

To E. M. L. Roche

"Some incidents in the lives of
your great-grandparents
John & Mary Elswarth."

Aunt Rachel Emily
London.
New Year's eve. 1945.

The first I know of ^{my} grand mother - then Mary Cockshott, was, when she was living with ^{her} brother - a bachelor, he was much older than she - and was a tall gaunt, & not very pleasant person. a real old fashioned hard shell Baptist.

He made a good deal of money. Farming in those days was paying well - like all the rest of the farmers in Craven, his great desire was to buy land. Mary was quite sufficient. She was very small and dainty. Gay & sweet tempered. These two were looked after by a housekeeper a sour, old, spinster, called Ellen. They were living then, at a nice old farm called Deepdale Head - of course belonging to brother Thomas.

Mary must have been very pretty. She had deepset dark grey eyes

with long lashes, Auburn hair, & a lovely skin. She had also tiny feet & hands. She was very proud of her small feet, & would always wear black silk stockings. This was an almost-unheard-of extravagance in those times - The farmers wives told her that only Queens, & Duchesses wore silk stockings, Mary piped up, "Yes, I know. Queens, Duchesses, and Mary Cocksfoot." She insisted upon wearing black, silk stockings all her life, & they must be of good quality silk with clocks.

Their first mental picture, is of a journey, she often told of - when she was old.

When she was quite a girl, they had a very hard winter - and winters were winters in those times. They had a terrible snow storm

Lasting for days without ceasing.

Thomas began to worry about his sheep on Foxcup Farm, away up in the dales, he told Mary he must ride up & see about them, so plucky little Mary said "I will come too."

"Nout ut soart" impossible, just look out at it, but I will come" said Mary.

So she put her saddle on her Galloway pony, & jumped up. She wore a flowing green habit, & a green hat with a red feather. (Your mother, Annie & I have all ridden miles on that saddle, it was most comfortable, it had a wash leather non-slip seat, with fancy stitching, only one crutch & a little slipper, so much better than the latter day stirrup - we always

(new) it - as Grandma's saddle.)

The two of them started off from

+

Deepdale Head in the early morning, & rode through Long Preston - round by the Church, & up the moor road - through the thick snow. & thicker they went up the moors, & thicker the snow became. but - on and up they rode.

When they got past Seale - the snow drifts were so high - they covered the 6 ft. stone walls - but up there - the snow was frozen so hard, they gaily rode right-over the tops of the walls & hedges.

As far as they could see - there was only snow, snow, & more snow, but for here & there a few tops of tall fir trees; & once or twice a lone shepherd, trying to dig out his sheep - The only sound a curlew's plaintive call, as it circled over their heads.

How charming little Mary must
 have looked in her green habit, and
 green hat with the red feathers, her
 red curls flying - & face all pink with
 the frosty air; the only spot of colour
 is all that white & pines -

Inglborough is in front - and
 Pennington along side them -
 When they get to the top of the
 dale. They see Foxcup. Mary
 turns in her saddle, & looks back
 on beautiful Lawford dale covered
 in pure white snow - The Sun is
 setting, looking like a great
 round ball of fire - Turner never
 painted a sunset to equal this
 glory of crimson & gold, against
 the snow. Mary rides on ^{the} feeling
 awed by the sheer beauty of ^{the} world
 as God made it for us.

The door of Foxup farm is open, and the glow from the big, peat fire, can be seen.

The farmer and his wife are "fair capped," at the sight of the riders on such a day. They go in; & Mary is put on the old black oak lounge settle by the ingle nook.

Mrs. Knowless insists upon taking off the little shoes, & when she sees the dirt stockings, words fail her. but she says "my poor lamb, you must be fair frozzin." "to bed at once with a hot bottle, & then joy. I'll bring up a nice hot-poppitt with a drop o' rum in it."

I

Time marches on. In a year or two
half the young men of Craven are
courting Mary Cocksott - for besides
being lovely - is by way of becoming
an heiress for three days - her brother
shows no sign of marrying - he
has no time for such foolishness

On week days he is hoarding up
his gold. his great ambition is
to get enough to buy Bend Yats,
a nice little farm near by.

