectly regular. “Of course,” said the surgeon’s assistant, “in a few days’ time it will be twice the size.”—“What!” I gasped, all my new-found pleasure vanishing; it *had* seemed perhaps just a fraction bigger than I had wanted. “Oh, sorry,” was the reply, “I meant to say *half* the size,” and I breathed again.

Next day I came home for the first time to a new flat. My face was still swollen and discoloured, and I had to stay out of sight for a couple of weeks. But when the discolouration and swelling vanished, there was no trace of surgery visible. All the work had been done from the inside, even to the cutting and the shaping of the bone.

I now was ready to make my debut in public in my finished state. Made-up—rather heavily to hide what discolouration remained—and, in a new hair-do and a new hat, both designed to show off my new profile, I set out. My heart was pounding, and my stomach seemed crammed with butterflies.

To get from the flat to the main shopping centre it was necessary to walk down a passageway. I started down it resolutely, and had gone half-way when I saw two men coming towards me. I kept on, doggedly resisting a wild impulse to put my head down and flee. As we passed, both men gave me a searching glance. My heart seemed to stop completely. Then one man said to the other, in a low but distinct voice, “Definitely, yes.” I realised, with a sudden glow of pleasure, that my appearance was acceptable.

Later that day, still wearing my rather heavy make-up, I was walking down Piccadilly when I clearly heard one woman, having given me a very prolonged stare, say to another, “I bet that one’s expensive!” I decided that the sooner I wore a lighter make-up, the better!

One more, rather minor, operation was needed. This was a ‘tidying-up’ process; after it was completed there was no trace of a scar whatever on my body. The surgeon had certainly done a wonderful job; the rest was up to me.

It was probably a very good thing for me to have to spend this period educating myself in the minutiae of being a woman. I became absorbed in the details of correct dressing and deportment, of beauty treatment and of hairdressing. Only when these had been mastered would I begin to build up new social contacts.

Clothes did not present much of a problem. I chose my basic wardrobe with ease; here I was on familiar ground. What was entirely unfamiliar was how my body had changed. It was a correctly slender body, for my strenuous dieting had reduced it to the proper weight, and I had stuck to a rigid maintenance diet afterwards, acquiring proper eating habits. But, surprisingly, my figure was that of a ‘womanly woman,’ with accent on the feminine. I was the type which should never be allowed to wear slacks, although unfortunately this type often does.

The past five years had changed my measurements drastically. The bust had increased a good five inches, and the hips, which had always been wide, had increased two inches. I had lost five inches around the waist. The most surprising change was in my height—this had decreased beyond a shadow of a doubt. The difference was a good inch, perhaps an inch and a half. It is not usual to measure height to an accuracy greater than that of a quarter of an inch, of course, so this has to be taken into consideration. The medical explanation for the height reduction was probable shrinkage of intervertebral cartilage, those discs of cartilage and fibrous tissue which are found between the bones of the spinal column, and now and again have been known to slip out of place.

As the reduction of height had only shortened my back, and not my legs, my general proportions were improved. This was a pleasant thing, and I particularly appreciated the fact that I was now shorter. Although I had been rather on the short side as a male, as a woman I was comparatively tall, especially in heels.

It may seem extraordinary that a male who usually gave the impression of having dressed with the bedroom on fire should turn into a fashionably dressed female, very clothes-conscious and utterly meticulous about the all important matter of 'grooming.' The explanation lies in the fact that men's clothes were a symbol of masculinity, and I hated them for it. Women's clothes were for me symbolic of my new and happy life. Being well-dressed made a world of difference to my confidence and composure, and I revelled in my new-found freedom to pander to a side of my personality that had been buried and suppressed for too long.

I could understand what the philosopher meant when he said that to a woman the sense of being well-dressed brings a glow of tranquillity which even religion fails to bestow.

I was quite self-assured about choosing my own clothes, but not at all so about any of the other branches of feminine knowledge. I knew nothing whatever about make-up and beauty treatment, and I found it unexpectedly difficult to learn. There were too many experts, all with different theories. I had received a great deal of contradictory advice when I first started to diet, but this was nothing compared with the mass of conflicting information I was given about beauty treatment.

It seemed, and still seems, amazing to me that leading authorities should often differ to such an extent over fundamental points. In one book by a leading beauty expert the author warns her readers that ignorance of correct methods can ruin one's skin, and gives as a horrible example the case of a woman who actually used to apply her powder direct to her face, without a foundation of any sort. The pores of the skin were thus clogged, and the unfortunate woman had a bad complexion through her ignorance and stupidity. But in another up-to-date book, this time by a doctor who specialised in women's beauty care, the categorical statement is made that when a foundation can be dispensed with it is all to the good, for the less that goes on the skin the better, and the powder can be applied direct!

My own skin, I am afraid, would have annoyed the experts. In spite of having been completely uncared for all my life, and often grossly ill-treated, it did not seem to have suffered from the ravages of neglect as much as one would expect.

I listened gravely as I was instructed to scrub it regularly with soap, hot water and a brush, and as I was solemnly told that on no account must soap and water be used, but only cream and lotion. I was advised to pumice-stone it regularly, to have massage and face-packs, *never* to have face packs or massage, to put cream on at night, not to put cream on at night.

Out of this welter of information and misinformation, I gradually found what suited me, and what did not suit me. Plenty of sleep and fresh air and a proper diet certainly made far more difference than any treatments, and most of the advice I received I simply ignored. But like most women I found that there was something quite fascinating about trying out a new treatment or lotion, especially if it were expensive, which was usually the case. Even when it failed to have any perceptible effect, the money had hardly been wasted, because it was all such fun!

I had thought that learning how to move gracefully would present little difficulty, but I was still learning and improving twelve months later. I had several teachers, and each had something new to offer.

Etiquette was something I had hardly thought would have to be learned at all. But after I had made some outstanding mistakes I conceded that there was a lot I didn't know, beginning with such

elementary matters as when to stand, when to sit, when to wear gloves. Evidently I had been a thoroughly unobservant male.

My vocabulary, or at least my choice of some phrases, modified itself without any conscious effort on my part. Happily plying the electric iron one day, I dropped it on to my foot, which was in an open-toed shoe. "Oh, bother!" I exclaimed. It was not self-control which kept me from drawing upon my extensive store of contumely, but the fact that my general nature had become much milder. I had not anticipated that I was going to use such moderate language in this crisis. In the early months of my transformation I had found it necessary to choose my words carefully; typically masculine phrases had tended to creep in, and so had snatches of R.A.F. jargon and mannish expressions.

My voice did not really change. It merely became higher in pitch, and better modulated but with fewer overtones. I had to teach myself to cough and clear my throat differently. I rather wondered what sort of a noise I should make if suddenly startled, and it was not long before I knew. Returning home to the flat late one night, I found the front door ajar; someone had broken in. Lisa was away at the time, and as I turned on the light in the hall a strange man came from behind the door, pushed past me, and ran off. I screamed at the top of my voice. It was a blood-curdling sound, most impressive, a most useful addition to my defensive armoury.

Hairdressing was a difficult problem. I wanted long hair; it has always been my conviction that the more feminine woman looks better with longish hair. Short hair may have its advantages, but they are not aesthetic ones unless the woman has a very well-shaped and nicely poised head. While my hair was growing I decided to wear a wig, which would probably be easier to manage than a hair-piece. Rather naively, I half-planned to wear a wig permanently; what a convenience it would be, I thought, not to have to spend vast amounts of time and money on a hairdresser!

I soon changed my mind about this. I had an invitation to dine at an extremely elegant London hotel. As I dismounted from the cab immediately outside the main entrance, I caught the top of my head on the top of the taxi doorway and for a ghastly moment thought I had scalped myself! Luckily this calamity was just avoided, but it was a very narrow escape indeed. I decided that the sooner my own hair grew the better.

I had no wish to undergo the same experience as the lady in the story. As she left her hairdresser's, resplendent in a new coiffure, she encountered a friend, who said, "My dear, what *have* you done to your hair? It looks like a wig! "—"It is a wig."—"Well, my goodness! I'd never have known it."

One of the things most useful to me in my new social life proved to be the lessons I received on what to do with my hands. It was much easier to appear poised and relaxed when my hands were held and moved in the correct manner. My hands—and my feet—once mere tools, now became important. I discovered that most women instinctively inspect each other's hands and feet. My feet, too, learned to stand inspection; wearing well-fitting shoes for the first time in my life had the unexpected effect of reducing the size of mine. I was easily able to take an English size five and a half, and later a five.

Lisa was a wonderful help during my apprenticeship. She would watch me closely, and comment on any small mannerisms which needed correcting. One of these was stroking my face, a gesture which a man often uses, but a woman never does. Standing with my back to the fire and going upstairs two at a time were other practices to be sedulously avoided, but I was never quite so bad as the Wren who raised her hat to the Admiral. (He said afterwards that she must have mistaken him for a funeral.)

I never had the slightest difficulty in managing my skirts, and have never once instinctively buttoned up my coat the wrong way round, as a man does.

One evening Lisa came in from a date, and began explaining to me the significance of some of the coloured ties worn by men, such as I Zingari and Free Foresters. The man she had been out with had been telling her all about it. When I reminded her that this was all far from being new to me, she gasped, "Good heavens, I'd completely forgotten that! 'This was certainly a happy moment for me, and she could not have paid me a nicer compliment.

I was now more or less used to my new body and my new existence, though I often still compared myself with Lichtenburg's knife, which had a new handle fitted and then a new blade. Sometimes all that had happened to me seemed too bizarre to be believed. The psychologists had been right in warning me that mental adjustment would be my most difficult problem, and would take a long time. I knew I had to be patient, and my new placidity helped me to wait it out. The inky-black depressions of the past were over for good.

The most direct contrast to my previous self was my development of a strong maternal instinct, and a new and strong interest in domestic work. I had never known anything about cooking, ironing, cleaning or all the other myriad things a domestic worker does with apparently consummate ease. I had made one discovery: it is unwise to boil coloured socks, especially those of variegated colours, together. Now I had to learn it all.

