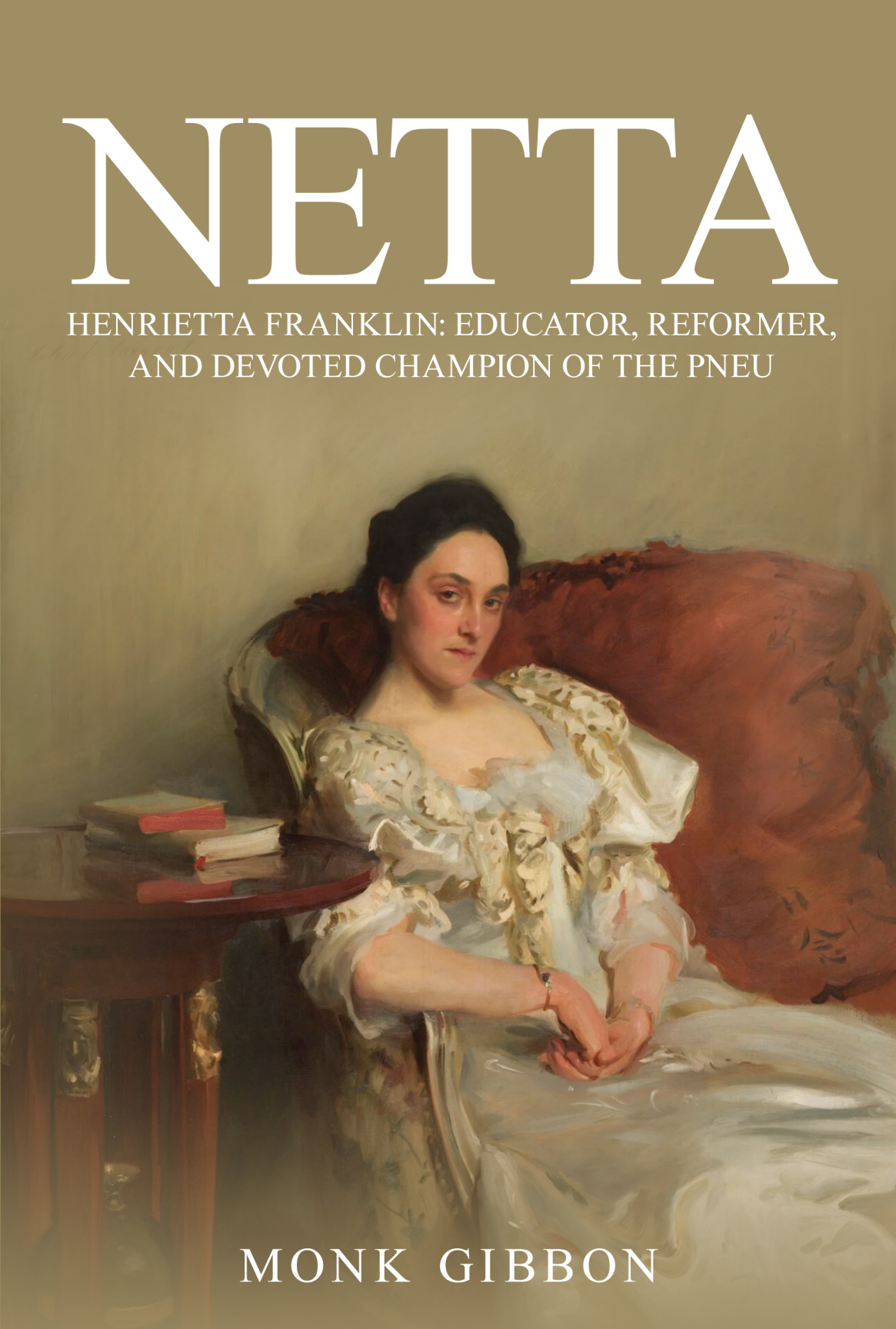
NETTA

HENRIETTA FRANKLIN: EDUCATOR, REFORMER, AND DEVOTED CHAMPION OF THE PNEU



MONK GIBBON

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NETTA

A Biography of Henrietta Franklin

BY

Monk Gibbon

INTRODUCTION

The Honourable Henrietta Franklin was a rich woman, born into aristocratic British society in the late 19th century. She could have spent her life within her social circle, attending social gatherings and focusing on a refined home environment. Her father, Samuel Montagu, 1st Baron Swaythling, was a wealthy banker given a peerage because of his social service and work as a political figure in the House of Commons. Franklin married early and married a banker, Ernest Louis Franklin, who in his own right was quite wealthy. She could easily have "rested on her laurels" as a very wealthy woman, but she did not.