He already has Deydale Head,

$\frac{1}{2}$ Wood and Old Ing.

His Sundays are spent preaching
at a make shift Baptist Chapel
at Helliwell, he holds forth for
hours on the "carnal lusts of the
flesh", to perishment by hell fire etc

Among Mary's Suitors, is one, young

John Elsworth of Stanton Cotes -
In Mary's eyes he is the handsomest-
youth in all Craven, he is the finest-
horseman, the best-dancer, he is

gay, carefree & very charming - he
is very tall, ^{has} a fine face, & wonderful
violet-blue eyes; they are both deeply
in love with each other.

When brother Thomas hears of this
he is simply furious, "this must
be stopped at once," he says. "John
Elsworth is nowt but a wastrel,
he has no brass, & never will
have."

Poor Mary is practically shut-up
in her bedroom, and old Ellen
is set to watch her.

But as we all know "love laughs at
locks & micks."

On one moonlight-night Mary slips
off her little sandals carries them in
her hand, creeps down the stairs, &
out of the front-door; she winds
round by the garden wall -
at the end of the garden - where
the gooseberry bushes still grow -
she sees the grandest, young
man in all Craven waiting for
her on his blood mare, "Blossom".
He picks her up in his strong, young,
arms (she is only a feather weight -)
he holds her very firmly in
front of him, & vows that
nobody shall ever take her
away from him again - as long
as his life lasts.

Mary feels a bit frightened -

"Will de catch us Hunt you John?"
 "Catch us?" says John. "not I de d'el
 Missy can catch us, when we're on
 Blossom. She is I de swiftest mare on
 all Yorks d'is." Blossom pricks
 up her ears, & with a neigh and a
 bound flies like the wind.

John has barely a crown in his
 pouch, & Mary - no down chest-for
 Mary - only her little reticule,
 which she clutches tightly to her,
 it contains one pair of black
 silk stockings (of good quality silk
 & with crosses) and six silver
 tea spoons marked C.

But they have what all the gold in
 the world cannot buy - youth, health,
 good looks. love. & each other. also
 superb courage.

~~God~~ God keeps them.

In the mean time, at Deepdale Head Thomas Coates is aroused by the neigh of a horse; he jumps out of bed, & rushes onto the landing, his night cap ditching.

He calls out - "Eleen do you hear out? is Mary alright?" Eleen goes to Mary's room, & comes out shaking with fright, & calls out "S does not here, S does gone wi young John Elsworth I'll be bound."

"What S doubts Thomas - That wastrel, Lark to what I say woman,

* her shadow shall never darken my door again, nor her name spoke."

The house in the days to come is very quiet - the master counts up his gold, & thinks it won't be long now, before he buys Bengali. The old wales miss the gay, young, laughter, & the patter of little feet on the stone floors.

This boy de Ruygen
and his wife.

Time marches on. The scene is changed
 we enter a small house in a poor
 part of Manchester.

John Elsworth is still gay & carefree.
 Mary is still sweet, but looks a
 little careworn.

There are two little daughters.
 The elder, Margaret is a fine girl
 of about 7. Strong & long limbed,
 with her father's large violet eyes
 & she is full of life & joy. & with a
 heart of gold. ever as rich as
 Elsworth.

The younger girl Catherine is
 about 5. She is quiet & shy. She
 does not look strong. Her cheeks
 are pale & wan; she has her
 mother's grey eyes & auburn hair.

Mary looks at her wistfully -
 & thinks - if only Katie could
 have some pure Craven air

Good, new milk, & eggs straight
 from the nest. So would soon be
 strong & well - I wonder, she thinks
 dare I? ought I? Yes, I must. I will.
 When John is out, she takes up her
 pen, & writes to her brother. (She
 has not heard anything from
 him all these years.)

"To brother Thomas -

Honoured Sir

I am sending my younger
 daughter into your safe keeping -
 she is somewhat delicate, the
 Manchester air does not suit her
 health. I know you are a hard
 man & unforgiving - but you are
 also a just man, honourable & God fearing
 man. I know you will bring
 up Catherine to be a good Christian &
 a virtuous maid.

