2.

A M E M O I R

THE MAKING OF A FAMILY

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Constantia Arnold

3.

THE FENWICKS

"If Jesus Christ were amongst them they would deceive him, if he would heere and trust and followe their wicked counsellsl"

Richard Fenwick 1597.

When Richard Fenwick wrote those words he was doubtless thinking of some of his sworn enemies among the border-raiding families. But the Fenwicks were tarred with the same brush and the same equally applies. They were a powerful Northumbrian family of Viking descent claiming a large part of the east of the county as their stamping ground. They are described, or describe themselves, as "gentlemen", often found amongst border officials (perhaps a kind of white collar worker?). But their gentlemanly status did not prevent them from carrying on some bitter and bloody feuds, notably with the Liddelsdale Elliots. And according to an old ballad about the legendary raid on Redeswire, "500 Fenwicks in a flock" took part. I don't know what they did when they got there but it was sure to have been something pretty unpleasant. Yet they were said to have filled every position of trust and honour in the county of Northumberland. They were extremely prolific and far flung. In Northumberland alone there were thirty distinct branches of the family, and in America there are four distinct lines. They crop up everywhere. In France there lived until recently a well known character in the racing world called Katie Fenwick (pronounced Fenveek) who was said to be extremely proud of her Northumbrian ancestry (Nancy Mitford told me this). The Lords of Fenwick Tower were established in 1100, and the last direct male heir, Sir John, was executed in 1698. The Fenwick crest is a white phoenix (presumably a pun on the name) with red wings rising out of a crown. The motto, or rather

the rallying cry, is “A FENWYKE! A FENWYKE! A FENWYKE!”. There were about thirty-five of these feuding clans - all bearing names well known in the north today. To name only a few beside the Fenwicks: Armstrong, Graham, Forster, Ogle, Nixon, Hume, Robson, Ridley, Irvine, Elliot, Scott, Johnstone, and Liddell. They were a rough, tough lot, constantly at war, stealing each others cattle and generally making a nuisance of themselves. Though apparently, during the short season of fine weather, they would temporarily bury the hatchet and help each other with the harvest. Also there were instances of inter-family marriages, to say nothing of elopements - think of Young Lochinvar and the lost bride of Netherby!

When the border was pacified and peace of a sort descended, these once feuding families clung together and formed a distinct social group which up to a point they still do to this day. Much as I should like to tell tales of such wild characters as Nebless Clem, Fingerless Will Nixon, Bang tail Willie Armstrong, and the two Elliot brothers whose nicknames are so suspect that I omit them - space, fortunately, forbids.
The next Fenwick of note, in fact really the only one, is Sir John who lived at Wallington. He had been a great favourite at the Court of Charles II, and was naturally hostile to William and Mary when they came to the throne. He was said at the time to be of ”amiable, though dissipated, manners" and these dissipated manners seem to have been mainly directed against the Queen. Instead of bowing low and sweeping his hat off, he "stared her in the eye” and took it off “in her face”. Had he not had a fatal capacity for involving himself in every Jacobite plot that was going, he would probably have settled down and become a respected country gentleman. He had married Lady Mary Howard, daughter of

the Earl of Carlisle, and all the omens seemed good. But, in 1698, after the Turnham Green conspiracy in which, for once, he was not implicated, William, who had narrowly escaped assassination, said enough was enough, rounded up the Jacobites in the north, and Sir John was caught in the net. He was tried and executed and all his lands confiscated. The majority of the Fenwicks then scattered to the four winds; some fled to France; some to Holland, and some landed up eventually in America. They were never to become a force in the north again.

The old Fenwick house at Wallington was either burned or pulled down and fragments are incorporated in the elegant new mansion built by Sir Walter Blackett in the early 18th century. The estate passed later to the Trevelyan family, and has now been made over to, and lovingly restored by, the National Trust.

Ironically, perhaps, Sir John had the last laugh. After his execution and the forfeiture of the estate, William appropriated his favourite horse. It was this horse which stumbled over a molehill and gave the King the fall that killed him - hence the Jacobite toast "To the little gentleman in velvet".

We now have to skip a century to my great-grandfather, Thomas Fenwick, who was born towards the end of the 18th century. I don't know anything of his origins or what part of the county he came from but presumably his branch of the family had escaped the Fenwick purge. He was a friend (some say agent) to the Lambton - family (not yet Lords Durham) and had the great good fortune to become senior partner in Lambton & Fenwick's Bank - and this laid the foundations for the family fortune which was considerable.

At this time, the early 19th century, Newcastle was expanding fast. Coal, iron and steel and the new invention of the railway combined to make Newcastle which up till then had been an

unimportant place at the mouth of the Tyne, into a boom town. There was money for the taking. But with the exception of Banking Thomas the Fenwicks had no part in it, and the name does "not once occur in ”The Making of a Ruling Class″, that fascinating account of fortune making on the Tyne in the 19th century. But another strand in our family history, the Claytons, played a "considerable perhaps major, part in the expansion of the town.

My great grandfather, Thomas Fenwick, interests me particularly for the manner in which he conducted his life. He lived with, but never married - or at least not till old age - a fisherwoman from Cullercoats. In those days it was considered quite all right to have a liaison with someone of lowly birth, .but not to marry her as then she would have to have been produced in society and that was quite definitely not done.

"These fishwives were great characters. They used to go to Newcastle crying their wares and were a well-known feature of the town. They wore distinctive dress which included a rather fetching straw poke bonnet, and as Cullercoats was a popular seaside resort for the Newcastle elite, I can quite imagine that a young and pretty fishergirl would have caught Tom Fenwick's eye. What was remarkable was that the casual affair lasted a lifetime. He never married anyone else and she was the mother of his eight children.

Of such then was my great-grandmother. But the taint of illegitimacy was considered so heinous that it was never mentioned by my father or by any of his sisters. (One can't help wondering" f the stigma would have been quite so disgraceful if she had been more socially acceptable - but then of course he would have married her!)

She was certainly pretty, perhaps beautiful, and was known

as "the toast of the north". By the photograph of her in old age, she was very dark with black hair and coal-black eyes. Perhaps she had foreign blood which would have made the whole, sorry affair even worse. Certainly the children were. all very dark with dark complexions. When one of the daughters was asked about her mother, she said “She was a very beautiful woman" and left it at that. According to her photograph in old age, she seems a humble and unassuming little person, and it is difficult to imagine her as the toast of anything. There is a story that one of the sons said to his father when he was very old, "Don't you think it's time you made an honest woman of mother?” So, although there is no record of it, perhaps in the end he did. But for us she remains a lady unknown.

Thomas Fenwick, then living at Southill, Co. Durham, died in 1852, and there is a memorial tablet to him in the church at Chester-Ie-Street; but there is no mention of his life's companion. We do not know her name nor where she is buried, and all mention of her was erased from the family Bible.

I am afraid her children, or at all events her daughters, were bitterly ashamed of her, and one of them, the odious Lucy, who had married an up-and-coming parson called de Pledge, carried it to such lengths that, when any young man showed an interest in her daughters (she had eleven children) she chivied him away for fear of having to divulge the family skeleton and so ruin her hus9and's chance of promotion. The result was that only two married, and those very late in life.

I should love to know how the Toast measured up to the aristocratic Constantia Walker (nee Beresford) at the wedding of their children - but, sadly, I don’t expect she attended the ceremony.

5.

I find this generation of Fenwicks rather depressing. The poor Toast must have had a sad life, removed from her own milieu and slighted by everyone else, even her own children (But not, I think, by my grandfather who gave a lifeboat to Cullercoats in memory of his mother, but named it "The Constantia" after his wife.)

George John Fenwick (grandfather).
George John was the second son of Thomas Fenwick, and the unknown lady. The eldest was Henry who must have died young, though he married and had one son, Harry, who was in the "Blues". He became Silverstick in Waiting, and was reputed to be enormously rich.

My grandfather was up at Oxford at University College. Here he lived in great style with a valet and a coach and four (a mistress too? Who knows?) He had a passion for prize-fights and one of the duties of his valet was to keep him informed of any fight that had been arranged. Once his valet roused him at 2 a.m. to tell him that a great fight, Heenan v. Sayers, was to be fought early that morning. They dashed off in the coach and managed to see most of it. In those day~ there were no Queensberry rules. Fights were fought with bare fists. Sayers was thirty four and stood 5' 8", and his American opponent was eight years younger and 5 stones heavier. But in spite of a broken arm, Sayers was undefeated at the end.

But grandfather was by no means a playboy. He had an enduring love of the classics, from which he could quote large chunks to the end of his life. He was a bon viveur~ a very good amateur photographer, and also a noted raconteur. This was considered an enviable social grace in 'those days, but now it is

out of fashion. He was fond of horses: and rode well, and the photograph of him shows that he had a good seat on a horse. But what he really enjoyed was driving his four-in-hand .

It was said that he never got on with my father, his son Mark, with whom, really, he had much in common.

In 1852 he married Constantia Elizabeth Anne, daughter of Thomas and Constantia Walker.

THE WALKERS

The Walkers seem to have been a nice jolly uncomplicated family, with no skeletons rattling in the cupboard. They came from a different background to the Fenwicks, being what was known as "in trade" - an expression of almost sinister implications in the late 18th/early 19th centuries. People "in trade" were much looked down upon by the aristocracy and landowning classes who, however, made good use of them and their money whenever they could.

The Walkers were ironmasters and owned a flourishing family foundry near Derby. My great-grandfather, Thomas Walker, known as "Dashing Tom Walker" was in the Scots Greys, had fought at Waterloo and, most important of all, had "a handsome private fortune of £3000 a year".