In baking a cake, I had heard, you stuck a knife in it and then inspected the knife to see if it came out clean. I had no idea what you were to do if it did come out clean - stick all the other knives in, perhaps. A more serious approach to the art revealed it as surprisingly difficult and complicated, but very rewarding. I was particularly glad to find that the preparation of food had the effect of diminishing my appetite, instead of stimulating it as I had feared. After the pastry had shot off the board on to the floor a few times my yearning to consume it dwindled rapidly. Uncooked eggs were reminiscent of unpleasantness in general, and I could not possibly eat a steak after having seen it raw. But I was still interested in cooking it, or anything else. I hung palpitating over the oven waiting for my first soufflé to emerge, and as luck would have it, it was an outstanding success. But when I made another as an encore, this unaccountably failed. I do not know which was more deflated, my pride or my soufflé.

Lisa once said to me that she could see very clearly how much happier I was as a woman, but she wondered if I would still be happy if I found that I was a very plain or ugly woman. My reply was a very definite and emphatic yes, I should still be happy.

I earnestly believe that there is no such thing as a plain or ugly woman; there are only women who do not know how to make the best of themselves. Before the plastic operation on my face I was a living argument in favour of Darwin's theory, and I was always relieved when a new acquaintance forbore to feed me nuts, but I was still able to present a convincing illusion of attractiveness with the aid of carefully applied make-up and a great deal of synthetic confidence.

Even if a woman's face is actually malformed it can be vastly improved by modern surgery.

One of the most remarkable examples of this was carried out some years ago by a British surgeon. The patient was a fourteen-year-old girl who had an upper jaw set so far back that her lip almost touched her nose, which itself was crooked. The roof of her mouth was very sharply arched, and she could only speak with the greatest difficulty. Her eyes protruded so far out of her head that she looked permanently startled.

Several of the bones of her face were deliberately severed, and moved into new positions. The upper part of her face was pulled forward, and new features were moulded. The operation was so remarkably successful that the girl's parents found it difficult to believe that she had once been a pitiful little creature, doomed to go through life as a miserable freak.

The girl is now a pleasant-looking young nurse.

CHAPTER 8

DURING THE ENTIRE PERIOD of my metamorphosis I had been, to all intents and purposes, unsexed. I was not interested in men or in women. When I went to a play or a film I did not identify myself with any of the characters. Slowly this asexuality began to disappear. At the theatre or cinema I found myself identifying with the heroine. I read love stories—I even finished some of them. The idea of kissing a girl was now almost as unthinkable as the idea of kissing a man would have been in my previous existence. But when a man showed some interest in me I no longer regarded it as a rather insulting nuisance.

It was a tremendous advantage to me to know a certain amount about the functioning of a man's mind, and to be able to see through the various types of approach to what was undoubtedly-behind them. Some of these enterprising gentlemen were brilliantly original; others were totally unimaginative. One day, when I was walking down Oxford Street, a man rushed across the pavement and pushed me bodily into the bar of a public-house. He then took off his hat and apologised profusely for having "bumped" me. As we now seemed to have found ourselves near a bar, he then remarked brightly, mightn't I care to join him in a drink?

This was a far cry from the perfect gentleman more often encountered. The latter type would be most apologetic and charming, opening the conversation with something like "Excuse me, I know it's very rude to speak to you, but isn't it a nice day?"

Although my mother had refrained from telling me never to speak to strange men, I soon learned not to. They would ask me how to get to some place or other, and while I was innocently giving them directions would abruptly invite me to dinner, or tea, or to a club. I very properly ignored these invitations until I was rather more sure of myself, and then decided it would be an interesting and instructive experience to see what would happen if I accepted. A kindly government had, in the past, given me lessons in unarmed combat and I even knew a little ju-jitsu. Though I was no champion, I was certain I could look after myself.

The next time a car drew abreast of me, and the driver leaned out to ask the way to Baker Street, I told him the way, in detail. When he added to his thanks an invitation to go out to supper, I accepted.

We went to a small club where everyone knew everyone else and a notice on the wall read, "Visitors are requested to keep their seats when the room is in motion."

After a pleasant little supper I asked to be taken home, as it was getting quite late. We got in the car, but when my host pressed the starter button there was a click and the starter refused to work. He had no idea of what to do.

I could have told him that the pinion of the Bendix drive was probably jammed against the flywheel teeth, and could be freed by rocking the car in gear or by using a set-spanner on the flats of the motor armature, but I wasn't supposed to know this. I sat by demurely while he telephoned the A.A. and at length got help. At long last I arrived home. Saying good-night to the gentleman at the front door, I stepped into the hall, only to find him at my heels.

Lisa, too, had been out that evening. At this precise moment she arrived home with her boy-friend, the old school tie enthusiast who had revealed to her the significance of I Zingari. She had invited him to come in for a nightcap on condition that he be as silent as possible, because her girl-friend (me) was a rather quiet type and would probably have been in bed and asleep for hours. As they arrived at the

front door they heard sounds of unarmed combat from within. They burst into the house, and there we were, fighting tooth and nail!

Now, if anyone asks me the way to Baker Street, I say "I'm sorry, but I'm a stranger here myself."

One particularly mysterious phenomenon I learned to know is familiar to many women, but hardly heard or suspected by most men. It is usually referred to as "good days and bad days." Bertrand Russell once wrote an essay on women in which he observed that real beauty is always intermittent. It is certainly a fact that on a particular day you find yourself looking exceptionally well, with men whistling after you and a succession of requests for the way to Baker Street, while on the following day, wearing exactly the same outfit, you attract no notice whatever.....

A great deal of this fluctuating attractiveness, of course, depends on one's mental attitude. If you behave as though you were quite confident of your own powers of attraction it seems to have a sort of hypnotic effect on people, and they come to believe it themselves.

When I started having frequent social engagements with men I found that Martin Luther had been quite right when he wrote, "No gown worse becomes a woman than learning." Most men seemed to expect and prefer a sort of helpless imbecility in their feminine companions, so I taught myself to be a good listener. I have never yet known a man who didn't appreciate the implied flattery of rapt attention.

Now and again I would meet a 'line-shooting' type. It was sometimes difficult to resist the temptation to lead him gently up the garden path and then trip him up, figuratively speaking.

A heavily moustached figure, allegedly an ex-fighter type but easily spotted as one who had flown nothing heavier than a Tiger Moth, was led on to describe some of his more exciting operational trips. I let him get to the point where he was force-landing his Spitfire with the hydraulics shot away, at very high speed because he couldn't lower the flaps. Blandly I interrupted to ask why his Spitfire, unlike all the others in service, lacked pneumatically-operated flaps. As *Punch* would have said, "Collapse of stout party."

'Line-shooting' is by no means confined to the male sex, of course. At a night club I heard a woman say to a photographer, "Please don't take my picture, there must be other glamorous women here!"

People generally were infinitely nicer to me now that I was a woman. This was particularly noticeable when travelling by train. Porters and ticket collectors were civil and attentive, and dining-car attendants almost embarrassingly so. But I had to be wary of these courtesies. Getting on a bus, I heard a man say, "Get up and give the lady your seat, Billy." Looking down I saw the man. He had a broad grin on his face and Billy, who was a small boy, was sitting on his knee!

Perhaps the most glaring example of this difference in attitude occurred in the days when I was obliged to spend part of my time as a male and part as a female. One night, wearing trousers, I went out to buy an evening paper from an old man with a pitch on a nearby street corner. I had nothing smaller than a shilling, and this he refused to change, grumbling that he couldn't be bothered. He could have changed the shilling, for I plainly saw a box full of coppers. The next night I came down again, in skirts, and again had no change. This time, however, he gave me a paper and told me to pay him any time I liked.

In the past I had had no very high opinion of women car drivers, although I had met one or two who were exceptionally good, and very much better than the average man driver. Maybe my low opinion of feminine driving ability in general had been based on a series of unfortunate experiences. I had a girl cousin who could never remember in moments of crisis which way the steering wheel had to be turned, and a girl-friend who would shut her eyes, let go of the wheel and scream whenever danger threatened.

Then there was the lady who drove me along the main road, put out her hand, encased in a large fur glove, and then instantly turned off to the right. We were at once rammed amidships by the car behind us. The man driving it was charmingly apologetic. He did not realise, he said, that the lady was making a signal, but thought she was throwing the cat out of the window.....

The same lady used to drive about town with the choke pulled out so as to have something to hang her handbag on. My mother once walked into the house with the gear lever in her hand. "Look," she said, "the post has come off."

The reason for all this, I suppose, is that women in general are less interested in mechanical things than men, and therefore take less interest in the actual functioning of the car. This should not affect their driving, necessarily, and as is well known, insurance statistics show that women drivers are safer than men, however odd their technical notions may be. But when I, as a woman, began driving men passengers, they behaved in a very peculiar manner. At crucial moments they would put their fingers in their ears to dull the sound of the impending crash, and at the slightest provocation would threaten to go by train or even walk. I can only put this down to the effect of insidious propaganda. Lisa, however, stoutly maintains that now, as a woman, I do not drive nearly as well as I did a few years ago.

If she is correct, this may perhaps be one of the ways in which I over-adjusted in taking over feminine instead of masculine roles. It seems to me that this over-adjustment was inevitable, for I was trying to find a balance after spending so much of my life with the masculine side of my nature predominating to the almost complete exclusion of the feminine. It was many months before I realised that there was such a thing as being too feminine, and that if I were to be a properly adjusted adult both sides of my nature would have to become integrated, to a certain extent at least.

When I could be objective about it, I began to understand that there was nothing undesirable about showing traces of the stronger side of my personality. Both men and women seemed to react more favourably when confronted with a more aggressive me. Men especially showed a better reaction.

I always had to remember that I was building a new personality, and that I would have to curb undesirable tendencies as they arose while at the same time cultivating the traits which seemed most acceptable.

It was pointed out to me that some of the world's most attractive women have a definitely masculine side. Marlène Dietrich has been described by Kenneth Tynan as having sex, but no particular gender. During one period she wore men's clothes on many public occasions. Once, Greta Garbo called at the house of Howard Greer, the Hollywood dress designer, and was refused admittance because his mother thought she was a boy in woman's clothes! Hildegard Neff, who has a deep voice like Dietrich's, is reputed to have masqueraded as a soldier in the German army when escaping from Berlin at the end of the war. She is a good example of the type of woman who is feminine enough to be attractive to men, but still has a touch of masculinity that women sense, and like.

When I felt I had reached the end of the period of transmogrification (good word, that!), the time came for me to be re-introduced to my parents. I had kept in touch with them by letter and telephone during all this time, but I believed it best that they should not meet me while I was changing. They had met and consulted with my doctors.

As things turned out, I was to be very glad that all the technical aspects of my case had been fully explained to them. Otherwise they might not have realised, when the case of Christine Jorgensen received world-wide publicity shortly afterwards, that our two situations were widely different.