As you read this biography, you will notice that as a young mother concerned about the education of her children, Franklin worked tirelessly for many causes. She became of great importance to the Charlotte Mason community after they were introduced in 1894. The Parents' National Education Union (PNEU) then became one of her causes. In the summer of 1984 she became the PNEU Organising Secretary, and for seventy years until her death in 1964, she worked tirelessly to promote the educational theories and practices of Charlotte Mason.

In fact, Mrs. Franklin's commitment to Mason's work was so strong that Mason dedicated her third volume, *Home and School Education*, to Franklin by writing: "Henrietta Franklin: This volume is affectionately inscribed, in very grateful recognition, not only of her generous life's labour given to the spread of certain educational ideas, but also of her singular apprehension of those ideas." Of course, it was never enough for Mason for anyone to have just mechanical acknowledgement of an idea; one must have deeper and stronger beliefs as to why one is investing time and energy into a set of principles. Without a change from within, one's practice does not change. Thus, Mason acknowledged that not only did Henrietta Franklin work tirelessly to promote Mason's philosophy and practices, she (Franklin) absorbed them into herself.

Franklin believed them so strongly that in 1896 she opened the first PNEU school in London in Linden Gardens, attended by approximately 16 students taught by two teachers trained at the House of Education (later called the Charlotte Mason College). But Franklin was also involved with other schools, such as the English public school for girls called Overstone and the boys preparatory school called Desmoor. She was involved in the

opening of schools that used Mason's programmes of study designed for the Parents' Union School (PUS), ran the PNEU office in London, and worked on a host of other projects such as the annual PNEU conference. In addition, she was a member of the National Union for Women Suffrage Societies serving as President from 1916-1917. You will learn more about her many social and cultural efforts as you read this biography.

It is important to note that through all her work, Henrietta Franklin had a medical condition that would have interfered with leading a routine life for many people. In 1909 she was diagnosed with cancer in one of her legs, and the leg had to be amputated. She insisted that a female doctor perform the amputation. Not long after she was up and about with a prosthesis. Although such a traumatic experience would have caused many to sit down and quit, it never seemed to daunt her. She continued her very busy life.

So what you will find between these pages is the life story of a person who gave her all for various causes, women's issues, the war effort, charity efforts, and the list goes on. No, she did not "rest on her laurels" until she was laid to rest on 7 January 1964 in London at the age of 97.

Why the republication of this book? Henrietta Franklin is a primary source of information about Charlotte Mason. As a young mother, Mason was Franklin's mentor and example. As a more experienced adult, Franklin was very much a leader in her own right. For those of us in the Mason community, seeing her through the eyes of author Monk Gibbon, provides a historical record of aspects of Mason's work, of the PNEU, and of various schools using Mason's PUS programmes. Monk Gibbon has written about a person directly involved with Mason and all aspects of her work.

The republication of this historical record is important for us to have a deeper understanding of not only Henrietta Franklin, but also Charlotte Mason and the work of the PNEU.

J. Carroll Smith, EdD
Founder, Charlotte Mason Institute
Roanoke, VA
January 2025

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

BIOGRAPHERS WHO ATTEMPT a living subject tempt providence. Just as painters must often feel embarrassed when the sitter gets up and slowly approaches the easel—still more when a candid friend is brought to the studio and declares that the nose is a little too long, the chin a shade receding, the eyes and hair the wrong color, but everything else a triumph of masterly accuracy—so the biographer of the living knows that he has to reckon not only with his victim but with his victim's friends. He will be accused of being too flattering, too malicious, too outspoken, too reticent; and it will be delicately hinted that the whole thing is on a completely wrong note, but that otherwise it would have been a magnificent success.