This is all I should have known of the Walkers were it not for a treasure trove of information taken from "The Memoirs of a Highland Lady" by Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchas, later Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys. Miss Grant had become acquainted with them through a Scotch friend who had married into the family and, in about-1821, she went to stay with a Mr. and Mrs. Walker (Dashing Tom's uncle and aunt) who lived at Berry Hill, not far from Mansfield.

"Mr. and Mrs. Walker,1I she writes, "were hospitable people, very kind, childless - so they surrounded themselves with relations. Their connections were all amongst the mercantile aristocracy of England- a new phase of life to me with my old Highland blood, and one at which I opened my eyes in wonder ... There was no ostentation, no great show anywhere, but such plenty, such an affluence of comfort, servants well dressed and well fed - eating, indeed, went on all day upstairs and downstairs. Six meals a day the rule. Well-appointed stables, delightful gardens, lights everywhere, fires everywhere, nothing wanting, everything wished for was got ... The younger people were well educated - so called- the men' school and college bred, gentlemanly, up to the times. But there was something wanting. There was too much vivacity, too much noise, no repose. The young women were inferior to the young men; they were accomplished in the boarding school acceptance of the word, but mind there was not; and manners were defective, no ease. They were good, charitable, and highly pleased with their surroundings and with one another, and extremely proud of their brothers.

They had all well filled purses and I do remember well the New Years gifts at one Walker house. There were four young people of the family and on lifting the breakfast plate ~ach found a fifty pound note underneath it!"

I can imagine the whole set-up so well. The nice, kind hospitable Walkers, so pleased with their possessions and their new-found wealth; their well-dressed, well fed servants, blazing fires, good food, gardens and stables - harbouring the waspish and disparaging Miss Grant who was by no means above accepting their hospitality, and a couple of years earlier had been extremely put out when an affair between my great-grandfather, Tom Walker, and her sister Jane, .had come to nothing and he had taken his handsome private fortune elsewhere.

"About July (1819)." „she writes. "the Scots Greys got the route for Ireland. Tom Walker was in despair. He was a fine looking young man and truly amiable, and he played the flute to Jane's pianoforte - a performance suited in every respect and unimprovable. for in spite of very lengthy practisings, neither artist made much progress " Jane evidently had intellectual pretensions for she found poor Tom's "knowledge of History was so defective that it was not possible to think seriously of a companion for life with whom there could be no rational conversation! So the handsome cavalry officer walked - no, rode away. An Irish love soon replaced the 'bonnie Jean' so honestly wooed. A Miss Constantia Beresford made no educational difficulties: she caused a few, however, of many another kind, and poor Tom Walker bore them" . (What were they, I wonder?) Jane was evidently· choosy as another eligible suitor was dismissed "for sticking his fork into the potatoes!".

Thereafter Miss Grant lost interest in the Walkers. But there is one last reference - in 1823 she paid a visit to her "old friend, Tom Walker, and his pretty Irish wife (the granddaughter of a Marquis). He had left the Army", (Perhaps he was managing the family business?) "and they were living in a rather pretty place near Derby".

Tom Walker is a perfect example of the method employed to this day in the making of a gentleman, viz. send the boy to a good school ("school and college bred"), then put him into a good regiment - The Scots Greys - and hope that his considerable private fortune 'will procure him a bride well in the station above him.

My great-grandparents married in 1819, six years after the publication of "Pride and Prejudice", and two years after Jane Austen died at the early age of –forty two. Elizabeth Grant's·

denigration of people "in trade" was entirely consistent with the spirit of the age and might have come straight out of any of . Jane Austen's novels. As for Tom, he might have stepped out of the pages of "Pride and Prejudice". He would have cut a fine figure at a ball in the Bath Assembly Rooms, or at Brighton - and what a flutter he would have caused in the Bennett dovecote - a handsome cavalry officer "truly amiable", and above all with a handsome private fortune of £3000 a year!

Constantia Beresford was a great grand-daughter of the Earl of Tyrone. Both her father and grandfather were called John Claudius. The first married in 1760 a French lady, Anne Constantia de Ligondes, who was at a convent either in Ireland or in France, and ran away to marry him. She was a beauty, and brought the name of Constantia into the family. She must have died young and her son John Claudius 11 married in 1795 Miss Elizabeth Menzies, daughter of Archibald Menzies of Culdare, Peebles, and they were the parents of my great-grandmother Constantia.

John Claudius II was a Rt. Hon. and a privy councillor. Though outside the scope of this memoir, he was a patron of the Arts, and amongst other things was instrumental in building the Customs House in Dublin. In the early years of the 19th century the Beresfords were created Marquis of Waterford, and Tyrone became the title of the eldest son.

THE OGLES

My mother's family on both sides were dyed-in-the-wool Northumbrian but, like the Fenwicks, they came from very different backgrounds. The Ogles were an old landed family. They had been moderately prominent *in* the border-raiding days but seem to have

managed to keep clear of serious trouble. When I tried to make some enquiries about them, I was presented with a vast tome so heavy that I could hardly lift it, called "Ogle and Bothal". When I opened it I quailed at the pedigrees and quarterings, coats of arms, all pertaining to the many branches of the family - the faded prints, the pictures of tombs and so on and so forth. So I quickly shut it up again. These great-grandparents were double Ogles as they were second cousins. When I asked my cousin Joan Browne-Swinburne about our great-grandmother, she said in a deprecating voice, "Oh, of course she was only a Sussex Ogle". If Northumbrians have a fault (and far be it from me to suggest that they have), it is that they are apt to consider themselves better than anyone else! And to make matters worse, the Sussex Ogles were the senior branch and had carried off the baronetcy. How and when they defected to the South I do not know.

In spite of this taint, my great-grandmother Sophia was a remarkable woman in many ways. She was born in 1807 the daughter of Admiral Sir Charles Ogle, an "Admiral of the Blue" which was rather a smart thing to be. His H.Q. were at Portsmouth and the appointment entailed a lot of entertaining. Sophia had to fill the role of hostess to her father. Her mother seems to have died young. She was well educated, extremely witty and spoke perfect French, so she was well suited to this job.

Although this part of the story is somewhat conjectural, it would appear that a French Marquise, a friend of the Ogles, happened to be staying with them when the French Revolution broke out, and very wisely decided to stay where she was. I·don't know her name, or if, indeed, she was a Marquise, but at all events she feared for her life if she returned, so she hung up her hat and stayed with them till her death. It seems that she played a

large part in Sophia's education which accounts for her proficiency in French. In 1830 Sophia redeemed herself by marrying a cousin, a true blue Northumbrian Ogle: the Rev. Edward, son of Edward Ogle of Kirkley Hall. Edward, being a younger son, had no~ expected to inherit; so, according to the usual custom of his time, he had gone into the church, and his first and, I think, his only cure of souls was at Bedlington. Bedlington was a desolate pit village on a bleak and windswept part of the East Coast of Northumberland near Blyth.

Poor Sophia - it must have seemed a very far cry from the salons of Portsmouth. But she was more than equal to the occasion. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the tiny world of coal miners, with their "fierce red-eyed terriers" (presumably the forbears of the woolly-Iamb-like Bedlington terriers of the modern show ring). The races up and down the long straggling village street, which were always won by the drunken Irish doctor on his weedy little thoroughbred - and the pitmen squatting on their hunkers in the street reading their radical newspapers.

Sophia seems to have been extremely autocratic, and ruled the village in a way which wouldn't go down at all well nowadays • On one occasion several of the village boys climbed into a plum tree in the churchyard and pelted the congregation with rotten plums as they emerged from their devotions. Sophia was perfectly furious and said to the Rev. Edward, "Edward, you must beat those boys - and at once". His Reverence; evidently a mild mannered and somewhat ineffectual man, demurred at taking on several hefty louts, so Sophia said, "Very well then, I shall", and proceeded to do so. She became the village midwife and was most proficient according to the times and, though I daresay she would not pass

muster with the Royal Gynaecological College today. She boasted she had never lost a mother. Evidently, too, she thought for herself. On the subject of Death, she said to *one* 'of her grand-daughters, my 'Aunt Evie, "Your body is of no account, it's only a garment that you must fold up tidily before you go to sleep". In the Victorian age, in which she lived, when the trappings and panoply of death was suffocating, this must have seemed almost like heresy.

After twenty one years of life at Bedlington, the Rev. Edward inherited Kirkley on the death of his father, his elder brother having died and left no heir. This must have meant a great change in their life style. Their family consisted of two sons and five daughters, all born at Bedlington.

Great-uncle John, the eldest son, seems to have been given to "unnatural practices" which were never precisely defined (though one could hazard a guess); he never married. Next was Anne Charlotte who was by any standards, a very clever woman. She must have inherited her mother's brains. She wrote one book: "A Lost Love", which was strictly autobiographical, but very good and readable, even today. Of the other children, Isabel married Nathaniel George Clayton and became my grandmother. Mary died unmarried, and Sophia married Bishop Jermyn. Alice married George Anthony Fenwick, and was grandmother of Evie Barnett. The afterthought of the family was Newton (Uncle Newty) much petted and pampered by his sister Isabel. He married rather late in life Lady Lilian Denison, a sister of Lady Ida Sitwell, so their son John became, rather improbably, a cousin of Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell. Lady Lilian died when John Ogle was a baby and Uncle Newty married again - a Miss Beatrice .Hartopp (Aunt Beatty) and became the father of Hester Wolfe-Murray and Bridget Ogle. .Too

old really to embark on another family, he is depicted as a good looking but rather grumpy man. Very taken up with his health he never moved without a medicine chest and a stomach pump. (Possibly this is the origin of the family saying that nobody with a drop of Ogle blood in their veins can ever pass a chemist's shop!)