I had arranged to meet my father on one day, and my mother on the next. My father arrived to keep our appointment on the stroke of four o'clock; characteristically, he was precisely punctual. I was all

nerves, and it was no help to see him start violently as I opened the door. A moment later he had controlled himself. He followed me into the lounge and we had tea together. I had expected that he would be as nervous about the meeting as I was, but he showed no trace of nervousness or embarrassment after that first moment, and this had a reassuring effect on his newly acquired daughter. The cup rattled rather loudly in the saucer as I passed him his tea, but I avoided the danger of slopping tea into the saucer by cheating and only filling the cup three-quarters full.

I was soon completely at my ease. The only reference of any sort that Father made to my femininity was when he said he hoped I would never paint my toe-nails scarlet.

Exactly forty-four minutes after he had rung my bell Father looked at his watch and announced that he had to be going. As I closed the front door on him I began to tremble in a violent nervous reaction. And it must have been an even stranger experience for him.

Next day my mother came to tea. The prospect was more terrifying than meeting my father had been, even though there was no real reason for my fear. I knew Mother would be sweet and kind, but I think I was probably afraid that she would not like me as a girl, and that she would find me so changed that she might hold me responsible for having done away with her son. In a way, of course, I was responsible for that.

I had told my parents quite frankly that it would have been feasible to have been masculinised and to have continued to live as a male. But once medical science had shown me that I was fundamentally and primarily female, I could not have been expected to have myself artificially masculinised so that I could go on living a miserably unhappy life as a member of a sex to which I knew I did not belong. Having been assured that I was genetically a female, with female physical characteristics, there was only one possible course to follow, and that was to find out what could be done to make me an unequivocal member of the sex to which I would have belonged since birth, if I had not developed along the wrong lines.

I knew my mother had had this explained to her, but I could not be sure that she really understood my feelings. Hence my nervousness, which became worse as tea-time drew near.

I heard the “ping” of the taxi-meter outside. Taking a deep breath, I went to the door.

She did not start when she saw me, as my father had done; maybe he had warned her not to. We went into the lounge and she sat down. I went out to the kitchen to make the tea. Carefully warming the pot, I rinsed it out and then made the tea. I had just put it on the tray and was about to return to the lounge with it when a horrid thought struck me. Taking off the tea-pot top I looked inside. The water was colourless; I had forgotten to put the tea in!

Hastily I made it properly, thinking that at any rate the pot would be nicely warm now, and carried the tea in, half-expecting any moment to fall flat on my face with the tray.

Poor Mummy was doing her best to make me feel at ease, but the atmosphere was rather tense. We talked of old times; she recalled how my little brother had been taken to a concert and had said, “Doesn’t good music hurt your hands?” We remembered how embarrassing it had been when, in church, he had loudly enquired, “That man wearing the sheet, is he the Holy Ghost?”

Then we talked of clothes. I showed her sketches and photographs of some of my work. I think it was only then that she really grasped how I had changed—how could this work have been produced by someone who was once a horrible grubby little boy who refused to learn the names of flowers and who once took the vacuum cleaner to pieces and used it as a basis for a television set—which worked!

After she had gone I felt as though I had been filleted and then put through a wringer. We met several more times before we really felt comfortable with each other. Then we became the firm friends we are now.

One of my new men friends was a newspaper reporter who worked on the staff of a national daily. Late one night he telephoned me and excitedly repeated a news story he had just heard on the radio. An American soldier, it was reported, had been changed into a woman by doctors in Denmark. Could I, from what I knew of medical science, tell him if there could be any truth in the report?

I told him it was quite likely to be perfectly true. The man might well have been a transvestite, with an irresistible urge to dress as a woman. Transvestites, particularly if they are not strongly sexed, had been recorded as asking doctors to make them into women. There are many authenticated cases of such transformations, the earliest known dating from the time of Nero.

After the death of his wife, Poppaea, Nero had searched far and wide for someone who resembled her as closely as possible. There was one person whose face was exactly that of the late Empress, but it belonged to a young freedman named Sporus. The Emperor ordered his surgeons to transform Sporus into a woman. They did the best they could, and when Sporus had recovered from the operation, Nero formally married him. It was a most extravagant wedding, pompous and impressive. The "bride" wore a rose-coloured veil.

No doubt the Romans wished Nero's father had had such a wife.

Many other stories of similar happenings have come down through the ages. I told my reporter friend that modern discoveries in hormone therapy and operating techniques had made even drastic alterations likely to be effective and convincing, but I suggested that there would be a good deal of controversy over the medical, moral and legal angles of such a case. I told him of Steinach's experiments with female hormone injections into castrated male guinea-pigs; the pigs had subsequently developed some female characteristics. I then gave my friend some details of well-known cases of natural and not artificially induced changes of sex, and hung up.

As I went to bed that night I wondered just what he would say and think if he knew all there was to know about me. Poor man, he'd have had a fit!

CHAPTER 9

IT IS VERY NATURAL for human beings to want to be "different," but any unfortunate who is outstandingly different from his fellow-creatures wants fervently to be normal and ordinary and not a 'freak.' And if he is successful in finding a way to become normal, he will understandably make every effort to avoid publicity. So-called 'changes' of sex do occur from time to time; my bearded philosopher friend is an example. But when he told me his history he emphasized that if his past were known his life would be ruined.

People are apt to hate as well as fear the unfamiliar. Only a few hundred years ago it was common practice to crucify a hermaphrodite. In Basle in the Middle Ages a cock was solemnly tried and then burned alive in the market-place for the unnatural crime of laying an egg.

Today, thanks to the spread of sex-education, we are more enlightened and less intolerant. The unhappy creatures who are intersexes are no longer dealt with as though they were personally responsible for their physical abnormality.

A recent instance of a public avowal of change of sex occurred in Scotland on September 12, 1952. An announcement in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* revealed that a Scottish woman doctor, forty years of

age, had been legally re-registered as a man. It showed remarkable courage, I thought, for the doctor to have taken this step.

There had been no surgery involved in the change, for none was needed; there had been, however, a series of male hormone treatments. As a child, the doctor had shown a strong dislike of frills and flounces, and had worn an Eton crop. Other comparatively masculine traits had been evident, such as an enthusiasm for hunting and fishing. But masculinisation could not have been at all 'freakish,' for the doctor had a large practice and was highly thought of by patients and neighbours. Now, after the change of sex, he has married. He is still in practice and is respected and loved by all.

Less than three months after this announcement, newspapers all over the world carried the astonishing story of Christine Jorgensen's transformation. Here is the full story, as related in the press. Two years earlier, a twenty-four-year-old American man named George Jorgensen, junior, a transvestite, had sailed from New York in the liner *Stockholm*. His destination was Denmark. In Copenhagen, he became a patient of Dr. Christian Hamburger, chief of the Hormone Department of the Statens Serum Institut in Copenhagen. After some preliminary experimental treatments, permission to take further steps was granted by the Danish Department of Justice. Operations were then performed. As a result of these treatments, the former United States soldier, who had been a clerk at Fort Dix, received permission from Washington to take out a new passport in the name of Christine Jorgensen, and was free to dress and live as a woman.

Christine then wrote home to her parents in the Bronx, saying, "Nature made a mistake which I have corrected, and now I am your daughter." Somehow the story was released to the newspapers; it aroused world-wide interest.

Because of this tremendous publicity, and because so many of the news stories were misleading, Christine's Danish physicians disclosed many of the details of her case. She had never been a pseudo-hermaphrodite, or a person possessing two sets of sexual characteristics, one dormant and one active. She was scientifically classified as a transvestite, a person with an irresistible urge to wear the clothing of the other sex.

As I had prophesied to my newspaper friend when he telephoned me with the first news of the Jorgensen case, not all of the publicity was favourable by any means. Popular opinion was sympathetic, on the whole: the Scandinavian Society of New York awarded her the title of "Woman of the Year," and she was also given a scroll from the Scandinavian Societies of Greater New York for her contribution to science. But the G.I.'s in Korea elected her "Miss Neutral Zone," and Walter Winchell was one of the many who expressed scepticism, to say the least. Medical authorities in the United States were on the whole disapproving.

Professor Dahl Iverson of Denmark was quoted by the Scandinavian newspapers as saying, "Christine Jorgensen has had treatment here and has undergone a complete change of sex. A young man has changed sex, and from my point of view that is all there is to it." He was told of doubts expressed by Judge Ploscowe of New York, and said, "One cannot expect a judge to comprehend a medical question." The United States Ambassador in Denmark, in the meantime, had signed a certificate saying that Christine Jorgensen is legally a woman.

Christine is now [1954] performing in cabarets and has made not only headlines but a great deal of money.

The distinctive feature in her case, of course—and the basis for all the controversy—was the fact that the change had apparently been induced entirely through artificial means, no spontaneous changes having taken place at all (as they did in my case). But Christine Jorgensen's transformation was by no means the first to be artificially achieved.

The famous sexologist, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, has described the case of an individual known first as Rudolf and subsequently as Dora. Rudolf was one of several brothers and sisters. All of his siblings were normal, and he too seemed entirely normal until the age of six. He was 'different' only in that he was unusually docile, and preferred playing alone to being with other children.

It was the custom, in those days, to keep all children in dresses, regardless of sex, until they were five or six. When Rudolf's parents tried to get him to wear trousers he became far from docile, and fought with all his strength against being forced to dress as a boy. He was discovered trying to convert himself into a little girl with the aid of a piece of string. He was only just stopped in time. This was at the age of six; during the following years he wore his sisters' clothes whenever he could, and as he developed sexually he showed homosexual tendencies. His compulsion to dress as a woman became stronger, and eventually he left home and lived as a woman.

In 1921, when he was about thirty years of age, he had himself operated on. In 1930 two more operations were performed on him. As a result of this surgery his body, externally at least, changed to that of a female.

A much publicised case of a very different type was that of the Danish painter, Einar Wegener. His life story is told in a book entitled *Man into Woman*, published in 1933. Einar was a perfectly normal boy, both physically and mentally. At the age of twenty he married; his wife was a painter, too, and their marriage was a happy one. One day, an actress whose portrait was being painted by his wife was unable to come for her sitting. Einar's wife persuaded him to take her place and pose for the drapery and legs. For a joke, his wife disguised him completely as a woman, and the masquerade was so successful that it was repeated on a number of occasions. In woman's dress, Einar attended carnivals and balls, and posed for many of his wife's pictures and drawings.