I have known Netta—more explicitly the Hon. Mrs. Franklin, C.B.E.—for thirty-six years. I was urged to write her life by two other long-standing friends, Winifred Raphael and Dr. Annis Gillie, neither of whom could ever fall under suspicion of wishing to do her an ill turn. But it is significant that I have not yet dared to show them my work. If what they hoped for was a vigorous depiction of the public-spirited propagandist, member of forty-two committees, it was a vain hope. It seemed to be more practicable, and perhaps more interesting for the reader, to create a Conversation Piece against an intimate background. Netta's life has been full of action and service; but her dynamic personality is best revealed in relation to persons. She is a figure of central significance for a whole clan; moreover, she has the gift of making her friends feel that they have to some extent been absorbed into the family circle. This role of extended matriarchy reveals her more fully than any.

I have tried, then, to trace the career of this courageous altruist, drawing on my own memories and those of certain members of the Franklin family with whom I have long been friends and who have endured repeated cross-examination without complaint. I am most grateful to them. I would like also to express my sincere gratitude to Mrs. Wilkins, who in typing my manuscript had to display a patience even more exemplary.

MONK GIBBON

June 7th, 1960

1

NETTA WILL BE ARRIVING at six. Ordinarily, she is here before any of us, but a conference has kept her in London. I have been her guest on countless occasions, first as a shy and frightened newcomer, plunged into a household which I found combined considerable unobtrusive organization with great personal liberty; then as a confident habitué; and now as a sort of super-guest, making a family arrival to the tune of six or seven persons, to take possession of a three-storeyed octagonal tower in the grounds.

It is wonderful to be back, yet Glenalla is not completely itself without its presiding goddess. She creates its whole spirit and atmosphere. She has made this haven of periodic bliss for herself, for her family, for her friends. She thinks of everything. On my first visit, years ago, all the speculative qualms of youth, as to what might be a suitable leaving tip for the domestic staff, were allayed by a small white card at one side of my bedroom door, informing me that no tips were expected or would be accepted, compensation having already been made for this deprival in the appropriate quarter. There were two distinct modes of life at Glenalla, then as now: the formal one and the bohemian one. The formal one assumed that you would appear on the glass-roofed terrace for breakfast punctually at nine o'clock. This was for the benefit of the very young, the middle-aged, and the elderly. Fortified by boiled eggs or trout, toast and honey, and as many red currants or small amber gooseberries as they chose to consume, the young were expected to join Netta in podding an immense garden basket of peas or beans, wheeled by the gardener onto the terrace alongside her chair. The breakfast things were cleared away, and the young podded happily around the table, frequently joined by a suppliant adult who found this restful occupation had definite psychotherapeutic virtues. At lunch, the grey-haired host, Ernest, helping himself to peas for the second time, would remark with grave courtesy to his seven-year-old neighbor, "How well these peas are podded," a conversational gambit which invariably brought a delighted smile to the flushed face of the individual so addressed. As the peas were being shelled, plans would be made for the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the bohemian portion of the household continued to sleep, had their breakfast later—perhaps a little cold—in the dining room, or, if privileged, taken up to them on a tray. They would descend to find Netta at work at her desk in the drawing room, while the young scattered joyously to various corners of the wooded demesne.

When she comes this afternoon, there will be no fuss, only one small act of time-honored ritual. Winding its way towards Glenalla, past the gate lodge, over the yellow surface of the long avenue embedded with countless minute fragments of sea shells, under the oaks, under the beeches, past the rhododendrons, and the first open glade which discloses a field of ripening oats, the vehicle will come at last to a second break in the trees. At this point, the arriving car invariably gives a series of long blasts on its horn, and all those who may have been listening for this signal hurry to the front of the house to welcome the newcomer. This avenue is a one-way street. The only time it is used in the opposite direction is when a member of the family, or a guest, is departing at the end of their holiday. Then the whole household, including the servants, assemble by the huge garage in the yard, follow the car out to the front gravel, watch it as it goes past the small painted NO EXIT board stuck in the grass edging, and, when it comes to the three brief open sections of the avenue, there is a last, Rolandesque tooting on the horn, and a tremendous waving of handkerchiefs on both sides.