When the Rev. Edward died, his son John (the one with dubious morals) inherited Kirkley. For how long I don't know, but he was succeeded by his brother Newton in 1892: in 1912 he died. His son John was still only a child, so Kirkley was let. When young John came of age having had to leave the Navy because of bad eyesight, he tried living at Kirkley. But he was hopelessly extravagant; and it soon became obvious that it wouldn't work. So, after six or seven years, it passed to other hands, and soon after the War it was burned to the ground. John married but had no children so that branch of the Ogle family has died out.

When Edward and Sophia moved to Kirkley they were faced with the prospect of finding husbands for their daughters. I don't-imagine there had been much scope at Bedlington. So, when Mr. Nathaniel Clayton turned up as a suitor for Isabel, he was considered a good match. Although the Clay tons would have been considered socially inferior to the Ogles, having come from the professional classes, young Nathaniel George had great expectations as he was the eldest male heir of that immensely rich and influential Newcastle family, of whom more anon.

Poor Isabel, however, had set her affections on one, Mr. Palk, a penniless sprig of the aristocracy, and the' Rev. Edward, evidently a kind man, was worried on her' account. The story goes that he said to his wife, "Oh, Sophia, that poor child is crying her eyes out". But Sophia, made of sterner stuff said, "Never

mind, Edward, think of Chesters and £70,000 a year". So they did think, Isabel married Nathaniel George and Mr. Palk was sent packing. The marriage seems to have been extremely happy. But it is a sobering thought that we might all have been' partly Palks. Sophia was certainly a "maitresse-femme", and in the only portrait I have seen of her she has strong, almost masculine features, which are oddly unsuited to her lawn cap. Today, she would probably be wearing corduroy trousers and a deer-stalker hat. She died in 1895.

THE CLAYTONS

The Claytons , to my mind, are the most interesting of our forbears. They defy exact social classification, almost forming a class on their own. They were Newcastle solicitors before the expansion of the city, and it was my great-great-grandfather Nathaniel who bought Chesters from the Errington family in the
mid-18th century, thereby establishing himself as one of the landed gentry before those families that made their fortunes in the great mid-19th century boom.

Although the Claytons owned Chesters, it is with Newcastle that they are always associated. Nathaniel Clayton had four sons and two daughters, all remarkable in their way. John, the eldest, was town clerk of Newcastle, a money-lender extraordinary, a scholar and antiquarian (he excavated the Roman wall), and he amassed an enormous fortune.

Matthew was a lawyer and an eccentric character. Richard, my great-grandfather, was in Holy Orders and incumbent of a fashionable church in Newcastle. He seems to have been rather dim, almost a non-person - but he was the only one who married so we owe our existence in part to him. The youngest son Nathaniel

was said to be brilliant; he went to London to seek his fortune in the legal profession, and was said to be "destined for the woolsack". Unfortunately he was run over by a hansom cab and killed before he could fulfill his destiny.

The two daughters were Saleh (short· for Sarah?), a celebrated numismatist, and also an antiquarian; and Anne, always known to my mother and her brothers and sisters as "Grananannny". She was a much loved unmarried great-aunt who had a house at Cullercoats where they used to go and stay as children, and she was also greatly loved by the poor of Newcastle.

These old Clay tons had most distinguished good looks, all very tall and thin, but John was the most distinguished of the lot. He had the most extraordinary capacity for amassing wealth. The following is from a newspaper article of the day:

> "It is difficult to discover more diligent success in acquiring money over a space of 30 years ----- Mr. John Clayton never speculated. He never threw dice. He. never, sunk a pit. He never founded a Bank. Slow, sure, regular and passionless, like a Laplander trudging and toiling over a waste of snow, Mr. John Clayton has pursued the even tenor of his way; but instead of his feet being clogged like a Laplander with snow, they are clogged with yellow dust, unalloyed gold on sure and most indubitable accumulation ---- The commerce and population of Newcastle extend. The treasury of the Town Clerk swells grandly in like proportion; the world smiles on Mr. John. Mr. John smiles on the world In 1835 Mr. John is nearly double in wealth as compared with 1825----"

That was *in* 1855, and when he died his estate was valued at £713,000. He masterminded the development of the Elswick estate, and he had a large hand in Grainger's City Centre development, and much of his capital came from coal royalties.

Augustus Hare, that arch-stayer-away, gives a wonderful account of staying with the family at Westgate House in Newcastle in 1862:

> "Yesterday afternoon," he writes in Vol. II of his Diaries 'Work in Northern Counties', "I came to the old square dark red brick house of the Clay tons, who are like merchant princes in Newcastle, so enormous is their, wealth, but who still live in the utmost simplicity in the old-fashioned family house in this retired shady street. The family are all remarkable. First comes Mr. John Clayton of Chesters, the well known antiquary of North Tyne, a grand sturdy old man with a head which might be studied for a bust of Jupiter; then there is his brother Matthew, a thin tall lawyer full of jokes and queer sayings; then the venerable and beautiful old sister Mistress Anne Clayton (beloved far and wide by the poor amongst whom she spends her days and who are all devoted to 'Mistress Nancy Claytoun') is the gentlest and kindest of old ladies.
>
> How amused my mother would be with this quaintest the most primitive fashion if they were acquaintances another by their full will you have the goodness to make the tea' - 'Mr. Town-Clerk of Newcastle, will you have the kindness to hand me the toast'" etc. Miss Anne *is* a venerable lady with snow white hair, but her brother Matthew is convinced that she *is* one of the most harum-scarum young girls in the world, and *is* continually pulling her up with 'Miss Anne Clayton you are very inaccurate~ be careful what you ,say', while the poor old sister goes her own way without minding a bit ---- This evening old Mr. Matthew was unusually extraordinary and very fatiguing - talking for exactly two hours about his bootmakers, Messrs. Hoby & Humby, whence they came, what they had done, and how utterly unrivalled they were. 'Miss Anne Clayton,' he said at the end, 'I hope you understand all I've been saying, now wait before you give an opinion, but above all things, don't, <u>don't</u> be inaccurate. "

One would have thought that after two hours of Messrs. Hoby and Hurnby, even Augustus, with his phenomenally high threshold of boredom, would have had enough of the Clay tons , but- no, in September (this being May), avid for culture . he was, back again: this time at Chesters where Aunt Saleh was keeping house for Uncle John who by this time seems to have divided his time between there and Westgate House.

"Chesters, Hexham, Sept. lOth: I came here yesterday .My aged hostess, the eldest sister of the Newcastle Clayton family, is of a most tall weird figure and speaks in an abrupt, energetic startling manner, but she is the most perfect lady imaginable, both in feeling and manners, and her kindness and thoughtfulness and consideration for others make her beloved far and wide. Chesters is famous for its liberal unostentatious hospitality, and Miss Clayton always lives here, though it is her brother's place ---- She reads everything and is ready to talk on any subject, but her great hobby is ¡Roman antiquities, and she is one of the best antiquarians in the North ---- This house is about the size of Hurstmonceaux Place and most thoroughly comfortable with well lighted galleries on each storey filled with water colour drawings by Richardson, with Roman antiquities and curiosities of all kinqs.1I (This was the old Chesters, before it was altered by Norman Shaw.)

"This morning we were called at six, breakfast at seven, and at half past seven in the bright cold morning Miss Clayton herself drove me down to the train at Chollerford ---- On Thursday Miss Clayton drove me in her Irish car up North Tyne to. Chipchase Castle ---- Mr.' John Clayton and Dr. Bruce arrived in the evening and Roman antiquities became the order of the next day ~_ll (Most people's hearts would have quailed at the prospect before them, but not so the valiant Augustus, who continues:) We set off in a hurricane of cold wind in the Irish car along the Roman wall and spent the whole day amongst Roman remains, lunching at Hotbank Farm where the Armstrongs live – last relics of the great

> moss-trooping family --The great Roman station of Housesteads is a perfect English Pompeii of excavated houses and streets" (excavated mainly by Uncle John)."Here we clambered across stone walls and bogs for several miles to Sewing Sheils ---- The Clay tons are indescribably kind and spare no pains to amuse, interest and instruct me and their horses seem as untirable."

One can picture the whole scene - the Irish car, of course open to the four winds, with Aunt Saleh taking the reins, and even with the untirable horses it must have taken a considerable time to reach Housesteads from Chesters, up and down those formidable hills on the relentless Roman road - no closed and heated car for them. Then when they got there the walk of several miles across the bogs to Sewing Sheils, coat collars turned up against the wind, hats crushed onto heads, the tall thin brother and sister striding out in the teeth of the weather, issuing a steady stream of instructive information to Augustus trudging in the rear, game to the last. It is to be hoped that ex-mosstrooper Armstrong provided a good hot lunch with something strong to wash it down. Later Augustus wrote: "I am becoming increasingly attached to 'Aunt Saily' (sic). She is always finding out all the good she can in her neighbours and guests and doing everything she canto make the world bright and pleasant to them= being really so loving and gentle herself, she influences all around her". Of course Augustus himself was a phenomenon of the 19th century. All was grist that came to his mill. Not only was he
interested in everything but his sense of humour enabled him to find an amusing nugget in every subject, no matter how unpromising, and to write entertainingly about it As he was obviously a marvellous listener (the open sesame) he was in great demand as a guest. Everyone he meets he describes amusingly, but totally without malice. In fact, like the Melancholy Jacques (though he

was not melancholy) in "As You Like It", · he found "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything".