Your humble & obedient
 Sister Mary Elsworth

I beg you to be kind to my baby for
the sake of our childhood days -
I doubt she will be oft sad
and lonely.

Mary.

Catherine is sent to Deepdale Head.

There ^{are} lots of lonely evenings for
Mary - when John is out, &
Margaret is bed. She sits by the
fire, & gazes into the flames, seeing
faces & pictures. She fancied she
saw again beautiful Lanstrath dale
in her mantle of pure, white snow
and the mantle of a sunset - the
sun going down like a ball of fire -
in all the glory of crimson & gold -
She sometimes sees little Kate &
looks for her.

The fire dies down & the pictures
fade away - She is back in this
murky, soiled, hateful Manchester. Does gallant
little Mary regret? I wonder, I wonder.

Again time marches on, & again the scene is changed. They are now spending their old age in the Church Hook, a cottage belonging to the Elsworth family. Close to the gates of the Parish Church at Long Preston -

I know nothing of "The Years between". John - in the eyes of his wife is still the finest man in Craven. Though now quite old, he is still happy & so lucky. He spends his evenings at the Maypole with his old friends. Mary listens for his foot-steps coming home round the old lane, & she often hears his gay laugh, & snatches of song - though his walk is not always too steady; but she never fails to greet him with a smile, never a reproach.

On a lovely Spring morning John & Mary Elsworth may be seen standing on their door steps

looking up to the "Everlasting Hills", as
 He seen rises - They are a delightful old
 "Derby + Joan" he is still a fine man,
 + his little wife is still - as ever -
 dainty + sweet. barely reaching up
 to his elbows.

I doubt Stephen M. Kenma says
 "The greatest curse God put on
 humanity is not death but old age".
 In this case he is wrong - these two
 have indeed "grown old gracefully".

I think it - must be because they
 have always had perfect love
 + trust - in each other. all through
 the sunshine + shadows of a long
 life together - + of ten hard times.

How grand Rev. Loaf looks -
 just as though it were keeping
 guard over the old church and
 billings. Think of the centuries it
 has looked down on all the

different vicars coming + going - of all the christenings - weddings + funerals of the people from one generation to another "Yes - & one day Rye Loaf will look down on us for the last time" Says Mary "wee joy -" John says "when we come to our journey's end, we shall still be together."

There comes one Sunday - when John Elsworth lies aying, the long limbs quiet at last. Mary sits by the bed holding his hand.

There is a knock on the door, an old friend comes in - he calls out "I have news for you"

"hush, hush, whispers Mary -

My master lies a aying - but what is your news?" "it is that Thomas Cochrane of Ben Gate died this morn."

This news penetrates to the ears of the aying man, & gives down

fictitious strength. He sets up
 & calls out "what did you say,
 Oud Tommie dead dunah" he
 jumps out of bed. Claps his hands,
 & dances a jig. saying "I'm better
 til ^{at} two yet." Then he falls back
 on his bed unconscious. Those were
 the last words he ever spoke.
 He was "game to the last."

Six tall farmers carry the huge
 coffin. shoulder high. across the
 road to where "The rude forgers
 of the Hamlet sleep."

They bury him among his own -
 the Reservoirs of Saints Cotes -
 his little wife turns away from the
 grave, & whispers - "Good night - my love
 I won't be long."

Not very long after she died
 at Bend Yall. where she had

been living with her daughter
Catherine. her little Coffin ~~was~~
placed beside "her man" they
lie side by side in their last,
long - sleep together.
God rest their souls.

Years later, when I was about 12,
I opened a drawer in the old
Elsworth corner cupboard &
found "laid by in lavender," a
pair of black silk stockings, with
such tiny feet; also a row of
auburn curls - which my mother
told me Grandma always wore
round her sweet face, within her
Victorian poke bonnet - In another
drawer were 6 silver tea spoons marked
C. I have these spoons before me as I
write - If they could they speak & give
us their history - As a tale that is told.