Generally, Netta comes before her guests. Only Kay Daly, who lives in Glenalla all the year, is here to welcome her. The order of her coming, Kay says, is nearly always the same. She descends from the car a little slowly. If it is at Easter, she looks up instantly at the creeper-covered house and says, "I've been longing to see my *Spooneri Clematis*, it has done well." Later in the year, her conversation may be different. "How is Nelly Moser doing? Has she got over that bad setback last year?" This is not an inquiry for the offspring of one of the cottagers up on Peat Hill. All the clematis are referred to by their proper names, and, when it comes to pronouns, their sex is strictly observed. She does not enter the house. Certain pet roses have to be inspected first, which grow below the wooden pillars of the glass-roofed terrace. She walks past the porch with its stout, wood, rose-twined single pillar, past the projecting end of the drawing-room, up which creeps a clematis whose stem must be thicker than that of many a full-size birch, and up the three steps onto the terrace. There she stands, near the lemon-scented verbena, and a little in front of the swing door,

which forms a part of the drawing-room bow window, and allows her gaze to travel in a complete semicircle from the flowering shrubs on the extreme left, backed by the huge monkey-puzzle and the rising woods of intensely green trees, on round by the waterfall and the stream, to the bog-garden, with the cornfield beyond; then past the two immense lime trees behind the tennis court until it comes to the water-garden and the pink limestone wall of the back avenue on the extreme right, before resting finally on the herbaceous border immediately at her feet. She is silent for a minute or two. Then she says slowly, "How lovely it all is," and makes her way into the house. Her guests will be following the next day. But already, full directions have been dispatched to Miss Daly from London: the number of the room into which each guest is to go, even the books which are to be put in that room. "In fact, I get a fairly accurate idea of their character before ever they arrive," Kay declares, "from the books chosen for them."

Today it was different. We were already here, and she arrived punctually at six. She had left London at one, reaching the airport near Belfast an hour and forty minutes later. There she got into the car and was driven off, only stopping for a picnic tea in Dungivvan Pass at the exact spot at which she has stopped for years, then continuing on her way to Londonderry, Letterkenny, and Ramelton until she reached the bridge at Ray beside Lough Swilly and turned up towards the well-loved green woods at Glenalla.

Almost as soon as she had arrived, she was in her chair by the open drawing-room door, through which came a drift of sweet-scented verbena, chatting away about books, world events, people—people the most absorbing subject of all to her, except for one even more absorbing—children.

Her life radiates out in a hundred different directions. Her friends are in every walk of life, of every political and social colour and complexion, and part of her own great vitality springs from this merging of herself into the lives of other people. There we sit, talking away, while the light on the Glenalla woods takes on a deeper emerald radiance as the sun sinks lower in the sky. She does not appear to be tired, and she would never admit it if she were. And yet, she has every excuse to be tired—an aeroplane flight, followed by a hundred-mile drive in a motor car, and now, in a few minutes, dinner and a number of guests. After all, Netta is not young, even if her animation is still the animation of youth, and her clear, incisive voice giving some patient direction to a child out on the terrace is essentially a

youthful voice. When it comes to reading Shakespeare aloud in the evenings, her Malvolio is definitely better than anyone else's, full of a rich, pompous, impenetrable self-complacency, which justifies all Maria's plots and plannings to tumble it in the dust. No one hearing her reading the part would ever guess the truth of the situation. For Netta, "according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three and such branches of learning," is indeed ninety-three years of age and will, before very long, be celebrating her ninety-fourth birthday.

2

NETTA'S ARRIVAL into this world was awaited in a mood of considerable despondency, for her mother had already lost a stillborn child, followed by four miscarriages. Actually, she was the first of eleven living children and was to have three younger sisters and a brother before she herself was five and a half years old.