I seem to have written at length about the old Claytons, because they do seem such extraordinary characters. For an elderly lady in 1862 to hoist herself into an Irish jaunting car as did Aunt Saleh, and herself to drive the guests all over the countryside, was flouting the conventions with a vengeance - and then, what clothes did she wear on these expeditions? Surely not a crinoline which would be the dress of the day. And what sort of headgear? In the photograph she seems to be wearing an early version of the tweed coat and skirt which was to serve country ladies so well for so many many years, and the frilled bonnet seems to have been added as an afterthought. She looks a delightful person. One of her strongest prejudices was against false teeth; she would never wear them. Aunt Alice as a child remembers watching fascinated as Aunt Saleh manipulated a lettuce with toothless gums. Chesters was famous for its "liberal but unostentatious hospitality" so she must have kept a good table. It was not all high thinking and low living with the Clay tons. I may have been unfair to the Rev. Richard, my great- grandfather. He didn't have the advantage of the Augustus Hare spotlight which brought his four brothers and sisters so vividly to life for us. He was married and not living in the family nest. He may well have been a fascinating character, as full of quirks and oddities as the rest of the family. But we shall never know. Of his wife we know even less, except that she was a Miss Atkinson from Cumberland, and died in 1840.

Old Uncle John emerges as a remarkable but not particularly lovable character. He was not in the habit of throwing his money about. When Miss Taylor, who had been governess to my mother and

her sisters, gave up most of her time to ministering and reading aloud to this tiresome old man who, by then, was almost blind: Granny suggested, tentatively, that perhaps she should be paid a small salary - Uncle John merely grunted and said "The salubrious air of Chesters is recompense enough! "And on being told that one of his friends was greatly worried by the fact that his son was wasting his substance on an expensive lady in London, he remarked testily: "Tut, tut, the young expect so much nowadays. When I was his age a village wench at half-a-crown was good enough for me". When he inherited Chesters from his father, the Roman station of Cilurnum which lay in the park between the house and the North Tyne, was completely unexcavated. Over the centuries people had been helping themselves to the stones to build walls and cottages, and in fact I have been told that great, great- grandfather Nathaniel Clayton, who died in 1832, had buried a good many priceless monuments to level his park. No-one seems to have taken the smallest interest in the "Remains" But Uncle John soon altered all that. An enormously wealthy man, he could indulge his ruling passion. Soon the place was alive with eager antiquarians, and excavation proceeded apace. Though his methods by modern standards are probably considered rough and ready, and unscientific, at least he started the work for others to complete. He also bought Housesteads (Borcovicus) and excavated that too.

He lived to a great age, missing this his century by a couple of months. He died in 1890_ just outliving the last of his family, the good and saintly Grananny.

His nephew Nathaniel George and his wife Isabel, who had for so long been waiting in the wings, at last came into their inheritance.

GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Thomas and Constantia Walker and their Children

Tom and Constantia settled down at Aston Hall near Derby the "rather pretty place" somewhat disparagingly alluded to by Elizabeth Grant. Actually I think that Walker country, which comprised Mansfield and Eccleshall (where the family ironworks originated) was always pretty ugly, and it is now completely industrialised, and Aston Hall,' no doubt, pulled down. Tom left the Army when he married and at this point disappears from the story. His daughter, yet another Constantia, and my grandmother, kept a voluminous and all-embracing photograph album with photographs of all the family down to the umpteenth cousin, but, there is no likeness of dear Papa which seems a strange omission.

Before he bows out from our family history, however, he had time to beget an enormous family of eleven children - five sons and six daughters - I imagine him a heavily bewhiskered gentleman, fair and rather florid.

The sons were Beresford, Sherwood, Lanty, Edward and Alfred. The daughters were Constantia, Selina, Georgina, Nanette, Helen and Henrietta (called Patty): all rather nice and slightly unusual names. I cannot find out anything about the sons, or who they married. I do remember a photograph at Abbotswood of an old boy looking like a very respectable head gardener in a dark suit and straw boater, with highly polished black boots, sitting out of doors on a kitchen chair with a trug of plants on his knee, and being told that it was of Uncle Alfred Walker. There must be many Walker cousins around but I do not know of any.

The daughters on the other hand we know quite a lot about. Constantia, the eldest, married George John Fenwick, son of Thomas Fenwick and the unknown lady from Cullercoats, and they

became my grandparents. Selina married Duncan McGregor and had no children, only a family of pugs whose deaths she announced regularly in the "Times". Georgina married Charles Fenwick, a cousin of G.J.F. and was the mother of Guy, Harry, Noel and Dick, Mimi Poole, Ethel Peacock and Nina Micklem, and grandmother of Dick Poole and Judy Hay, Audrey Blewitt, Pinkie Fenwick and Angela van Straubenzee, amongst others. Nanette married Lionel Skipwith; Helen married G. Clogston, and their daughter married John Gilliat and was the mother of Margot Leslie and Gian Weatherby. Henrietta married Henry Ashton.

There is a photograph of Charles Fenwick in Granny's album, and it is amusing to see how exactly like him all his descendants were. He evidently stamped his stock to a marked degree.

Great-grandmother Constantia, the mother of this brood, who lived the latter part of her life at Bathafarn, Ruthin, N. Wales, is described as a "splendid handsome old lady, very well read and devoted to her garden and her farm". The Fenwick obsession with gardening would seem to come from her~ also a good proportion of looks. She had large deep-set hooded eyes and a beaky nose. According to a little water-colour of her in youth, she had dark hair and eyes, so the very fair streak which persists in this family must, I feel, come from dashing Tom.

GRANDPARENTS

George John and Constantia Elizabeth Anne Fenwick and their children

George and Constantia were married from Aston Hall in 1852. The bar sinister in the bridegroom's family doesn't seem to have worried the Walker parents, but they had six daughters and rich young men were probably as hard-to come by then as now

They set up house at Cullercoats which would seem to show that G.J.F. was not ashamed of his mother's connection there. Cullercoats was a fashionable resort where the Newcastle gentry used to have their seaside residences.

Constantia was quite a good artist; better than the usual run of Victorian young ladies, and whilst they lived at Cullercoats she sketched the fisherfolk, the women often wearing their straw bonnets. None of them could be described as glamorous, but I reproduce one of her sketches of a girl such as my great-grandmother might have been. I would love to know how the conventionally brought up Constantia regarded her unconventional and humbly born mother-in-law. Certainly there is no photograph of her in the family album, though there are many of her daughters and their progeny.

Their two eldest daughters, Amy Constantia and Ida Marion, were born at Cullercoats and then the family appears to have taken to the road~ Taking a house here ~nd a house there, they even went to Geneva where a third daughter, Blanche Ginevra, was born.

More babies followed in rapid succession - no two born in the same place. Sophia Rachel, Mary Ella (died of croup, aged a few months), Walter Lionel, first son, followed in less than a year by Mark. Then Madeline Isobel, and finally Rose Nanette.

In 1877 the family decided to turn their backs on the North for good, and to settle in the South. A plot of land was bought in a then completely unspoilt part of Bournemouth, and there they built their first and last house, Craghead. Though described by Mark as "a dreadful villa" it was then considered the last word in elegance and luxury. It had electric light, several bathrooms and some form of central heating. The electric light must have been a very early installation. It demanded a special electrician who did nothing but minister to its needs. It *is* so unusual for

any Northumbrian to leave the North voluntarily, that one wonders what prompted G.J.F. to do so. I can't help thinking that he was anxious to settle somewhere where his unconventional origins would not be known, as of course they would have been in the North.

They also had a house in London, 93 Eaton Square. When G.J.F. and Constantia acquired the house they found in the servants' hall, neatly shrouded in linen covers, the eight famous painted Hepplewhite "Music" chairs, the subject of so much family intrigue in subsequent years. They had been left behind as being of no account.

As well as Craghead and Eaton Square, the grandparents had a property in the New Forest called Allum Green. This started as a cottage residence and small farm, but soon developed into something far more ambitious. A model dairy farm and large kitchen garden with pineries and vineries soon sprang up mainly to provide the other two houses with milk, cream and eggs, and also fresh fruit and vegetables. So the family scratched along with three houses and seem to have managed tolerably well.

Craghead was never the haven to us sisters that Chesters was. Mark never got on well with his father who anyway much preferred Uncle Walter who seems to have been in all respects the favourite son and brother. Completely different in appearance, as dark as Mark was fair, he seems to have been a very jolly chap. much loved by the ladies, though I think Mark was the better looking. Molly, my mother, was very fond of him, so much so that I once asked, pertly, why, if she was so fond of him, she hadn't married him instead of Daddy? She got quite embarrassed and said, "Well, for one thing he didn't ask me!"

Uncle Walter rather blotted his copybook by marrying a Roman Catholic, a Miss Millicent. Montagu - considered a beauty with a very small head on a swanlike neck. This caused quite a

rift between the brothers who had always been great friends sandwiched as they were between sisters

Poor Uncle Walter was an early victim of the fashionable disease of appendicitis. King Edward had just had it, so everyone felt they must follow suit. The operation was performed on the dining room table at Witham, and nobody thought fit to remove his white West Highland terriers who were all in their usual places under the sideboard; with the result that he got septicaemia and died while still in his forties. He had three sons, Keld, Tony
(killed in the 1st World war) and Monty who was the father of June and Tony.

The Fenwick aunts were all good looking. Aunt Amy Jeffreys was considered the beauty. I remember her as an old lady with masses of white hair and large piercing blue eyes. She was the mother of Winifred (Lady Magnay), Sybil (MacLeod), and Stella Charrington, and grandmother of Cynthia, Elizabeth, Marigold and Gerry.

I am sorry to say I knew very little of my other aunts, and many cousins, with the exception of the Charringtons and Jock Cumberlege, the youngest son of Aunt Blanche. Him I only got to know through Ralph and publishing. Jock was very much a force to be reckoned with in the publishing world at that time. He was Head of the Oxford University Press and he and Ralph used to meet and lunch together regularly at the Garrick Club: no doubt talking shop all the time. After several months of this idyll, Ralph happened to mention his father-in-law, Mark Fenwick. Jock looked at him in amazement: "Good heavens, you must be married to my first cousin". Any two women would have discovered this in the first five minutes. This began a friendship which I only wish had started earlier, as Jock was the-best of company and the most delightful of men.