This 'joke' had begun while they were living in Copenhagen, and it continued after they moved to Paris. By now his masquerade was so well-established that he and his wife had begun calling him "Lili" when he was dressed as a woman. Then he began to perceive a change within himself. He started to feel that "Lili" was a real individual, sharing the same body as Einar. From this time on his nose began bleeding sporadically. There was other bleeding as well, and he consulted many doctors without getting any help or relief.

He read medical books extensively, and became convinced that his internal organs were abnormal. At forty he was a desperately unhappy person, contemplating suicide. Then he met a German doctor who was prepared to help him.

Examinations revealed that his body had undoubted female conformation. He underwent a series of operations. The presence of rudimentary ovaries was established, and ovarian tissue from a healthy young woman of twenty-six was transplanted into him. This technique, of course, has been superseded by modern hormone therapy.

A new passport was issued by the Danish authorities, in the name of Lili Elbe. The King of Denmark declared Einar's marriage annulled, and his wife married a mutual friend. A French painter who was also a friend of old standing fell in love with Lili. But before Lili could marry she had to have one more operation. This was to enable her to function completely as a wife and mother. The operation was successfully carried out, but shortly afterwards Lili died of heart trouble.

Some time before her death her story had leaked out through an indiscreet friend. It caused a great sensation in 1931. I did not hear of Lili's case until my own treatment was well under way. When I read the book about her life I noticed many similarities between her history and mine.

Cases of women who have become men are not uncommon, although the reverse is very rare indeed. Military life seems to attract women who have changed their sex; more than one has joined the Foreign Legion. One case was that of Giovanna Lavagna of Bologna, a beauty in her early twenties who was engaged to an R.A.F. officer in the First World War. She developed a deep voice and powerful muscles, and ultimately became a soldier.

Poor Giovanna! A minute quantity of the wrong chemical in her body and she not only lost her lover but had to face a new existence—and a pretty terrible one at that. Thirty years later, and it would have been possible to restore her femininity by suitable hormone treatments.

Among the few known cases of men who have turned into women perhaps the most remarkable is that of a Polish sergeant who, according to reports, became a mother in 1936. The baby weighed nine pounds and was quite normal.

In 1951 a German boy in Munich officially changed sex *twice*. He was born a boy in 1932, and when a year old was operated on and became a girl. The birth was re-registered. At the age of nineteen the girl began to grow a beard and to become somewhat burly. The suspicions of the police were aroused, and as a result she attended a Munich clinic for treatment. After two operations she was re-registered as a boy. Six more operations were required before the change was complete and the unfortunate patient became a properly functioning male.

One otherwise unrecorded change of sex was revealed by a tangled legal situation.

In 1949 Mr. Wynsley Michael Swan died, leaving a widow, Olive Mary Swan. They had been married in 1927. Mr. Swan had been left a residue in trust under his father's will, and the case was brought into court because the money had been left to Wynifred Mary Swan. Wynifred Swan had been a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps during the First World War; in 1923 she had changed sex completely. The court's problem was to decide whether the estate could be dealt with upon the footing that Wynsley Michael Swan, deceased, was in fact the same person as Wynifred Mary Swan.

The decision of the court was that there was no impediment to carrying out the terms of the will. In effect, therefore, the change of sex was disregarded. The Judge remarked, "There is nothing very terrible about this, it is a peculiar case, but not unknown."

The evidence showed that the child was registered as a girl at her birth in 1874. After the change, Wynsley Michael Swan married and lived a normal life with his wife. There were no children.

Transvestites represent quite a different problem from that of a person like Einar Wegener or Giovanna Lavagna. Transvestism indicates a high degree of *psychological* intersexualisation; physical attributes are normal. Transvestism is common and has been ever since the two sexes began to wear distinguishing clothes. Socially and psychologically, it is far more difficult to deal with than malfunction of the mechanism of sex determination.

I had been discussing transvestism with a doctor one day, when I casually mentioned that I had never come across a case, as far as I knew. A few days later my telephone rang; in a funny little voice, a man announced himself as one of the doctor's patients. The doctor, he said, had thought I might be interested in meeting him. I was particularly busy at the time, so I said this would be impossible for a few days at least. The voice sounded a little disappointed. "I was rather hoping," it said, "to meet you tonight, in the West End. I shall of course," it added, "be wearing women's clothes."

I thought this would be far too good to miss. I arranged a meeting, though in a far less conspicuous spot than the one he had suggested, which was Oxford Circus Tube Station.

When I told Lisa what had happened she said, "This I must see." We went off together to keep our strange rendezvous, certain that he would be very young indeed, and thus able to get away with it, or so old and awful that nobody would care, anyway.

We approached the meeting place and saw an extraordinary figure waiting there. From fifty yards away, and after dark at that, the figure could only have been that of a man. He wore an off-white (very much off-white) coat of a fabric woven to simulate fur, lisle stockings, big black *boots* that looked like violin cases, and a head scarf with a tuft of straight, thinning hair escaping from the front. His unmistakably masculine face was dabbed with white powder.

Our first inclination was to walk straight by, but we realised that if no one turned up to keep the appointment his feelings would be badly hurt, so we introduced ourselves. He said the name was Mary, and asked how we thought he looked. We said we thought he looked charming but we really must be going in a few minutes. He offered to come round to tea with us, provided there were no children in the neighbourhood. I told him that unfortunately the entire neighbourhood positively teemed with them.

A few months later I asked the doctor for news of "Mary." He said he had not seen "Mary" for some time, but rather gathered he had intended to get married to a woman who proposed to take him in hand.

A year later one of my friends told Lisa and me that he had been exchanging letters with a transvestite who had promised to come up to town and meet him at Piccadilly Underground Station. If Lisa and I wanted to come along and have a look, we could, but we must promise to keep out of the way.

At the appointed time Lisa and I duly arrived. Our friend was already installed in position, and we exchanged careful glances. "There he is!" Lisa and I cried out simultaneously, pointing in different directions. Lisa had singled out a rather burly woman with an incipient moustache, while I had picked on an odd-looking creature with a figure like an inverted pear.

In the next ten minutes we had a succession of false alarms, and then at long last up tripped the transvestite. We both gasped. It was Mary! But a transformed Mary. She looked years younger; still masculine when you knew the secret, but then so, apparently, were half the other women in London. Her hair was uncovered; it had been done in little curls which made it look quite thick. She wore high-heeled shoes, obviously a few sizes too small, which made her feet look quite presentable. It seemed that married life suited her!

The causes of transvestism have been carefully studied. The psychological effect of clothes, scientists are now aware, is a powerful thing. Although very few transvestites venture to wear the clothes of the opposite sex in public, a great many do so in private.

Male transvestites are often rather ashamed of their proclivity; certainly public opinion deals more harshly with a man dressed in woman's clothes than with a woman wearing slacks. Some men go about the house in skirts and rationalise their behaviour by saying, "It gives me a sense of freedom." Many women also go about their homes in trousers, and, oddly enough, explain, "It gives me a sense of freedom."

Psychologists explain why men behave in this rather bizarre way. They say that such conduct is basically due to deep-seated homosexual tendencies; the subject tends to identify himself with his mother or mother surrogate. He therefore wants to dress like her. He may also have an unconscious fear of losing his masculinity. Unconsciously he feels that in female clothes he is safe from mutilation. Usually another contributing factor is exaggerated narcissism; this trait exists in many men but cannot

always find expression. Fetishism is usually evident; clothes are the symbol of the opposite sex and the subject identifies himself with them. Often an element of masochism is present.

Some authorities believe that a child can become a transvestite by being forced to wear the clothes of the opposite sex, and thus conditioned to behave as though of the other sex.

Analysis shows that some, and often all of these elements are at work in the male transvestite. Psychotherapy can cure the transvestite—if he fully cooperates, and really wants to be cured.

There is strong anthropological evidence that the basis of transvestism is, in the main, a homosexual one. It can hardly be considered a manifestation of heterosexuality.

But the homosexual element is nearly always entirely unconscious, and often very deeply buried. When a transvestite strenuously denies that he has the slightest tendency in this direction, it is entirely likely that he is telling what he believes to be the truth.

Often transvestites are happily married and have children. Their own explanation of their peculiarity is that they just happen to like wearing the clothes of the opposite sex; it makes them happy to do so, and they feel it gives expression to a feminine streak within them.

Occasionally a transvestite with exhibitionistic tendencies will make a public appearance in woman's clothes. There is no actual law which states that this is illegal, any more than there is a law forbidding women to wear trousers. However, under British law he can be charged with insulting behaviour, or with conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. He will almost certainly be fined, and may even go to prison for importuning. The worst part of his punishment, however, will be the inevitable publicity and ridicule. And for good measure, he will most likely be taken for a homosexual, although in all probability he is nothing of the sort.

It goes without saying that people with such tendencies should be discouraged, if only for their own protection. There have been cases of murder resulting from a discovery that the true sex of an individual is not his apparent one.

Female transvestites are much easier to understand. Usually theirs is a straightforward desire to be men; they do the best they can by dressing the part. Here, too, a homosexual component is common.

Of course it should not be forgotten that women sometimes wear the clothes of the opposite sex for purely functional purposes, as did Joan of Arc.

From the earliest times cases have been recorded of men who dressed as women and women who dressed as men. Hercules, Julius Caesar, Philip the Duke of Orleans, the Chevalier D'Eon, and the Abbé de Choisy come to mind immediately amongst the males, and amongst the women, Dr. James Barry, Lady Hester Stanhope, George Sand and Colonel Barker.

Transvestites are never hermaphroditic. Dr. Clifford Allen, who has made a study of hermaphrodites, states that those brought up as males did not show homosexual tendencies, and did not behave as transvestites. This study seems to show that the cause is in the mind rather than in the body.

In my own case, I was never either a transvestite or a homosexual. My sexual inclinations were normal until the period of hormonal imbalance began. While my body was undergoing changes, all inclinations died. When they appeared again, they were re-oriented. But this re-orientation was normal, since I was then a woman.

A normal man or woman in the clothes of the opposite sex would look quite absurd, and either appearance or demeanour would make the masquerade easy to detect. It follows logically, therefore, that when an individual is able without any effort to pass, when properly dressed, as a member of the opposite sex, there must be some physical factor at work.

As medical science reveals more of the secrets of the mind and of the body, perhaps a solution will be found to the problem of the transvestite.