"I caught measles at birth from my mother. She had visited a family whose children were ill with it but whose doctor was of the opinion that no pregnant woman ever catches an infectious disease. There was consternation when my mother developed it, and I, at a few days old, was dispatched to a childless aunt in the hope that I would escape. I didn't. The rash appeared shortly afterwards, and as I have nursed all my own children through the complaint without getting it, there can be no doubt at all that what I had was measles."

Netta learnt to talk early, and it is not surprising that her memories can go back to when she was only two and a half. She was sitting in a hip-bath in lodgings at Brighton when her mother came into the room, saying that she was getting a German under-nurse. "I was transfixed with horror, why I cannot imagine, for Rosie proved the best and kindest of friends, and remained with the family for fifty years. Her name was on the lips of my brother Edwin, the Secretary of State for India, when he died." At five, she was already a fluent reader. She would sit on the floor beside the tall nursery fender at the top of the house, her eyes riveted in morbid fascination on the pages of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. She admits she hated the book. It gave her frightful nightmares, despite the consolation of a well-sucked thumb. "But I could not take my eyes away from it—I read on and on, and suffered accordingly."

A shiny-surfaced Carte De Visite photograph, taken in Bayswater nearly a century ago, shows a diminutive one-year-old Netta set down on a hideous, velvet-bottomed Victorian chair. In the high forehead, the black curly hair, the steady, rather challenging look in the eye—I can trace likenesses to child, grandchild, and even great-grandchild. A certain Signor

Lombardi of Brighton—whoever he may have been—has recorded the Netta of a few years later. This time, she sits up very straight on the edge of a heavy mahogany table with ornately carved bulbous legs. Her sashed white dress is spread out gracefully around her; she is wearing white socks and buttoned kid boots, and has crossed her ankles, with her feet resting on a leather-seated music stool. With her hands in her lap and her head erect, she appears confident and assured, if a little sad; and, wonder of wonders, her thick hair is tied in a ponytail, anticipating modern fashion by more than eighty years.

Netta grew up in a home where there was love, devotion, and courtesy. She remembers how, when she was only ten, her great, bearded, grave-looking father insisted on carrying quite a small burden for her on the grounds that women must be taken care of. But, though she was surrounded with affection, she was in some degree a victim of the prevailing mood of the time. A hundred years ago, children's responsibilities were mountainous and were constantly being dinned into their ears. The more advantageous their worldly circumstance, the more the doctrine of moral obligation was preached to them day and night. If they had the misfortune to be royal, the treatment, so far from being milder, was ten times more severe.

Fate seemed weighted against the young. Netta told me once of an incident that took place when she cannot have been more than ten or eleven. She was to go shopping with her mother, her four small sisters, and the German governess. In a spirit of lighthearted forgetfulness, she ran down the steps and climbed into the waiting carriage, whereat her Teutonic companion immediately took great affront. "I haf been insulted by Netta!" So serious was the offence that the lady refused to accompany them and retreated indignantly up the steps, pursued by Netta's distressed and pleading mother, who did not relish the idea of going shopping with five little girls unaided.

In a scene like this, we get the whole schoolroom atmosphere of the time. If you loved your governess, you were made desperately unhappy by her moods or by the faintest suggestion of a tiff between her and your parents. If you detested her, you soon found that you were helpless against her machinations.

Punctuality was regarded by Netta's mother as a cardinal virtue. "If we were late for a meal, there was no reproof, only dead silence, which was

worse than any reproof[1]. The whole meal was spoilt for everyone. A dark shadow hung over it until we got up from the table. My brother Edwin, as a schoolboy, once remarked, 'If we committed a murder, Mother would sit sympathetically at the foot of the gallows, but if we were late for tea she would never forgive us.'"

Harshness was unknown in their home. The atmosphere was loving, but it was also desperately earnest where religious observance was concerned. As the firstborn, Netta soon acquired a keen sense of responsibility. In general company, she was not self-assertive. Rather, by all accounts, she was extremely shy. But she had a deeply ingrained sense of duty and an almost heroic resolution to be of service to others.