Granny (Constantia) died before I was born. From what I gather, she was a very practical and somewhat frugal lady. At Craghead the grandchildren used to come down "to dessert". In other words, when the endless meal (dinner or lunch - I am not sure) had wended to a close, the young used to come into the dining room. and be given tid-bits. Jock Cumberlege used to recall that Granny was not a soft touch, and would summon one of the grand- children saying, "Now it's Jock's turn to suck my peach stone", and that was all they ever got from her.

Grandpapa, however, was completely different. He greatly enjoyed the good things of this life, and frugality was not one of his outstanding qualities. I think Mark had much more in common with his father than he would have cared to admit, which was perhaps why they didn't get on.

I paid one visit to Craghead when I was about six. Grandpapa was by then, I suppose, about 90, and was hardly aware of my existence. Aunt Sophy, the one unmarried daughter, was looking after him. What I chiefly remember about it was that Nanny and I had our meals in the housekeeper's room with the upper servants, which I, thought a blissful arrangement, and I wondered wistfully if it couldn't .be arranged at home: but without much hope. I can just remember Grandpapa, a benign old gentleman, very clean in a spongebag check suit, who dispensed little packets of chocolates individually wrapped in cream coloured paper, and each packet tied up with gold ribbon, which for some obscure reason he had specially sent to him from the West Indies. He was greatly venerated by his children and grandchildren and, when one cousin, Rex Cumberlege I think it was, remarked casually, "A lot of people thought he was a dreadful old man, but personally I rather liked him!", a shocked and stunned silence fell on his audience!

G.J.F. died in 1913 at the age of 92 - a very rich man

though why he was quite so rich I don't know. His estate was valued at over a million. Both during his lifetime and in his will he gave enormous sums and bequests to hospitals and charities of all sorts, including £50,000 to the Newcastle Royal Infirmary. And £25,000 to the Newcastle Diocesan Society. So he didn't forget the County of his birth. His six daughters each received enough capital to bring them in £10,000 a year, but as he had paid over large sums of money to his two sons many years before his death to enable them to build Witham and Abbotswood, he considered that he had done enough and didn't leave them anything which annoyed them greatly! He lived to a great age - 92 - and was evidently a most generous man who put his wealth to good use.

GRANDPARENTS

N.G. Clayton and Isabel and their children

Nathaniel George, nephew and heir to old Uncle John's immense fortune, and Isabel, had waited over long to inherit. They had been living in fairly straitened circumstances at West Denton Hall, mainly on what Uncle John allowed them which wasn't much. They must have found it hard to appear suitably grieved at his funeral.

When at last they did come into Chesters, it was almost too late, as Nathaniel George was a very sick man, though I don't know what ailed him. He died in 1895. However, this did not deter Isabel from fairly throwing the money around. "Nobody would think you were the daughter of a poor country parson", wailed her husband. But after all, you didn't come into £70,000 a year every day of the week. Norman Shaw, the architect, fresh from his triumphs at Cragside, was turned loose on Chesters, and the unpretentious, but by no means small, house of the old Claytons

underwent a thorough face-lift. It sprouted wings in all directions. Norman Shaw had wanted to pull it down and start again~ but when he presented his plan to Isabel she said,"It looks like a hospital", so he was sent back to the drawing-board. Eventually a compromise was worked out. The south front with its two bow windows was left intact; and two wings were added. The entrance front (facing north) was also left intact with its graceful pillars, and another wing, the "West Wing" said to be the architect's best work, was also added. This' had a colonnade which makes the rooms behind it pitch dark. The stables were moved and rebuilt on the other side of the main road. One of the new wings contained the drawing room, which was never used, the balancing one on the other side, the dining room. Behind the colonnade lurked the "business room". The middle with its two bow windows was made into one lovely room - the library, with an organ at one end. This was the room used by everyone and was supremely comfortable. In my memory it always smelled of Phloxes and Humia -' an old- fashioned greenhouse plant with a delicious smell. In fact the delicious smells of Chesters merit a slim handsomely bound volume of their own! There was also a still-room, a schoolroom, a large nursery department at the top of the house, a billiards room, and de rigeur in all large country houses of that date, a bachelor's wing. This was reached via the billiards room, an essentially male preserve. Occasionally when it was empty of bachelors, my cousin Joan Swinburne and I used guiltily to tiptoe in to look at it, and were surprised to discover that the poor bachelors fared most uncomfortably. Iron bedsteads and lumpy mattresses, thread-bare carpets, and what looked suspiciously like servants' wash-basins. There may have been a bathroom but I don't remember one. Why it was necessary to incarcerate the- bachelors in this way I can't think. Perhaps if they had been let loose in the comfortable.

main part of the house, their passions might have been inflamed by the sight of a lady scurrying to one of the few bathrooms, and they might have been unable to contain themselves. Though, from what I remember of the Chesters bachelors, it seems unlikely Bachelors, in those days, formed a kind of sub-species. Every family had its quota; now they seem to have died out and single gentlemen suffer from more opprobrious names. But unwieldy as it must have been, even in those spacious days, Chesters had, and the memory of it still has, a magical quality for me, and I think for all the grandchildren.

Nathaniel and Isabel (she always called him George) had six children: Johnny married very young and unhappily. He was caught when an undergraduate at Oxford, by a Miss Cadogan, one of a family of plain sisters. Old Mrs. Cadogan, scenting a good match, bore down on poor Johnny and told him, "You have compromised my daughter and as a man of honour you must marry her". Nathaniel and Isabel desperately tried to extricate him, but to no avail. He felt bound to do so - the marriage was a disaster. They had two daughters, Eleanor and Diana. The latter was the grandmother of Bobby Wilson, the amateur rider, who won this year's (1981) Gold Cup at Cheltenham on Little Owl. Uncle Johnny died young and I never knew him.

Next to Johnny, and the eldest daughter, came Mary (later always called Molly) of whom more anon. Teddy, my godfather, was not a very enlivening character - sandy haired, and as I remember him, with an affliction of the throat which made him talk in a hoarse whisper. He, too, made an unfortunate marriage. As a young A.D.C. to the Duke of Connaught, he found himself landed with the Duke's discarded mistress, a beautiful French lady called Jeanne de la Fougere (a name which seems too good to be

quite true!) As a man of honour, he, too, had to marry her; and though it seems a wildly improbable marriage it appears to have been a happy one. They had two children, Jeannine (Jane) and Jack. As might be imagined Aunt Jeanne did not see eye to eye with her mother-in-law. They were soon at daggers drawn. She found life in Northumberland profoundly boring which, indeed, it must have been for her, and as soon as possible they went to live at Newmarket.

Evelyn (Aunt Evie) married Lancelot Allgood, a neighbour, and though I only saw him once, he impressed me as being quite inhuman. I think, po6r man that he was very ill by then, but he must have been a difficult husband. One of his eccentricities was to turn night into day. He wouldn't go to bed and had to have meals during the night. Aunt Evie was everybody's favourite aunt mother of Guy, Nat, Maud and Rosamund. She was unmercifully teased by them, and all sorts of stories were told about her, many apocryphal but generally with a germ of truth. She was a person of strong prejudices, and amongst other things she was strongly prejudiced against people who had tassels on their umbrellas. I should explain that in those days everyone who was anyone (and many who weren't) owned a Briggs umbrella; these were very long, and pencil-thin with a crook handle (those for gentlemen had a gold pencil inserted in the crook - presumably for marking race cards). Mr. Briggs, who, I am sure, had his shop either in St. James's Street or Bond Street, always, in his wisdom, despatched each umbrella with a black tassel round its neck. This, for some reason, was considered "bad form" and the first thing any right-minded recipient did was hurriedly to tear off the tassel and throw it away. One day a new neighbour came to call, or rather to return a call, at Nunwick, and was shown into the drawing room. Aunt Evie, who had already had reservations about her and who was

time, came into the hall and was seen by Guy or

upstairs at the time, came into the hall and was seen by Guy or Nat bending over the lady's umbrella which had been left on the table, muttering disparagingly: "Just as I should have thought a tassel!". I am afraid that would have been the end of that. Another Aunt Evie story, which has the hallmark of authenticity, concerned the Roman altar.

Aunt Evie was not of a scholastic mind. She knew little and cared less about Roman remains, but tried to put on a brave face when antiquarians came to Nunwick and expected anyone connected with the Clay tons to be in the know - one old boy, feeling he had a sympathetic audience (she was very good at that) embarked on a long, tedious story of how a Roman altar had been rescued and installed in a church, and ended his story by saying: "And is it not wonderful, and a sobering thought, that what was once a pagan symbol has now been transformed and is serving the cause of Christianity?". Aunt Evie, who had only been listening with a quarter of an ear, but felt something was expected of her, turned her beaming smile on him, and said: "But how wonderful, and does it work?".

Aunt Evie married secondly, really in a fit of absent- mindedness, a funny little fellow, exactly like Punch, called Natty Douglas. Nobody could think why she did it, least of all herself. They used to spend part of the year at his place on the Border, and the rest of the time at Nunwick. There, he was so terrified of his four fierce step-children that he used to follow Aunt Evie about like a little dog refusing to let her out of his sight and insisting on always sitting next to her at meals. When he died he seemed to sink without trace.

Our four Allgood cousins were all friends and great characters. The eldest, Guy, became a Roman Catholic when he was in his thirties, and thereafter was always known to his outraged

Brother and sisters as “The pope” or “His Holiness”

Aunt Alice, the youngest daughter, almost deserving a memoir to herself, was a most extraordinary character. Not everyone’s favourite aunt, she had an incisive wit which could be biting. She had the knack in a single phrase of pinning people down, like a butterfly to a board. But that sort of wit does not transfer well to paper, and besides it’s necessary to know the people. On reflection she didn’t do anything particularly well, but she did it with such panache that I think she deceived herself as well as everyone else.