CHAPTER 10

A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN WRITTEN about change of sex, and from time to time a specific case arouses great public interest, and much discussion. Perhaps not the least interesting aspect of the matter is the fact that many leading authorities claim that there is no such thing. One such authority, the late Dr. Norman Haire, who was a leading expert on sex, stated categorically that there has been no authentic case of change of sex in a human being, and that ostensible changes of sex were in actuality cases where the sex of the child was wrongly diagnosed at birth.

Such an error, in Dr. Haire's opinion, can arise when there has been faulty pre-natal development. As the child grows older, further development may reveal that he is not a member of the sex in which he has been brought up. It is usual, in cases of sexual ambiguity, to bring the child up as a boy, at least until the true sex can be positively established. If the child should unmistakably begin to develop into a girl, then the "sex" is changed, and the child's education and general rearing changes accordingly.

Dr. Haire's opinion is not definitive; there is still a great deal to be learned about what determines the sexual development of the unborn child, and of the adolescent. Nor does science as yet fully understand the complicated roles of the hormone-secreting glands. Enormous strides have been made in these fields within the last few decades, and a great deal of light has been shed on problems which previously baffled the medical scientists, but there is still a great deal more to be done, and intensive research is continuing.

The general lines of biological development, of course, have by now been thoroughly explored. Certain factors are no longer controversial. Science knows, for example, what exactly makes the difference between a male and a female. Many people think that a man is a man because he has testes, and a woman is a woman because she has ovaries. This is an incorrect approach. Modern biology has demonstrated that sex is based, not on the gonads, but on the genes. The gonads have an important function, but they are only the senior executives, while the function of the genes is that of the governing director.

It is common knowledge that the human body is built up of a number of tiny cells, each a minute unit which has in its centre an infinitesimally small particle of matter called the nucleus. Every living cell must have a nucleus. It is also well-known that cells multiply by dividing, so that one living cell can form two new living cells. What is not so well understood is the fact that when this division takes place the nucleus of the parent cell is bisected in a complicated way. Instead of merely splitting into two equal portions, it becomes sorted out into a collection of rods known as chromosomes. And the *identical* assortment of chromosomes will be found in the nucleus of every single cell within the body of a specific animal.

These chromosomes make us all what we are: they determine our sex, the colour of our eyes, skin and hair. They transmit inherited factors, called genes, and thus determine whether or not we look like our grandmothers. The actual mechanism of this transmission is not yet fully understood, but it is known that thousands of genes are carried by each chromosome.

As yet the genes cannot be studied under the microscope, but it is known that they are in the same order in each chromosome in each cell. Actually, they are chemicals which control every aspect of human development. They control our fingerprints, and they are responsible for the fact that we are born with two arms and two legs.

There are always exactly forty-eight chromosomes in each cell of the human animal. Never more and never less. When a cell divides, the nucleus divides too, and so does each chromosome, so that each cell still contains forty-eight chromosomes.

At the moment of conception, the sperm from the male penetrates the egg in the female and activates it in such a way that each cell within the fertilised egg now contains half the original chromosomes of the father and half those of the mother.

The forty-eight chromosomes are paired together. Twenty-three of the twenty-four pairs are always identical; the twenty-fourth pair, known as the sex chromosomes, is the key to the whole question of sex determination. Depending on the type of chromosome contained in the sperm, the sex of the baby-to-be is decided at the very instant when fertilisation takes place. Sex is therefore *genetically* determined, and is purely a matter of chance, for half of the millions of sperm cells deposited by the male at the moment of conception contain sex chromosomes of the male type, and the other half contain the female type. Only one of these millions of cells will merge with the egg.

One obvious fact emerges from this. The baby-to-be must be either fundamentally male or fundamentally female, so there can be no such thing as a true hermaphrodite. As the fertilised egg divides and subdivides into a multitude of cells, each new cell will have a set of chromosomes identical to those of the single original cell, and carrying the same sex-determining function. The fundamental direction of the child's sex development is set when the father's chromosomes pair with the mother's within the egg.

In the foregoing account a tremendously complicated process has been outlined in the simplest possible terms, and all but the most important details have been omitted.

Professor R. Goldschmidt, of Berlin, has made a special study of anomalies in animals and plants, and he has evolved a theory about intersexes in human beings. His theory is that all human intersexes were originally intended to be female; that is, the egg from which they came was fertilised by a sperm possessing female-type sex chromosomes. Every cell in the body of the intersex is therefore female, and will always remain so. But disturbances during the growth period may cause changes in the development of the body structure, changes so drastic that the baby may develop normal male organs and glands.

A girl whose development took this path would be able to produce sperm; unlike the normal male, however, who produces approximately equal quantities of male and female sex chromosomes, her cells would contain sex chromosomes of the female type only. Only female children, therefore, could be procreated.

Some authorities support Dr. Goldschmidt's analysis, and consider that completely normal males who seem to be unable to procreate male children may be the most complete examples of sex reversal. My case does not contradict the theory; both my children were female.

If present attempts to separate the two types of sperm succeed, and tests are then applied to appropriate cases, it may be possible to test this theory. It may then be possible, too, to choose whether a child will be a boy or a girl.

Intersexuality results when something has gone wrong with the sex-*forming* mechanism of the unborn child. In its potentialities, the human embryo is bisexual; theoretically it could develop into a male or a female or a combination of both. The sex-formative impulse, which functions in a manner that is still little understood, controls the path of the embryo's development. It stimulates the growth of masculine attributes while inhibiting the growth of feminine ones, or else does the reverse. But the rudiments of the organs of the opposite sex are to be found within the body of every human being.

Such a thing as a one hundred per cent man or a one hundred per cent woman simply does not exist, even when the sex-forming mechanism has achieved a normal result.

When the embryo is just over an inch long the gonads - the sex glands - begin to form. At this stage the gonads are bisexual, and it is only after the seventh week of development that the stage of unisexuality is approached. Then each gonad, which at this point is an ovotestis (combined ovary and testis) receives either the impulse to form an ovary and stay where it is, or to form a testis and then ultimately descend into the scrotum.

The genital organs have so far been developing rudimentary characteristics of both sexes. Now they begin to assume a shape approximating their final form. When a masculinising impulse is at work the female ducts disappear, leaving only vestigial traces. The labia combine and form the scrotum, and other similar modifications take place. The feminising impulse virtually eliminates the tract of the male ducts, leaving only the slightest traces. The female ducts develop, forming the Fallopian tubes, and also unite to form the uterus and vagina. The rest of the system grows and is formed in a similar manner.

It is perhaps not surprising that such a complicated and involved evolution as this should occasionally fail to proceed exactly as it should. Sometimes, though rarely, development is faulty, and can result in intersexuality. This is not always the cause of intersexuality, however; malfunctioning of the glands is often the factor responsible. My own case was due to a combination of both these factors.

It is a widely-known fact that what we are depends to a great extent upon our glands, and few people can have had a better opportunity than I of having this fact clearly demonstrated to them!

The glands perform their vital functions by discharging secretions into the blood. The secretions are known as hormones; they may act as stimulating agents, or may have a repressive action. They are the chemical messengers of the body. They are at work throughout the course of the human being's life, depositing minute quantities of vital hormones into the blood stream. These tiny traces of chemicals are of absolutely essential importance.

All hormone-secreting glands are part of the endocrine system; the system functions as an entity. The glands are not isolated from one another; the malfunction of one gland may very well destroy the entire balance of the hormones. The consequences can be unpleasant; they may even result in death.

Gland trouble may make a person into a circus freak. The fat man, the bearded lady, the dwarf and the giant all make their livings out of endocrine disorders.

The glands are so closely interconnected that it is difficult to consider the action of one without involving some, or all, of the others. Any increase or decrease in the production of sex hormones, for example, may affect the entire system. Sex hormones are not only manufactured by the sex glands, but can also be produced by the adrenals. There are two adrenal glands, and they lie above the kidneys.

The continuous functioning of the adrenals is essential to life, but the most important gland of all—the master gland—is the pituitary.

This gland is formed partly from nervous tissue. It lies in close proximity to the base of the brain, with which it is closely associated. Many medical books on the endocrine system refer to the pituitary as “the conductor of the endocrine orchestra.” Among the many hormones which it secretes is one which controls the output of sex hormones by the sex glands. There is therefore a very close connection between the brain and the ovaries or testes, via the pituitary. The centre and core of each of the adrenals is also formed from nervous tissue.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychiatry, lived before the discovery and isolation of the sex hormones. He once wrote, “What constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown element which is beyond the power of anatomy to grasp.” Now, however, it has been grasped.

When male and female sex hormones were at last isolated the astonishing discovery was made that they are chemically very similar indeed, with only slight differences visible in their molecules. The male hormone is called *testosterone*. The female sex hormones are of two kinds, *oestrogen* and *progesterone*. Testosterone antagonises oestrogen, but has some progesterone-like properties.

Testosterone stimulates the growth and development of the genital organs; it stimulates growth of body hair and can halt baldness. All the typical masculine characteristics are due to the male hormone: general masculine appearance, deep voice, strong muscles, energetic gait, dominating and unemotional temperament, beard growth, and so on.

The female hormones are responsible for the general female appearance, for its roundness and comparative delicacy. These hormones cause the hair to grow thicker and longer on the head, but not on the face or trunk. They are responsible for such characteristics as breast development, accentuated emotional reactions, and maternal instinct. A woman's fine skin, light muscles, high voice, less dominating personality, her tendency to fatness and the distinctive distribution of the fat—all these traits derive from the female hormones.

The endocrine glands of a man produce not only the male hormone, but also a certain amount of the female hormone, oestrogen, as well. Conversely, a woman produces some male hormone.

Oddly enough, there seems to be little or no connection between physical and psychological masculinity or femininity. An outwardly very masculine man may be psychologically very feminine. An apparently girlish male may have a tough masculine nature which completely belies his exterior. There are also women who appear very feminine and fragile but who behave like men, and aggressive men at that. There are also women whose looks lead one to expect that they will have rather mannish natures, but who turn out to be charmingly feminine in everything but appearance.

Nor does there seem to be any direct connection between hormones and homosexuality. Hormones can make a tremendous difference in the strength of the sex-drive— either by increasing or decreasing it—but they do not seem to affect its direction.