Netta's verdict on herself at this time is: "I was distinctly priggish." She certainly had cultural aspirations well in advance of her time. She wanted to learn Latin like her brothers; she wanted to learn algebra, and her headmistress sagely suggested that she should hem a shirt exquisitely for her father in order to convince him that algebra would not in any way detract from her womanly qualities. She had a great admiration for her headmistress's partner, who taught her Latin. "In fact, my *schwärmerei*, or 'pash', was such that nowadays it would not be encouraged. I would stand long at the window, regardless of rules, in the hope of seeing her pass on the way to church. She was a High Anglican, and, later on, after I was married, when this *grande passion*, if it were a *grande passion*, had come to be more on her side than mine, she told me one year that it was her custom to give up something that she cared for greatly in Lent and that therefore she would give up coming to tea each week with me! Shortly afterwards, she appeared at tea, and I learnt to my amusement that she had decided to give up sugar instead!"

In her own eyes, Netta was a prig, but in her pre-school days, she seems to have had her attractions for the opposite sex.

"I came across the other day letters from several of my boy cousins aged about seven or eight, each signing himself 'your loving husband'. One of them announces that his heart 'has gone pit-a-pat' at the mere news that I had a cold."

As a little girl, too, she was once 'capped' daily by the Kaiser. She and

1 Olive, her daughter, tells me the same story. 'If we were staying with my grandfather and came back from a walk late for a meal the whole room turned round to stare at us. We preferred to starve.'

her sisters were staying in a rented house in Shanklin in the Isle of Wight. It was summer, and in the adjoining house, the future ruler of Germany was residing with his younger brother in charge of a tutor. Every morning, when the two boys came out to go for a walk, the tutor would see that they doffed their caps politely to the four small girls in white piqué dresses on the balcony of the house next door. "Years later, I saw him again when he was travelling in Norway on a holiday. Ernest shook hands with him, but I remained in the background and did not tell him that I had once been a part of his education in good manners."

Other holidays spent at Brighton do not gleam so radiantly in memory. They were heavily interlarded with lessons, and as a relaxation from these, Netta would walk up and down the promenade in button boots and stiffly starched London clothes with the German governess of the moment, who was a terrible tyrant.

Later, on their annual summer holiday, the whole vast family often travelled in a specially reserved saloon carriage. On one occasion, on their way to North Berwick, there was some kind of railway accident. Her mother was thrown from her seat, and strange objects like perambulators, cots, a tin bath with a lid, and numerous leather hat-boxes cascaded from the roof. On these journeys, Emma, their nurse, would cook Welsh rarebit for them on a spirit lamp, despite the fact that she herself and several of the children suffered acutely from train sickness. Emma was a pleasant memory. There were others less pleasant. Netta's younger sister Ethel, for example, suffered grave pangs of conscience because she had told a lie and had informed their father that the bruises on her temple had been caused by a fall, whereas really they were the handiwork of the German governess. Netta rose to the occasion, went to her father, and the governess was sent packing to become, shortly afterwards, the spouse of an English widower and stepmother to several children, scarcely the role that Netta or Ethel would have chosen for her.

Netta was twelve and staying on holiday at Folkestone when she had an adventure which might have cut short her career. She was taking riding lessons and was given a mount that had kicked to pieces a victoria only the day before. They had no sooner set off with the riding master than her horse bolted.

Folkestone sea front is not the ideal setting *for une course hippique*. There was the danger that the horse might at any moment come off the road proper

onto the asphalt promenade, which ran parallel with it on a slightly lower level; in which case, it would almost certainly have slipped and fallen. "I remember saying the Shema[2], and not being in the least frightened. After about three miles, the horse gradually slackened pace. It was beginning to get tired. Its rein was grabbed by a bystander, and it came to a halt in front of a house. A gentleman, getting into a victoria with his wife, offered to drive me home. I had been brought up never to talk to strangers, so I refused, saying that I would wait for the riding master. He went back to his wife, and she came over to me and insisted. I was driven home in the victoria, and Rosie, our dear old German nurse, opening the door, threw up her hands in horror when she saw who it was and called up the stairs with Teutonic fervour to my mother, 'Here is the child come home killed!', a rather Irish way of indicating that there had been some kind of an accident."