Nathaniel George was an indulgent and much lover father. He spoilt all his children (except Johnny who he never got on with) but Alice most of all. He died when she was very young, and left her (and his other daughters too) the then princely sum of £1,000 a year. Alice then took off. She went off on her won to Paris to study Art and brought home unsuitable young students of doubtful character who she threatened to marry. "I always wore a wedding ring when. I was in Paris," she once said. "It was safer.") When her younger brother Savile (Uncle Sav.) took a hunting box at Moreton Morrell, she went too, to entertain for him. None of this would seem at all out of the way nowadays, except that the wedding ring would be considered quite unnecessary, but in those strait- laced Victorian days it was unheard of. Poor Isabel wrung her hands; everyone said, "You must do something about Al.", but she said despairingly, "What can I do?"?)

Aunt Alice was a "man's woman". She greatly preferred the company of the opposite sex, and they returned the compliment. She had considerable charm and, though a great talker (which became worse with age), she could also be a good listener. I have a picture of her in my mind and eye listening enthralled (no doubt

to a man); with her blue eyes and black lashes (which she kept to old age) screwed up as she did when interested, with her chin cupped in her hand, and a cigarette between her long thin fingers. She married eventually in her late thirties, a neighbour, Hubert Swinburne, the eldest son and heir to Sir John Swinburne of Capheaton. He had long been tied to Molly's chariot wheels, but in the end settled for her younger sister. For her part Alice felt it was time to settle down, and besides she felt he should be rewarded for searching all night for her dog, Nancy. Alas to no avail, poor Nancy was found drowned in the Roman well.

When she was congratulated on her engagement, she remarked laconically, "Well, the old bird's caught at last!". Joan Browne-Swinburne was their only child. The youngest of the family, Savile (Uncle Sav.) was a moonfaced, rather stupid fellow with very flat feet. He fought (one feels to no great account) in the Boer War and his only recorded remark on this military endeavour was that he must have leave as he needed some new boots and they could only be obtained from Maxwell's. When he did come home he spent too much money on fast women and slow horses, and was finally declared bankrupt. He lived in great comfort on an allowance from his mother at Chesters, where he was looked on as a kind of mascot. He died from a heart attack at Manchester Races in 1922.

The remarkable older generation of Clay tons failed to pass on any of their attributes to my uncles. Neither their business acumen nor their scholarship. The next generation was far better at spending money than on making it and had no interest in any scholarly activities. The three daughters were very different. They were all “characters", witty and good company. This, I feel, they must have inherited from their grandmother Sophia. The male line of the Clay tons is almost extinct. Only the great-great-

grandson ,of Nathaniel's younger brother, Uncle Dick, is still alive, and he is unmarried.

Granny died in 1926, her three sons having pre-deceased her; Jack Clayton inherited Chesters. He could hardly wait to put it on the market to pay his bookmaker's bills. It was bought by Alec Keith whose wife Daphne, nee Straker, was a connection though not actually a relation. Now their daughter Alice, who married John Benson of Newbrough, lives there, so Chesters has been lucky.

MY PARENTS BEFORE MARRIAGE

Mark Fenwick

Meanwhile young Mark was proving very troublesome. His father said he had wasted his time at Harrow and learned nothing. but had spent all his time in playing games and that, if he went to a university the same thing would happen, and even more time would be wasted. So he was sent on a kind of grand tour of Europe with a tutor and two other boys. Although he was bitterly disappointed, this proved a blessing in disguise, as he discovered that he had a great flair for languages, and quickly mastered the language of any country he was in. 'He spoke French, German and Italian fluently and with an excellent accent and, even more important, with the correct intonation and appropriate gestures. He taught himself Spanish after he married, "for fun".

When he came back from his travels his father sent him up to work in Lambton & Fenwick, the family bank in Newcastle. He was a most reluctant banker, and I expect managed to find plenty of time to play games. His parents were anxious that he should have some friends in the North (he had never lived there) so letters were despatched to various friends and acquaintances including

Mrs. Barnett (nee Fenwick) of Bywell, and Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Clayton of West Denton. The former had three sons about his age: Tid, Fred and "Mouse". These three brothers became life-long friends, particularly the eldest two. West Denton Hall was a convenient distance from Newcastle and Mark became a frequent visitor there and wasted no time in falling in love with the eldest daughter of the house.

At that age Mark was a very good looking but difficult young man. Aunt Alice once said to me, "When your father was young he was so 'farouche' (her very word) that no-one could do anything with him". Maybe he suffered from being in competition with Uncle Walter who was so obviously his parents' favourite son. But whatever the cause he became more and more genial as he got older, and ended up extremely mellow and a great favourite with the ladies.

Mary Sophia Clayton (Molly)

I have left Molly to the end, as she was my mother, and felt she should have a place to herself. She was the eldest daughter and seems to have been Isabel's favourite child. She was not very tall but slim and was renowned for her figure and beautiful hands. She had brown hair, hazel eyes, a retroussee nose, and rather a dark complexion and high colour. Except for the hazel eyes, which both Peggy and Cicely inherited (and in the younger generation, Molly) she failed to pass on her looks to any of her daughters. Hilda was different from the rest of us, but not really like her mother.

Like her sisters, Molly was very much a "man's woman" and all her life preferred the company of men. She liked men to be somewhat raffish, and was made uncomfortable by too much worthiness. It was particularly annoying for her to have five daughters and

no son. One of my aunts once said to me, "All the men were a little in love with your mother, my dear".

Her first suitor was one Mr. Rideout, who was said to be "old and moth-eaten ı(He was probably about thirty.) When he came to pay court, her younger brothers and sisters used to hang over the banisters chanting: "You cant see Miss Clayton, she's out in the phaeton. So eventually he gave up. To digress for a moment, Mr. Rideout married eventually late in life and, so the story goes ıon the morning after his wedding night ıhe got up in the early morning, dressed in the evening clothes he had taken off the night before and disposed himself on the sofa in their bedroom, so as not to offend the susceptibilities of the housemaid that called them. The Rideouts, who seem to have been an extraordinarily dull couple, used to come and stay at Chesters complete with a daughter with the odd name of Beaujolais.

Mark and Molly married extremely young. They were only twenty-two and nineteen, but they encountered considerable opposition -from the matriarchal grandmother Sophia Ogle. She was far from enchanted with Mark, thought him too young, not steady enough, spoilt and a flibberty-gibbet (if that description can be applied to a man); in fact, not nearly good enough for her favourite grand-daughter.

The Claytons used to go every August to Birdhope, their moor on the Rede, for the shooting. This was a monumental undertaking. The three elder children, Johnny, Mary, and Teddy went, and the three youngest, Evie, Alice and Save were sent to Chesters to be looked after by Aunt Saleh (who they were considerably in awe of). Invitations to shoot at Birdhope were much sought after, and Mrs. Clayton kept an excellent table. So when Mark was invited he was over the moon and decided to propose to Molly during

the visit. The only way to get there was by train. Not only the guests but also all the provisions had to chug up the now long defunct railway. Isabel, therefore, asked Mark to call at Carrick, Watson, the grocer in Newcastle, to collect the stores and bring them with him. When he arrived hoping, no doubt, to ingratiate himself with what he hoped would be his future in-laws, he was met at the door by Granny open-armed and expansive. "Oh Mr. Fenwick," she said. "I am afraid we have made quite a carrier of you." Only then did the awful truth dawn - the stores were still languishing in Newcastle! This story always amuses me when I think how often he used to accuse me of having a head like a sieve, never paying attention to anything I was told, etc. etc

However, despite these lapses, married they were at Newburn Church in 1882. No doubt they got round the indulgent Nathaniel George. I wonder if Granny knew of the bar sinister in the bridegroom's family. I feel she must have done, but Aunt Alice, who had never heard of it herself, assured me that she didn't. This seems -incredible when the families were almost neighbours though, of course, there was a great divide between Northumberland and *Co.* Durham in those days.

Amongst their wedding presents was a "compendium of games". This was given to them by someone (unknown to me) who said that they were still such children that it seemed the most suitable present he could think of. This compendium was a beautifully made small mahogany chest with a domed top. As children we all played with it during the sacred children's hour after tea. I remember it distinctly. It contained backgammon, chess, draughts, a race

game (very popular) with lead horses, dominoes, and included, of course, the chessmen, draught counters, and dice. It was a miracle of good planning as it was small enough to be carried- by a small

child. No present could have given so much pleasure over the years.

PARENTS

Mark and Molly Fenwick

I don't know when my mother started being: called "Molly" instead of Mary, but I suspect that Mark started it, and it very quickly caught on. Granny, however, strongly disapproved and always called her Mary in a very pointed way.

They started their married life at a house in St. Thomas's Place (always called "Tommy's Place") in Newcastle on £700 a year which was considered more than enough for a young couple in those days. They scraped along with four servants, a nanny for the baby, Peggy, and I think some form of a groom. They certainly had a dog-cart, and a very smart turn-out it was, so I am told. Newcastle was very social and they both had a passion for parties and for entertaining, so life must have looked pretty good to the young Mark Fenwicks. The fact that they were both to end up in wheelchairs was in the far, far distant future.