The fact that physical manhood is hormone-determined was very clearly demonstrated in one of the first cases in which testosterone was used upon a human being, back in 1937. A little boy of three had a tumour in his larynx and could hardly breathe. He was given testosterone because experience had shown that laryngeal tumours of this type clear up of their own accord when a child reaches puberty. The effect of these injections of male hormones was quite remarkable. Within a few months he was showing many of the characteristics of an adult male. His muscles were strongly developed, and his body in general quite powerful. His sex organ was almost as large as that of a grown man. He had always been gentle and quiet, but now he became a real little bully, and had to be forcibly restrained from attacking the other children in the hospital ward.

When the injections were stopped, his whole character changed again, and the premature signs of manhood vanished. He became kind and considerate to the other children, and the terror of the ward was a terror no more.

Life once published an article concerning aggressiveness in the chicken-run. The most aggressive of the hens pecked all the others, without retaliation. The second hen in the pecking order pecked all except the first, and so on down the scale until the last poor fowl, who was completely devoid of any initiative whatever. She was pecked by all the others, and did not dare peck back. Then the unfortunate one was given some doses of testosterone. She became assertive and dominating, and from then on no hen pecked at her, but she pecked them all!

When women grow older their hormone balance often alters; more male hormone is secreted and less female. They often become aggressive and dominating, and are very much in evidence during bargain sales. Men, on the other hand, often lose their aggressive traits as they grow older; the male hormone output diminishes and they lose their drive. They become fussy and are easily upset. Cases have even been known where they were hen-pecked!

Internal secretions influence all our actions, to an extent and with an efficiency that the average person, unfamiliar with the workings of the endocrine system, often finds it difficult to comprehend. Hormones are biologically a very primitive method; they are found even in the lowest forms of animals, those which do not possess a nervous system. Hormones are completely interchangeable from one species to another.

It would be dangerous, however, to conclude that what we are depends exclusively upon our glands. Dr. Starke R. Hathaway, in his *Physiological Psychology*, says, "After going through the experimental and clinical literature, the thoughtful reader will conclude that the effects of personality upon glands are more impressive and easier to illustrate than are the effects of glands upon personality."

We have learned, in the last few decades, that the mind and the body are so closely linked that they can almost be considered one and the same thing. The channel of communication between them is the glandular system.

When an autopsy was performed upon the body of Napoleon, unmistakable signs of glandular change were found. These in turn had affected the body. These changes, it was thought, resulted from his defeats; it was suggested that they were the effects, and not the cause.

One's susceptibility to impulses of endocrine origin depends to a considerable extent upon the strength of the personality, which in turn is conditioned by education, environment and heredity.

Often the endocrinologist can cure a severe glandular disorder by changing the external factors which caused the disease; the disease will then cure itself. An interesting case was that of a girl who had been unlucky in love, and was admitted to the hospital weighing less than sixty pounds. Her ovaries seemed to be almost completely inactive. Her treatment comprised both psychotherapy and a change of environment; after a time she was discharged as cured. Later she returned for treatments of a different kind. She now weighed 168 pounds and wanted to reduce.

The factors were exactly reversed in the case of a young American motor mechanic. He had been an affectionate and obedient child, but during adolescence his character changed. He became moody and irritable. He took to crime, stealing and wrecking motor-cars on impulse. It was found that his testes were over-active. The condition was treated and his behaviour became exemplary.

Scientific evidence has shown that certain hormones can stimulate or inhibit the mechanism which evokes specific instinctive drives. The appearance of my own maternal instinct is an example of this.

In nature one of the most wonderful examples of instinctive behaviour is the phenomenon of bird migration. The gonads of the birds enlarge in the summer, and get smaller in the winter. As the organs enlarge the birds migrate northward; as they diminish the birds fly south. Experiments have shown that the time and direction of migration can be influenced by hormone injection. Migration is therefore almost certainly another example of a preformed nervous mechanism, presumably activated by hormonal agents.

As my case is, in scientific parlance, a "Series of one," it is difficult to draw conclusive evidence from the results obtained from the treatment. However, to my mind, one of the most fascinating aspects of the very far-reaching effects of the hormone treatment has been the changes in my instinctive behaviour.

In either sex the libido, or sexual desire, is thought to depend upon the male hormone. Frequently women cancer patients who are treated with male hormone have such an increase in libido that it annoys them. Women in their menopausal years, and also past them, often have increased libido because at this time they secrete more male hormone.

Tests have shown that brunettes secrete more male hormone than blondes. In theory, therefore, they should have more aggressiveness and sensuality but less femininity. Women derive their natural supply of male hormone from the ovaries and also the adrenals. An adrenal tumour can cause so much testosterone to be secreted that the woman may become virilised, with a deep voice, beard growth, and other signs of masculinity.

Feminism sometimes occurs in males. It can be caused by an under-secretion of the male hormone, due to a deficiency of the testes. Under such conditions the oestrogen in the male acts without the neutralising effect of testosterone.

In order to give some idea of the complications of hormone therapy, it may be mentioned that the treatment for such a condition may involve the use of testosterone, chorionic gonadotropin, total anterior pituitary, adrenal cortex, thyroid, vitamins B and E, and also calcium, iron and phosphorus!

Great skill is essential in administering hormone treatments. Hormone balance is a delicate matter, and must be most carefully supervised. Under certain conditions hormones can have a completely reversed effect. In some circumstances, for example, testosterone can feminise.

Medical science has now progressed to the point where it is possible virtually to turn a female into a male. Although this sort of thing is still in the experimental stage, quite a number of cases have been satisfactorily dealt with. The change is incomplete, it is true, and unproductive except that it can achieve a tolerably happy life for the individual concerned. He can never become a father, but he can become a good and useful member of society.

The case of a male who wishes to become a female is an entirely different matter, and cannot be treated in the same way.

Spontaneously, women sometimes become men, or at least develop a masculine psyche and are virilised to such an extent that they can live happily, and be socially acceptable, as males. Men sometimes become slightly feminised, but they do not become women.

Medical science believes that on the very rare occasions when an apparent man turns into a woman it is because he has been a highly virilised woman all the time. A man has a more or less steady flow of male hormones in his body. A woman has a hormone secretion which is far more complicated, and is cyclic. For fourteen days oestrogen is secreted by the ovaries, and then the progesterone takes over, although the oestrogen output still continues. At the end of the twenty-eight day cycle, the activity of both hormones ceases abruptly. The cycle is controlled by the pituitary, which also releases another hormone, the lactogenic, towards the end of the cycle.

When a woman is given testosterone the menstrual cycle stops. A pellet of the hormone can be implanted under her skin, and a minute quantity of chemical will be given off into the blood stream every day. The effect will be the same as if she had testes.

This treatment often produces acne, though, in the typical unpredictability of hormone treatment, testosterone has also been known to *heal* a severe case of acne!

There are vast complications in the way of converting a physically normal male into a female. One of them is the fact that it would be illegal, at least in Great Britain. In Denmark the Department of Justice will not now allow foreigners to be treated, although under certain circumstances permission may be granted to a Danish subject to undergo the treatment.

Apart from legal, ethical and social considerations, a change from male to female is made more difficult by the fact that many of the male sex-characteristics are not reversible. A man has wide shoulders and narrow hips, large hands and feet. He has a firm jaw and a strong face. Hormone treatment is not likely to alter the voice, and will not necessarily cause loss of either beard or body hair.

Unless the prospective patient is so feminine that he can pass for a woman *before treatment commences*, it is not likely that he can be helped. Presence of deep constitutional femininity is essential.

The physically normal male who wants to become a female is almost invariably a transvestite, which adds psychological complications to the technical ones. The transvestite has a sexual basis to his desire to change sex. If he were to find that he had become an unsexed woman he would most probably bitterly regret the change. Fortunately, it is possible to give a synthetic female hormone, *stilboestrol*, by mouth. This can have the effect of temporarily neutralising the output of the body's natural male hormone secretion, when taken in proper quantities under medical supervision. The effect usually is that the transvestite loses all interest in sex and no longer bothers to dress up.

Actually only a very small proportion indeed of transvestites would change sex even if the opportunity were open to them; in nearly every case they cling to their masculinity, and the less there is to cling to the more they seem to cling to it.

CHAPTER 11

LISA OPENED THE DOUBLE DOORS which led into the garden and the whole house seemed to take a deep breath of fresh, clean spring air. I turned on the radio. A dance band was playing "April in Paris, chestnuts in blossom." Lisa and I looked at each other for a moment, then she turned and went out of the room. When she came down she had our passports in her hand and I was on the telephone to the airline, booking seats on an afternoon flight to Paris the following day. It would be the first time I had been to Paris as a woman.

A hectic twenty-four hours passed before we found ourselves sitting in an aircraft watching the airport slant away from beneath us. Everything had happened so quickly that it was hard to believe that here we were, off to Paris and adventure.

Orly airport, then off to the Gare des Invalides in the long bus which rattles and toots and reminds you very forcibly of the fact that you are now not in England but in France, where the traffic proceeds in a series of phenomenal avoidances, where everyone believes that the faster you go the less likely you are to have an accident—always provided, of course, that you never stop sounding your horn.

Then a taxi, with a typically lunatic driver carrying a little dog on his lap. Down the Champs Elysées we drove towards our hotel, past the appropriate sight of a courting couple in an open horse-drawn carriage.

The taxi stopped at some traffic lights. A few yards away on the pavement were five young men, all very Continental-looking. They smiled and waved, and Lisa smiled and waved back, full of the joys of spring. Then the usual furious cacophony of hooting broke out from the vehicles behind us, and a few minutes later the light went green and we were off again.

As our taxi arrived at the hotel, an enormous American car drew up, and out of it emerged the five young men. They must have had their car parked just round the corner when they first saw us; evidently they had jumped in and followed at once. We had a terrific job getting rid of them. The hotel authorities seemed quite impressed, and suggested that the gentlemen take rooms, too.....

At least it cured Lisa completely of waving and smiling at people!

Later that evening I left her in the Hôtel Claridge, where she was meeting an old friend, and wandered out into the Champs Elysées. I was just wondering whether to go up towards the Etoile or down towards the Place de la Concorde, when I realised that just across the road was the end of the Avenue George V, and my thoughts went back to that scene in the early morning during the war, with my friend running like mad to join the jeep, and an irate Frenchman in hot pursuit.

I visualised the figure who had been at the wheel of the jeep, dressed in a battered service uniform, his face tanned dark brown with sun and exposure. It seemed utterly fantastic that I could possibly have anything in common with him....

A voice at my elbow spoke. "I beg your pardon, but did I not see you just now in the hotel talking with Mlle Lisa?" The speaker was a man of about thirty-five, with a most attractive voice. I was instantly reminded of George Sanders. He went on to ask me how she was; he could not speak to her in the hotel because he had been with some people.

