

And mother would say, for example, "There she goes, Aimless Annie. She just came from the pawn shop where she got eight and four pence for the bedstead, and now she doesn't know what she's going to sleep on tonight. Oh, well, she's got eight and four pence so now she can buy four penny worth of jellied eels—that'll please the Old Man. But, oh, God, she's got to break the news about pawning the bed. That'll be the first thing he'll miss when he turns in tonight. And they've only been married a week. Oh, well, it's his fault.

He shouldn't have spent too much on the wedding. Now she has eight for the bedstead. Anyhow, she's going to get it out on Saturday, so they can sleep all day Sunday." This sort of chatter she would keep up until the pedestrian vanished round the corner.

The caricature was always [xxx] by whatever the pedestrian did. If he hesitated, looked, or hurried round to watch something as he might, mother would pick it up and express what she thought he was thinking of at that moment.

I would sit with my mother at the window for an hour, waiting for people to go by and waiting for her comments.

The next one to pass might be some jaunty individual, with an optimism and a directness in his gate as though he knew where he was going and was confident he was going to get there. "Oh! That's [xxx] Al. Well," my mother would say, "he got a job last Friday and he's going to keep it. Now he can tell everyone to kiss his ass."

Then an aloof, spiritual young man would walk by.

[Biography matters]

There's Bertie Heath. He's not feeling very well. Took two pills last night and is a little uncertain as to whether he can get home in time. He doesn't walk too fast. Poor Bertie, he is in a quandary. He's undecided whether to hurry home or spend tuppence in the nearest public lavatory. He hates to spend tuppence on a thing like that yet he doesn't want to ruin his nice new underwear he just bought.

I would be in a continual state of laughter and would

Since the time I was able to remember, Mother, no matter what time she came home, always brought us an edible delicacy of some sort, whether it was bull's eye candies or Napoleon pastries or sponge cake in chocolate. If she was flush, there'd be one Napoleon pastry a piece or two bags of candy left on the table. But if she was hard up, there's be only one Napoleon pastry broken in two or a half of one broken in two.

In a vague way I knew she had suffered much of heart and soul. The conscious world of childhood was acutely darkened by the problems and troubles of our outer world.

A world in which my mother and other grownups lived. A world where they were taken to law courts, a world of trouble and tears which suddenly broke in upon my childish mind. I remember my mother weeping and saying that A was unjust—a brute.

had tried to destroy her in the law courts, had wrested her of her just due and had lied about her. How could she keep two children on five shillings a week? This outer world of strife would suddenly burst in upon my consciousness at the most unexpected times—when I was playing with [xxx] on the floor or at night when I woke up and found her weeping in bed.

Sometimes great joy came from the outer world, joy in which there would be gales of laughter and

She would keep me in a continual state of uproarious laughter. Such as when another typed passed by, I would urge her to make more comments, which she did until she became exhausted. It was in the gloomy days of the following month that I was to experience the greatest sorry of my life. It was not the death of my mother. That happened many years later when I was able to philosophize and understand and adjust myself to that loss. But it was the loss of her mind which resulted in my being torn apart from her at a time when she was



the all-absorbing love of my being, of my child world. No other love was so intense and as mutual as ours. At the time she was taken away, she was the object of all my growing sentiments and childish poignant passions. Apart from loving her, I admired her. I thought her young, beautiful, and, of course, witty. I also thought her superior to other mothers, more humorous and loving, for in those days, I realize the terrific fight and struggle she went through to bring up us boys.

in our sitting room, picnics, moonlight, rides on the four in hand out into the country.

Then periods of loneliness, being left with my grandmother while mother went on tour in the provinces.

The joy of waking up in the morning before mother and finding two portions of either cake or candy with a little note explaining which piece of cake is for whom.

Earliest mental recollections are those of mystery. The facades of buildings, people behind windows. What are they standing on? Why were they so high? The scaffolding around a lamppost on Westminster bridge. What stopped it from falling over into the river? How did bones get into a body? Why should they grow inside? Money? Planting money. My dream of a money farm.

I discover ugliness. Railway arches. All arches are ugly and sinister when you look up into them. Their [xxx] the [xxx] Their curve is objectionable, like the inside of a belly.

My first revulsion of feeling of ugliness of the hair line around a little boy [xxx] ear.

The bald spot behind the ear—so bald and disgustingly white.

There was something in the [xxx] of my sense of security born out of my mother's happiness and laughter.

For a moment mother's religious conscience was [xxx]. Should we give it over to the police?

Perhaps it was some poor devil's whole fortune. But we children soon shouted her down. And fortunately, there was no address, which was a great relief to mother and her religious conscience

The revealing [?] of such budding talent could not be concealed and thus it was that Mr. Jackson saw me entertaining the other boys with imitations of Bill Sykes, [xxx] and the old man of the Curiosity Shop. Sydney had unswerving faith in my talent and while a [xxx], wrote to Mr. ? of the Palace Theatre.

Have you ever seen a human frog? Well, I'll show you. Here, you hold the candle and I'll take the lamp; then he lead the way into the kitchen, creating gargantuan shadows on the kitchen wall. He rested the lamp on the dresser, which had a curtain strung across the bottom in place of the cupboard doors. "Hey, Gilbert, come out of there!" he said, parting the curtains.

A half a man with no legs, and a blond oversized head and powerful muscular arms crawled from underneath the dresser. He wore flannel underwear and from where the legs of the garment had been cut off to the thighs, ten thick stubby toes stuck out!

Those who knew me made me feel unglamorous. How warm and secure one feels if one is noticed. I remember as a boy of twelve, watching a Salvation Army. One member was extremely entertaining on the accordion and he attracted quite a large crowd. I followed them into their hall, fascinated. The accordion player was also a great spellbinder. After the service, many went to the penitents' form and gave themselves to God. I remember the thrill I got when the accordion player pointed to me in the audience and asked if I had been saved. As a matter of fact, I had, but I shook my head. Then he beckoned me to come down the aisle and kneel at the penitents' form. I remember I refused at first out of shyness. Then quite a nice young lady sat beside me and counseled me. "Don't you want to make Jesus happy? Jesus, who died for you?" I could resist no more. I got up to the accompaniment of loud murmuring and exclamation. "Another soul for Jesus!" "A child shall lead them!" "Amen!" "Praise God." And I became a member of the Salvation Army for three weeks.

The second season of the Football Match was to start without Weldon and I was to take his place. This was my chance. Although I had made a success in the Mumming Birds, its importance was not as great as playing the lead in the Football Match which was one of Karno's bigger productions. Moreover we were to open at the Oxford, the most important music hall in London. Harry made a notable success at the [xxx] when The Oxford management had accepted me as a substitute for the Great Weldon. We were to be the main attraction and I was to see for the first time, that which had been the dream of my life, my name in [xxx] letters at the top of the bill at the Oxford music hall, above all places at this moment a considerable step up in my rank as a comedian of merit, a star salary and an eminence that would