When I married and went to live in Kent, I knew a lady called Mrs. Kennedy-Shaw, a friend of my in-laws. She had lived in Newcastle when she was a child and remembered my parents. When she was out with her mother one day, they came by at a spanking pace in their dog-cart and stopped to speak to them. She said, "l have never forgotten your father and mother; they were <u>such</u> a good-looking couple and looked so happy”

Mark continued to go to the Bank reluctantly.' He once told me that he used to run at top speed through the streets of Newcastle, not because he was late, but just for the fun of it. (Oddly enough, I must have inherited that trait, because long after

I was grown up and married I used to run everywhere too, much to the amazement of people in Cobham, where we then lived, as I went flying down the village street.) Peggy and Hilda were both born at Tommy's Place. Then they took a house outside Newcastle called "The Stelling" where Cicely and Audrey were born - strictly speaking I think all four children were born at Westgate House, the home of the old Claytons, which Granny kept as her town residence. Later still the family rented Meldon from the Cooksons' and lived there for about four years. There Mark started his passion for gardening and this made him determined to have a place of his ·own where he could make a garden from scratch Lambton's Bank was absorbed by Lloyds in the '90s, and this gave Mark the opportunity he was looking for. He thankfully gave up being a Banker, and decided to move south where there might be a more congenial climate for gardening, and where he would still be able to hunt and shoot.

To-find a *nice* house, *in* a suitable neighbourhood, was easier said than done. People were affluent and living in their country houses. Nothing was for sale. At last he found what he was looking for, though it would not, at first glance, seem to have been very promising. A hideous house built about 1870 with large plate-glass windows, sloping grass banks with monkey puzzles and other conifers dotted about. But with his infallible "eye" for that sort of thing, he saw that it had all the essentials for the kind of garden he wanted to create. The house stood on a gentle' south-facing slope. The rising ground at the back was protected from the north by a wood, and there was ample water for stream and water-garden, and there was dry-fly fishing in the Dikler for Molly, and ample stabling.

Lutyens, who was then quite young, but already a rising

Architect was engaged to deal with the house. He had some tussles with his client! He wanted to sweep away the ugly Victorian bow windows on the south front, but was not allowed to my Mark. No doubt if he had had a free hand he would have made a far better job of the outside. The inside was gutted too, and that, I think, was an unqualified success. Everyone who remembers Abbotswood says what a delightful comfortable country …house it was. G.J .F. most generously paid for everything, and I am afraid got scant thanks for it. Rather on the principle that he had so much money that he didn't know what to do with it!

The date 1900 *is* over the front door at Abbotswood, but in 1903 they were still not properly *"in"*. However, with their unquenchable love of entertaining, this did not prevent Mark and Molly from embarking on a house party in December. In his diary entry for the day Mark gives an account of it. The wretched guests, some of whom "were far from well" were dragged over every stick and stone to applaud and admire. When the weekend had drawn to what must have been a welcome close, he says in his diary:"Perhaps it was a bit premature to have a party." The next day's entry reads: "The men came to start putting in the stairs today!".

By 1904 they discovered that they had seriously overspent themselves. Presumably Grandpapa, understandably, would not produce any more money. So they sold all the horses (including Audrey's beloved pony Merrylegs) and went to Rome for the winter, taking Peggy, who was 19, with them. When they got back they were in for a severe shock. In his diary Mark records laconically: "Molly is enceinte again - what a bore!" It must have been a bore to put it mildly. Peggy was 20, Hilda 17, Cicely 15 and Audrey". Prams and all the baby paraphernalia had long since been disposed of, and the thought of starting-_up a. nursery again was a daunting -prospect (though not nearly as daunting "as it would be today).

However, I expect they put as good a face on it as possible and hoped for a boy. Both of them were over 40. Alas, for hopes! I quote from a letter from Peggy to Hilda and Audrey:

> "Alas and alack the baby is only another horrible girl. It arrived this morning when we were at breakfast and Papa nearly fainted with rage and disappointment when the' nurse came down to say it was a girl. Mama is very well and thankful it is over. The infant is very small (all head like a tadpole) and looks to me simply hideous, but the nurse says it is very pretty as babies go. I have just been nursing it and it howled dismally the whole time, till at last I stuffed my finger into its mouth which quelled it. Was A. very surprised?"

A.was very surprised as apparently she had no inkling of the impending event. However, I think Mrs. Vere Chaplin (as she became) was indulging in hyperbole – Mark was much more moderate in this reactions:

> "Dec. 8th 1905. The new baby was born about 9 o'clock. An unwelcome little girl. We did so hope it would be a boy this time, and everyone prophesied it was going to be one. ("Everyone" was wrong aas usual.) Molly and Peggy frightfully disappointed. The baby *is* rather small but all right in every respect. She has good dark blue eyes and dark hair (which soon turned very fair) …..I walked up to Stow and sent a lot of telegrams and paid in my rent cheques ... "
>
> So, although the church bells were not pealed for my arrival, the family seems to have become quickly reconciled. I was spoilt by my elder sisters, particularly by the writer of the letter who asked to be my godmother. Though they considered me to be precocious and over-privileged, and able to "twiddle Mama round her little finger! And I, for my part, returned their

affection in full. I admired them and tried to copy them in everything,' but above all I considered them mines of wit. They could hardly open their mouths without sending me off in peals of laughter. Perhaps that is why, to this day, I enjoy laughter and good company more than anything else. I once, in 'an unguarded moment, said to Mitty, my dear old nursery governess apropos my sisters, "I don't know what I should do without them, but please don't tell them so as it might 'turn their heads!!' ". She did, however, tell Hilda, and I was overcome by embarrassment and hotly denied ever having said such a thing.

MY PARENTS - AS I REMEMBER THEM

My father and mother were both old enough to have been my grandparents. Peggy was almost twenty-one when I was born. I called them Mummy and Daddy not Mama and Papa like "the others", as I always referred to my sisters. Daddy was very good looking and unlike most people got better and better looking as he got older. But I never quite got onto terms with him: he was very strict, and at the same time unpredictable, so that you never quite knew where you stood. But having said that, there was so much about him that was likeable, He was essentially a cheerful person and dearly loved to laugh: indeed I have seen him almost speechless when something tickled him. However, the other side of the coin was his unfortunate capacity for bursting into tears. Once he took me to a matinee of "Mary Rose", a sentimental play by J.M. Barrie, who he greatly admired. He produced two enormous white pocket-handkerchiefs saying ominously, ." I may need these": and sure enough, he did, dabbing his eyes and blowing his nose noisily into them. I was acutely embarrassed. When we got back to Bruton Street, our London house, he spread them out on the

fender to dry in front of the fire. And on another much later occasion a few days before my wedding, he suddenly burst into tears at tea (luckily no-one else was there) saying between sobs, "To think that you are leaving your home for good", which, as he had been working to that end for some time, saying that if I didn't hurry up I should be left an old maid, seemed to be a case of over-reaction.

He was always humming and singing, usually snatches of old Music Hall songs. "You don't know Nelly like I do, said the saucy little bird on Nelly' s hat. And "The Man who broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" ¡Gilbert and Sullivan: and Tyneside songs such as “Blaydon Races˝ “Johnny Look Up and Johnny Look Down",' and, best of all.' "Cappy, the Pitman's Dog", which I can still remember. He was rather given to telling stories, and when we didn't laugh which was frequently as we had heard them so often, he used to round on us: “I can't imagine why you girls have no sense of humour, when both your mother and I have such a good one!"

He had a pretty quick temper, but it was over almost before it had begun. His favourite maxim was: “Let not the sun go down on your wrath” and a very good one too. I am afraid that I, especially, managed to infuriate him, often with good reason. He devised such strange punishments. Once I remember jumping off a wall into a lovely stand of Regale lilies and smashing them all. The punishment for this really monstrous act was to learn by heart a poem called “Bishop Hatto" which, as far as I remember, was about a bishop who was eaten alive by rats. I have never read it since and have no idea who wrote it.

On another occasion I and two other children conceived the bright idea of running along the top of the kitchen garden wall after the gardeners had stopped work and the gate was locked; letting ourselves down by our hands- (smashing a plum tree en route)

and climbing onto the fruit cage and, using as a trampoline marvellous fun but , of course, inevitably it broke quite .soon , All hell was let loose, but the punishment he came up with was "No gooseberry jam for a year", which, as I disliked gooseberry jam hardly seemed to fit the crime. Sometimes he would apologise for being cross, and I remember once saying “well alright but don't do it again", which amused him.

Mark had great flair for many things, notably for plants and gardening, food, old furniture~ and languages. But his taste in Art was suspect. Several dreadful portraits were executed of his daughters standing in riding habit~ topped by sun bonnets, holding horses in the stable yard. (They have all mysteriously vanished.) He also greatly admired an artist called George Belcher who specialised in drawings of drunken charwomen, which appeared regularly in "Punch". For some reason he thought it would be a good idea to have a conversation piece done by him of Mummy and Aunt Evie and Aunt Alice. It was to be entitled "The charming Sisters". (This was meant quite seriously.) He was very chagrin~ when they all refused point blank to co-operate. He was not really a reader, though he felt he ought to be one. I can see him, spectacles on nose and with a cigar to help things along, wading through some such portentous work as "My Campaigns on the North West Frontier" in two volumes by some obscure general. More of a duty than a pleasure.

He was something of a dandy, and in London became quite a familiar figure when arthritis forced him to take to an electric bath-chair, immaculate in top hat worn at a rakish angle, with a carnation or a bunch of Parma violets in the button hole of a very stylish great-coat that he affected. He used to whirl about London in this chair to cries of "Watch-it, Guv.!" from bus-drivers, usually ending up at Boodles Club where he used to park .the chair

by the front door. Those were the days! It was before the War, and traffic as we know it was almost non-existent, and such things as traffic wardens were still in the womb of time.

He suffered greatly from arthritis in both hips and in those days nothing could be done, and when he was old he was almost blind. A cataract operation was not a success, but he never complained and retained his gusto until a series of small strokes caused him to lose interest in everything, even his beloved garden. At the end he really couldn't walk at all, and he had made a little trolley like a child's, which he designed himself. It had tiny wheels and a hand-rail, and he was dragged on it by the butler to a makeshift lift which went up to his bedroom.