Then he asked me if by any chance I was free, and whether I would care to have dinner with him. I thought fast. It had been an excellent and most impressive approach, and it seemed that he really did know Lisa. A strange man, though, and in Paris! He was apparently very much of a gentleman, but I would be absolutely asking for trouble if I went to dinner with him. What *would* my mother say if she knew? Think of the risk I would be taking! Quite definitely one of those things that just are not done. I went.

That night remains in my memory as the most pleasant and happiest time I have ever spent. He had a large English car and we went off in it. My feelings as it drove away can only be compared with those of someone who is sitting in a barrel, teetering on the brink of Niagara Falls. That night was like seeing Paris for the first time.

We went to a tiny, out-of-the-way bar, where a magnificent Negro sang and played the guitar. When he had finished everyone applauded by snapping their fingers, because there was someone asleep upstairs. We went to an hotel which had been a main organising centre for the Resistance movement during the war, and which had since become a real old-time cabaret.

In the little restaurant where we dined he borrowed the waiter's spectacles to read the menu. We drank a very special wine, dating from a year when coal had been scarce in that wine-producing area, and only wood was used for fires. The distinctive taste of that vintage was due to the wood fires.

My memories of the evening are of a kaleidoscopic view of the most fascinating places and things. My companion could not have been more attentive. In one boîte the band played and replayed my favourite tune. Ten minutes after we left, we had to return to get my gloves—the moment I reappeared the band struck up my tune again.....

It was on this evening that, for the first time, I really learned what a wonderful thing it is to be a woman, and to be admired. Deeply and thankfully I responded to the atmosphere and the attention.

P.G.Wodehouse once wrote: "It's like eating strawberries and cream in a new dress by moonlight on a summer night, while somebody plays the violin far away in the distance." That was exactly how I felt.

The night passed in a perfect dream. When we emerged from the last boîte it was daylight, and he drove me back to the hotel.

Later that morning he telephoned me. I asked him if he would like to speak to Lisa. He said that he had never met her; he had overheard me use her name!

Back in England again, the discovery of new emotional depths within myself had the effect of making me think back and consider how the pattern of my feelings and general attitudes had altered.

I had lived through a series of transitional periods. The first had been a stage of black depression, in which I did not know what had gone wrong, but sensed that I was changing in some unknown way. The second had been a stage of open and declared transition, when every day brought a new transformation of a major or minor kind, of a physical or emotional nature. The last had been the most subtle stage, and in a way the most difficult, for I had had to teach myself—and wait for myself—to develop from a mere female into a proper woman.

I had made mistakes, of course. In the beginning, as I have mentioned, I had over-compensated; I had been *too* feminine, I had been playing a feminine rôle instead of acting like a feminine person, who had, like every human being, some contradictory streaks in her personality. I had studied every feminine skill, the frivolous ones as well as important ones, as if each new thing I learned were another visa stamped in the passport I needed for entry into the world of womankind.

Bit by bit I found myself. Lisa had helped immeasurably. We were always very happy and perfectly at ease in each other's company. But until I had 'found' myself socially, I was as receptive as possible when with other people.

The main difference I noticed between the conversation of a group of young men, and that of a group of young women, was that the women laid much less emphasis on sex in their conversations. I had been rather led to imagine that the reverse might be the case, although I had found it a little hard to credit.

Among men, the accepted and successful way to gain attention is to use a penetrating voice. Among women, I discovered, the way to make oneself heard is to speak quietly instead of bawling; invariably they would stop to listen to my contribution to the conversation or argument.

A surprisingly large number of women seem to have had practically no sex education at all, and obstinately cling to the oddest old wives' tales.

I first discovered this at an all-woman tea-party, when one or two slightly naughty stories were being told. I told the story of a mother-to-be who had gone to the zoo and had been clawed by a bear. Next day the baby was born, and it had bare feet. There was a disappointing hush when I finished speaking. Obviously it was considered rather a serious subject for such a gathering. One woman said she had heard of such things, including a case of a woman who broke her leg and had a baby born with one leg shorter than the other!

In *The Natural History of Nonsense*, Bergen Evans mentions a case reported in the Boston Traveller of an unfortunate girl who gave birth to a baby octopus. "Imagine," he says, "the horror of having to knit baby things with eight sleeves...."

I shall be most careful not to say anything about this report at a ladies' tea-party. I am sure there would be some worried mothers as a result!

It does seem a very great pity that more cannot be done to further adult sex education. In the magazine *Woman*, dated October 17th, 1953, was a letter from a reader who described how badly she wanted a girl baby. She had decided that the left side of the mother's body governed the birth of a female child, and so during her nine months of pregnancy she slept only on the left side of the bed, sat on her husband's left at meals and at the cinema, and in a hundred and one other ways emphasized everything left.

I was very glad to see that the baby when it came was a girl (a left-handed one!), but a great deal of trouble could have been spared by some knowledge of the elementary biological principles involved.

Some of my newly-developed traits are almost complete reversals of the characteristics of the past. I had never paid any attention to children; now my maternal instinct is very strong. I never really realised

it was there at all until a certain ride I took on a bus. I was sitting on the hindmost seat, and suddenly felt a very sharp tug at my back hair. I turned round and there was a tiny little boy, three years old. His mother had dumped him on the bench seat just behind me and had gone back to fetch another child. My heart went straight out to him and we soon got acquainted. In that moment my whole attitude to children had changed completely. He had not only pulled at my hair, he had pulled at my heart strings.

When my nature became softer and less aggressive I made the discovery that I could actually shed tears! Apart from the usual crying spells during early childhood, the last time I could remember producing a tear was during a boxing tournament at preparatory school, and then this was at least partly induced by a series of punches on the nose.

But one evening I was watching a particularly sad film, and to my utter and complete amazement my eyes filled with tears. Shortly afterwards, late one Saturday night, I lay on my back in bed and heard over the radio an especially beautiful piece of music. Tears came to my eyes, and I made no effort to stop them, but just opened the taps, as it were, and let 'em come. I suddenly felt that they were also coming out of my *ears*. I roused sufficiently to investigate, and proved to my satisfaction that nothing phenomenal had occurred; the tears had merely flowed out of the corners of my eyes, into my ears, and then out again. The incident struck me as remarkably funny, and I began to laugh. I stopped this very hastily because for the first time, and I hope the last, I was well on the way to hysterics.

My temperament generally became much more variable, and less phlegmatic. I learned to predict the days on which I would feel especially energetic and cheerful, and those on which I would be best by myself. This new, slightly temperamental self was much more difficult to understand and cope with than the more stolid edition which preceded it.

It was a while before I was sure of the type of basic temperament which was emerging, and my unsureness was reflected in the clothes I wore. These ranged from the very unostentatious to the vivid. One day, when I was wearing a bright scarlet coat, an American said, "Hiya, little red riding-hood—I'm a wolf."

Beau Brummell, in the eighteenth century, abolished the beautifully embroidered and highly-coloured clothing which had adorned the gentlemen for hundreds of years, and started the fashion for black and white which has been adopted by well-dressed men ever since. He certainly did women a good turn, although I know many a man wishes he could be a little more decorative and still be fashionable.

When I went to my first formal dinner-party I realised what a nice thing it is, for the women at least, to have all the men looking like penguins. It makes the best possible background. And knowing that the men would provide this perfect background enhanced the tremendous psychological lift I got from being able to choose any colour I liked for my evening dress.

At first I found that I could spend an almost unlimited amount of time in getting ready for such an occasion. It was all very well for the beauty expert to say, "Before you get into your bath just pop your hair into pin-curls," but it took me forty minutes to do this minor task! Later I learned time-saving tricks, but it took me *six hours* to get ready for my first dinner-party!

I had done a certain amount of dancing almost from the beginning of my new life, but mainly in clubs, where the crowded floor only allowed movement in the vertical plane. At last—rather too soon for my liking—came an invitation to a ball. I had been looking forward to my first ball for a long time, but when the invitation finally came I nearly refused; I felt that I was not quite ready for it. However, life is short, and I only started mine half-way through, so the less time wasted the more gained. Back went my acceptance.

On the eve of the great day I went to a Turkish bath for the first time. The masseuse remarked on the firmness of my figure; I did not tell her that this was to be expected from a figure that had only been fully developed for a few years.

Carefully, I went over the clothes and accessories I was going to wear. I chose only things I had worn at least once before, so that I could be sure there would be no mishaps from an uncomfortable shoe or a dress that misbehaved.

I spent a busy day, leaving myself no time to think about anything other than the immediate job in hand. Almost before I knew it I was upstairs putting on the finishing touches.

That night, for the first time, I was going to be dancing in a brilliantly lighted room, with a large number of people.

Suddenly I was terrified. I should have waited another three months, I thought....

My hand is on the door-knob. I am trembling violently. Pull yourself together, girl. Yes, all right, then, have another look in that full-length mirror, if you think it will give you more confidence. In a few moments the dream of your life will be coming true. No jerkiness, hands flowing from the wrist, perfect poise. Just behave as though you were quite used to all this.

Out into the corridor, along to the head of the stairs—now for it. Waves of music. The dancing has already begun. If I tremble any more my knees will give way completely—no, of course they won't. Do the thing you fear and fear will vanish. Now I'm walking down the wide sweep of the staircase, and my fear *is* vanishing. Everyone in the hall seems to be looking at me. What are they saying? If it's nice I'm glad; if it's nasty, well, perhaps it's jealousy.... Anyway, what do I care?

Now I must speak to my host and hostess, and I must keep my voice low and soft. And now I'm dancing, and all the blood in my body has turned to music. The past is forgotten, the future doesn't matter, and the glowingly happy present is even better than I had hoped.

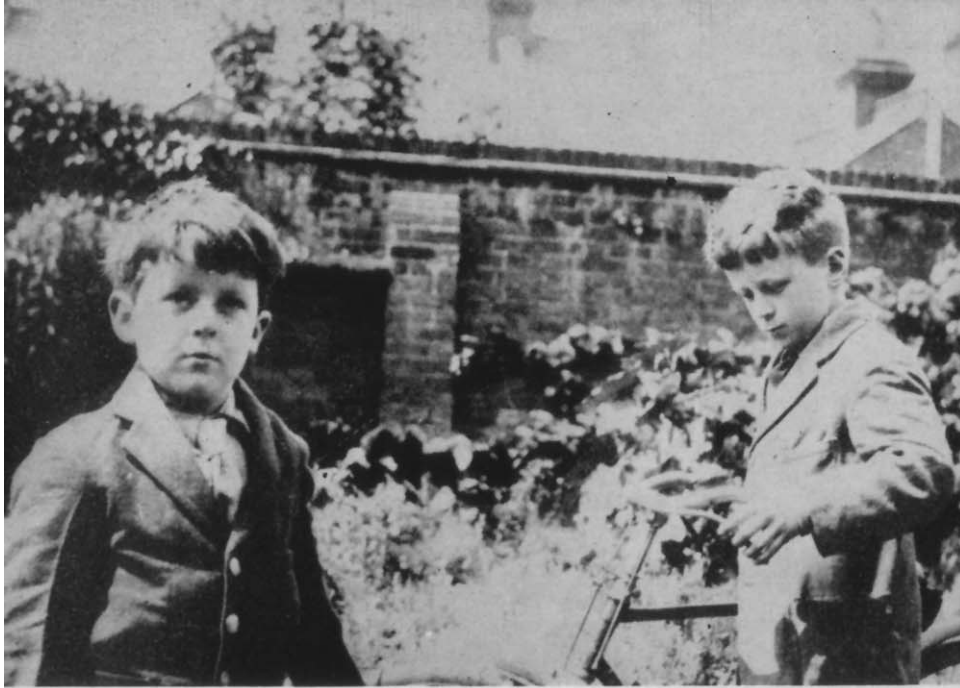
I am myself.

Illustrations

Next Page



The Cowell family in the early 1920s. Robert is on the extreme right.



Robert, on the right, about
ten years old. His brother
is with him.

Aged sixteen.





Robert on the right, at Brooklands, 1939.



February, 1941.

Captain Robert Cowell,
R. A. S. C., Military Identity Card.

Army Form B.2606.

**MILITARY
IDENTITY CARD No. M 207893**

Surname **COWELL**

Surname at Birth **COWELL**

Other Names **ROBERT MARSHALL**
(and rank or designation) **CAPT. RASC.**
165541

Unit of occupation **I. MAC.**

Address **WISSECH**

Nationality **BRITISH**

Nationality at Birth **BRITISH**

Second Nationality, if any **None**

Place of Birth **CROYDON**

Year of Birth **1915**

Issued by **Asst. Provost Marshal**

At **MAJOR**

Date **3/2/41**

**ASSISTANT PROVOST-MARSHAL
H.Q. 2 CORPS.**

**3 CORPS
H.Q.
MARSHAL**

Signature of Bearer
Robt. Cowell Capt.

Visible distinguishing marks
as above



Major-General Sir Ernest Cowell, Roberta's father, receiving the order of Commander, Legion of Merit, from General Eisenhower in North Africa.



Robert Cowell, back at racing after the war, photographed in 1947.



RAYMOND MAYS

BBRITAIN'S best-known driver, with a global reputation, Mays has been driving racing cars in hill-climbs, sprints and races for over 20 years. You would hardly guess his real age, for he seems to enjoy perpetual youth, as well as gay silk shirts and pale blue ties. Like the great Chiron, Mays is always impeccably turned out. His list of successes is too long to mention here, but it includes many International records, records at Shelsley Walsh and Prescott hill-climbs, the British Hill-climb Championship, and races in Germany, Switzerland and France, before the war. He was one of the originators of the E.R.A. car back in 1934 and is now similarly engaged with the B.R.M. Grand Prix car of which so much is expected in the not-too-distant future.

In his spare time he runs the family wool business, is a director of motor concerns, and lives with his mother in Lincolnshire. His interests include music, the stage, first-class tennis (in which spheres he has many friends) and skiing. Mays is always courteous even when pestered for autographs, and on his day is one of the finest drivers there is. He relates that his biggest thrill was when his brakes failed at 140 m.p.h. at Donington before the war and he had to scramble round Melbourne Hairpin at about 80 m.p.h. on the grass. He finished third in the Jersey race last year, at 81.82 m.p.h.

ROBERT MARSHALL COWELL

CHAIRMAN and technical director of R. M. Cowell Ltd., this 29-year-old driver has come to the fore in postwar racing and is at present constructing a novel racing car with a special engine for Grand Prix racing. His interests, apart from automobile engineering, include photography and music.

His co-driver is **Kenneth Bills**.



ROY SALVADORI

THIS young (25-year-old) newcomer to motor racing since the war has a 2.9-litre monoposto Alfa Romeo once driven to victory by the great Nuvolari but today he drives a 6-cylinder 1½-litre Maserati. He is a motor trader by profession and is interested in many forms of sport. He says, with a grin, that his greatest thrill to date, was driving the Alfa at the Chimay race last year when, never having motored at 100 m.p.h. before he found himself cruising at 135 m.p.h.!



Part of the program for the Jersey International Road Race, 1948.

No. 106B

(Certificate of making Decree Nisi Absolute (Divorce))

In the High Court of Justice.
PROBATE, DIVORCE AND ADMIRALTY DIVISION

(DIVORCE)

Between *Diana Margaret Talma* Petitioner
Cowell

and *Robert Marshall Cowell* Respondent

and Co-Respondent

Referring to the Decree made in this Cause
on the *17th* day of *March* 19*52*

whereby it was decreed that the Marriage had and solemnized on
the *29th* day of *May* 19*41*

at *Weydon Register Office in*
the County Borough of Weydon

between *Diana Margaret Talma*
Cowell the Respondent

the Petitioner and *Robert Marshall Cowell*

the Respondent be dissolved by reason that the Respondent had
deserted the Petitioner without cause for a period
of at least three years immediately preceding the
presentation of the petition

unless sufficient cause be shown to the Court within six weeks from the making
thereof why the said Decree should not be made absolute; and no such cause
having been shown, it is hereby certified that the said Decree was in the

29th day of *June* 19*52*
made final and absolute and that the said Marriage was thereby dissolved.

Dated the *29th* day of *June* 19*52*

106B.



Robert Cowell was divorced in 1952 when already legally a woman.



(Picture Post)

Roberta with her father and mother.



Crossing Piccadilly Circus.
(Picture Post)

"It was necessary to establish a
new personality."

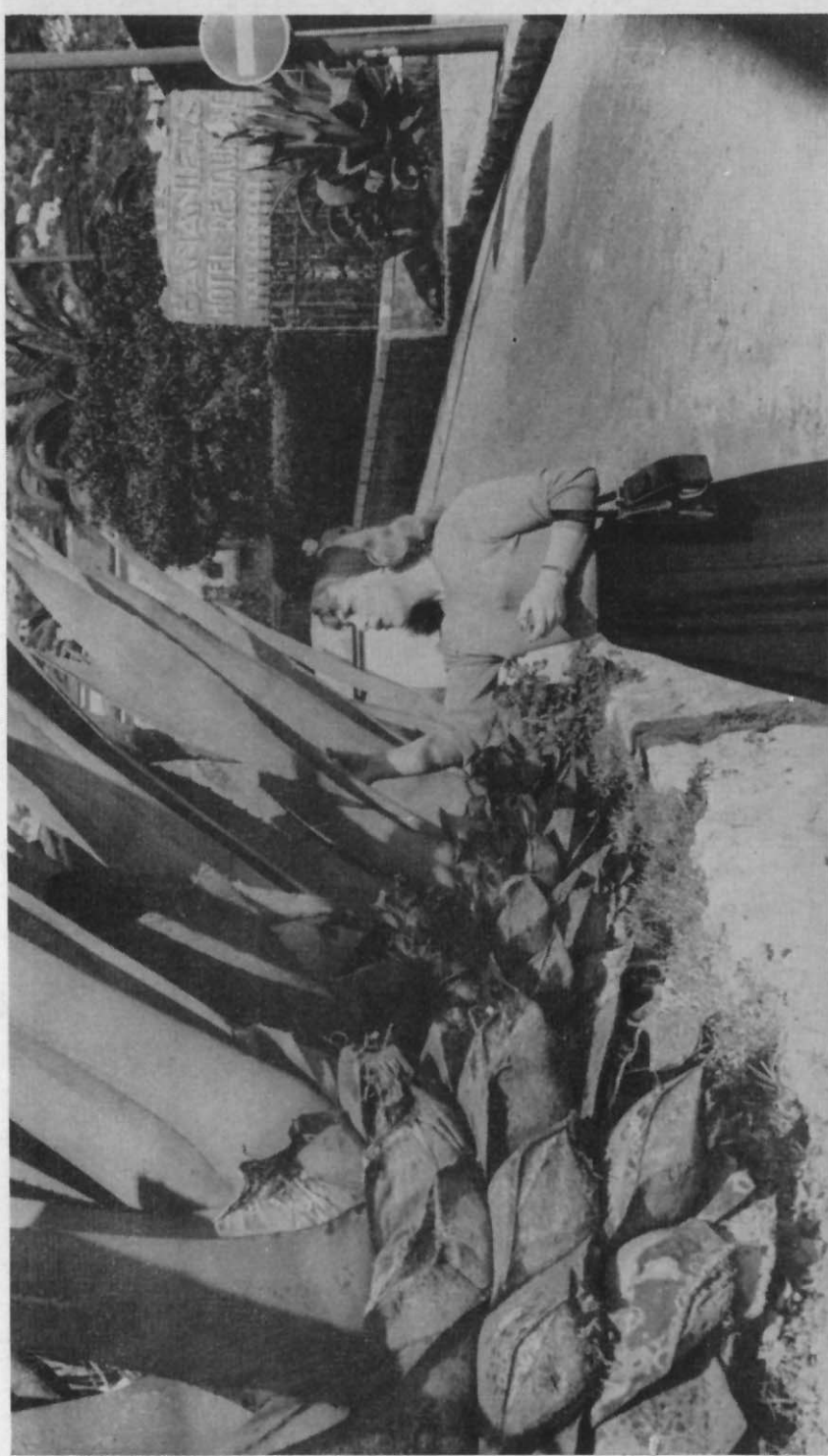
(Picture Post)





(Picture Post)

With Canon Millbourn of Bristol Cathedral, on the cathedral grounds.



(Picture Post)

Vacationing in France.



(Picture Post)

“Now that my body had developed into womanhood . . .” Looking at women’s magazines in Paris.



(Picture Post)

In the Louvre. "Having reduced my figure to the correct proportions . . ."



(Picture Post)

Back at the wheel again.



(Picture Post)

"Cooking was unexpectedly exciting."