Though in his young days he had some unedifying wrangles over money with his father, I should like to put on record the fact that he supported many old friends who had fallen on evil times, though he never mentioned it, and I only heard by chance.

When he was unable, through arthritis, to shoot, hunt, or play games, he gave them up with never a backward glance. Gardening was to be his ruling passion from then on.

I can’t remember Mummy except as an invalid. When I was three she had a hunting accident which was to lay her low for the rest of her life. She was coming home early from hunting in order to take me to a party, and she couldn't resist one last flip over a gate. This, though she didn't know it, was unlatched, and when her horse touched it it swung open and gave her a fearful fall. She was unable to take me to that party, but she was not paralysed at the time. Nowadays with modern surgery she would probably have been quite all right, but then there were not even any X-rays, so gradually in spite of every kind of useless treatment, she got worse and worse and finally was· unable to walk at all, and .was always in pain. She had two nurses - always the same two ~ Nurse

Henderson (Hen) and Nurse Dempsey (Popeye). Dear Nurse Hen, as Scotch as they are made, liked to read the Bible to Mummy, but Nurse Dempsey - always on night duty and as Irish as they come used to regale her with racing tid-bits and they used to study form together during the nights when the pain was so bad that she couldn't sleep. The only drug then was, I think, heroin. She must have become completely addicted to it I remember hearing her bell ring -during the night for Popeye to give her an injection.

I had a very close relationship with my mother. The others say she had very little time for them, but for me, on account of her illness, she had all the time in the world. The first thing I did after breakfast was to tear up to her room where she would be starting her breakfast pour out her coffee, tear off her calendar and read aloud the Shakespeare quotation for the day. Then we would discuss plans (of course after lessons with Miss Smith, "Mitty"). It might be bird's nesting, or some project involving Lord Oh! (my pony). Whatever it was she always showed the greatest~ interest, and when she was away, as she often was having treatment, I wrote her almost daily accounts of the Egg or Wildflower collections and interminable stories of Lord Oh! and my canaries.

I don't think she ever quite became reconciled to leaving Northumberland. The south was considered rather an enervating place. I was considered somewhat delicate as a child, and she used to make excuses for me as though being born at Stow-on-the-Wold ("where the winds blow cold, and the cooks can't cook their dinner") had seriously undermined my constitution.

She was never cross, and I never remember her scolding me for anything, but she did rebuke me sometimes and I have never forgotten it. People have suggested tome sometimes that it must have been rather a sad home for a child, 'With a permanent invalid

and two nurses always in the house. But nothing could be further from the truth. Health was never mentioned (it was a taboo subject), neither of my parents knew the meaning of self-pity, and the house was always full of people of all ages. Mummy would appear when she was well enough and would go out in her bath chair drawn by Ratty, a superannuated Shetland pony, led by some member of the family. When I became a sullen, rebellious and very plain teenager, hating school and refusing to learn, she used to beg me off and I was sent to another school with no better results. Daddy was understandably furious when the reports got worse and worse, but she always managed to put in a good word for me.

She must really have been a remarkable person. When I think of the fight she put up against constant pain and without the aid of all the drugs available nowadays. Ralph used to meet Sir Edwin Lutyens at the Garrick Club when he, Lutyens, was an old man, and they used to talk of Abbotswood and of the fondness and admiration he had for Mummy.

In -fact I think it was largely her personality that made Abbotswood the happy house it was in those days.

She died in January 1924, when I was just 18.

Nurse Hen went on to look after Granny at Chesters, so we often saw her. But Popeye (we never called her that to her face) left after the funeral and went out of our lives for ever. We never saw her or heard of her again.

MY GRANDMOTHERS

Both Constantia Fenwick and Isabel Clayton appear to me to have been professional grandmothers. One cannot think of them as being anything else: impossible to imagine that either of them should ever have been tempted to throw their bonnet over the windmill.

Presumably they used to go to balls when young, partnered perhaps by that rich and handsome Mr. George John Fenwick, and that amiable and eligible Mr. Nathaniel George Clayton. They must once have been young wives and mothers, but to me, Isabel, the only one I knew, was the arch-type of Granny. We all loved her. Kind, benign, but not without a sense of humour, she really enjoyed being teased so long as it was done with affection, which it always was. She always wore a lace cap indoors, and a large boat-shaped hat trimmed with ostrich feathers outdoors (can it always have been the same one, or was it copied?). She always dressed in grey or black with much good lace and discreet jewellery. Almost immovable, she did, however, occasionally dead-head the roses, and was sometimes to be seen perambulating slowly round the garden on the arm of a bishop or perhaps a Roman wall expert.

Church, on Sundays, was de rigeur. All who could walk were expected to do so - this, of course, included the children. Granny herself went in the brougham with other incapacitated guests or members ·of the household. She used to wear a special bonnet on Sundays which Joan and I used to say made her look like "Old Mother Rat". Sometimes, the vicar, the Rev. Pitman, would come back to lunch. He had been a naval chaplain which seemed to excuse everything, and helped to make up for his deficiencies as a preacher.

Endlessly kind, Granny was often imposed upon. She was known to her irreverent family as the "Milch Cow", and Chesters was always full of hangers-on, often hanging up their hats for weeks or months on end.

Grannies aren't made that way, nowadays!

A CHILD'S EYE VIEW OF THE ROMAN CAMP AT CHESTERS

When, as children, we used to stay at Chesters with

Granny, the Roman Camp of Cilurnum was one of our chief playgrounds. The various sites which had been excavated by Uncle John lie in the park between the house and the river. They were protected from the sheep and cattle with iron railings with kissing-gates - not always effectively as sheep sometimes got in. Grass grew on the tops of the walls; and I seem to remember an old man pushing a small hand-mower about to keep the grass down. Many were the games played there, and as a picnic place it was unrivalled.

The museum, built by Uncle John was near the front gate. This was frequently used by my cousin Joan and myself as a place to play on wet days. It had a peculiar and rather pleasant smell (like everything else connected with Chesters). Nobody as much as enquired what we were up to, with the result that we used to amuse ourselves by changing the labels on the exhibits, so that a goddess of the well would unaccountably appear as a bearded gentleman leaning on one elbow holding a trident: and the river god would be endowed with unmistakably female attributes with long hair and draperies. Nobody seems to have noticed, and the labels were: still there the next year. It all sounds extraordinarily haphazard - was a fee charged? I can't remember. Antiquarians and students visited it sometimes, but as a tourist attraction it was non-existent. When Chesters was sold on Granny's death, the Camp was very properly made over to the Ministry of Works, and it underwent a sea-change. When I visited it a year or so back I was horrified by the transformation. An asphalt car park marked out with white lines surrounds the museum. There are turnstiles and litter bins. Asphalt paths between stout oak rails (all in the best of taste) take" the place of sheep-bitten grass. Neat notices explain everything in clear terms and no grass grows on the walls. In the museum itself the gods and goddesses have long since regained

their rightful gender; but Uncle John, looking down, must be horrified too, as the members of the public mill aimlessly about, all in the name of culture. No doubt it is far better shown and culture has been well served, but the magic had departed, though Chesters stands just where it always has done and the North Tyne flows heedlessly on.

ENVOIE

This brings to an end the family saga. Writing it has seemed to bring me quite close to the forbears I never knew, as though sometimes they were looking over my shoulder. I should like to have known great-grandmother Sophia; also more of the fishwife, and what I feel must have been her sad life. Likewise, I should like to have known dashing Tom, and why he was considered so dashing, and his wife Constantia who passed on her looks to so many of her descendants. And the old Clay tons who failed to pass on anything. Why some genes are so much more powerful than others. Grandfather George John Fenwick I feel a great affinity for; I would love to have known him in his hey-day as I am sure he was fun. Grandmother Constantia I never knew.

None of our forbears was really distinguished in any way. They were a good social mix which is all to the good. Of four great-grandfathers, one was a banker, one an ironmaster and two were parsons. Of four great-grandmothers one was the grand-daughter of an earl, one a fishwife from Cullercoats, one was the daughter of a distinguished admiral, and one (the Clayton one) I know nothing about. Of two grandfathers, one was a banker and one a solicitor (albeit a very rich one). None of them took any part in politics, in public affairs, or were prominent in the armed forces (except for General Sir George Jeffreys). They produced

no writer, artist or musician, but much appreciation of the Arts. They tended to be well educated and cultured, but except for the old Clay tons, not scholarly. But on both sides there seems to have been an enormous capacity for amassing wealth which has not been passed on. My mother's family, in particular, all possessed a trenchant sense of humour and wit, which hope and think have been passed on. I also mused (as many have done before) on the impermanence of human achievement. John Clayton with Granger & Dobson must have thought that their brave new Newcastle would stand for ever, but it has been largely swept away in a few generations by courtesy of T Dan Smith. "l'0mrg.y's Place" is no more and Westgate House went long before that. Craghead, brain child of G.J.F. and Constantia at Bournemouth has likewise been pulled down and a brand new block of flats entitled "Craghead Court" has risen in its place. Chesters has fared better; it has passed to people who love it as we did and most of Norman Shaw's work remains. Abbotswood has changed h~nds twice and though my father's garden remains up to a point, it sadly lacks its creator's hand. But gardening is the most ephemeral of the Arts. I suppose Uncle John Clayton is best remembered for his work on the Roman wall, but even there the real credit must be given to the Emperor Hadrian for building it in the first place. There were some pretty forceful characters amongst them who I like to think contributed a lot to the circles in which they moved. This must be true of the vast majority of ordinary families who make up that little understood people - The British. When all is said and done, it is what you are, and not what you do that counts. There is very little room at the top!