At school, she had very speedily justified herself. It was not only her fine memory and great receptive powers that endeared her to her teachers, but her attitude to them, which was one of gratitude rather than resentment. One of them wrote later, "I had so much pleasure in teaching you, both on account of your aptitude and generous consideration towards those who gave you your lessons." Thanks to her German nurse and a succession of German governesses, she had learned enough German by thirteen to abandon lessons and to begin specializing in French. Later in life, she continued to study languages, learning Greek, Latin, Russian, Italian, Spanish, and Norwegian.

At one time, both the boys and the girls of the family attended Doreck College. On wet days, relays of Montagus descended from a series of hackney cabs to the amusement of the onlookers.

The Montagu girls were regarded as highbrows by their relatives and friends. There is the recorded remark of Lady Magnus, mother of the charming Mrs. Freddie Franklin, Netta's sister-in-law, and one of her dearest friends: "It's no use the Montagus going to a dance. They only talk Greek to their mother." This lady was noted for her acid outspokenness. On one occasion, she greeted a young person: "Good afternoon, Betty," only to be told coldly, "My name is Miss Jones." "Yes, and likely to remain so!" came the stinging reply. However, time takes its revenge upon all. In old

2 The declaration of faith in the unity of God.

age, Lady Magnus became extremely deaf. She had a hearing aid in the shape of a fan, which she held between her teeth. It was not very effective. She would sit in her armchair with the fan projecting from her mouth, while her granddaughter, Dulcie, played for her the most outrageously cacophonous ragtime of the 1920s. Then the old lady would nod gratefully, while Dulcie explained to her that she had been listening to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata!

Whether or not Netta talked Greek with her mother, she did certainly coach a future philosopher. He was her cousin, Herbert Samuel. He had lost his own father, and Samuel Montagu was his guardian. Bribed by a promise of a present from his mother if she succeeded, she helped him to secure a first prize at his school. When, later, as an undergraduate at Balliol, he was asked by his mother to discuss his attitude to Jewish orthodoxy with Netta's father, he replied—"I shall be pleased to discuss the question of religion with Uncle Montagu as my guardian, though there is no likelihood of such a discussion having the least effect upon me. My opinion of Uncle Montagu's theology and his philosophical qualities is not such as to lead me to bow to his wishes in the matter." Nevertheless, in earlier days, he had listened tractably to Rabbi Singer's occasional sermons to children in synagogue, as had Netta, who was expected to narrate the chief points back to the rabbi on the following Sunday at their weekly lesson. "Writing on the Sabbath was a sin, but we had a box of alphabet letters for games, and I used to spell out the headings of the sermon with these, laying them in a drawer, which later had to be very delicately opened lest it should throw the words into confusion. And in this way, I was able to satisfy the inspired and beloved teacher the following week."

A home of Jewish orthodoxy had its embarrassments. Her sister Lily sometimes found it a little difficult to explain to her hostess when she went out to a meal that all sorts of restrictions were necessary. She must not eat any kind of meat, not even chicken, unless prepared according to Mosaic rites, nor cakes or cream for at least one and a half hours after meat. "I saw what trouble my father took even on his travels to deny himself any forbidden food. At a grand hotel table d'hôte, he would contentedly sit and eat bread and cheese if the manner of cooking vegetables made him suspicious."[3]

3 *The Faith of a Jewish Woman* by Lily H. Montagu.

Netta tells much the same story: "We were allowed to play tennis on the Sabbath but not allowed to play croquet! My father said that we chipped the mallets when we played croquet, and according to the strictest rabbinical interpretation of the Mosaic law, breaking or damaging things is a form of work. There was an even subtler distinction to be observed when we went to Brighton. There we could hire a bath-chair on the Sabbath, pushed by a man, but we might not drive in an open victoria. The man was a rational being and could observe his day of rest the next day if he chose. But the horse was a member of the 'brute' creation and would be given no choice in the matter. We could not take the risk of making it work on our Sabbath since it might be forced to take someone else out for a sea drive along the promenade the following day as well, and then we would have broken the injunction in the fourth commandment, which conceded the ox and the ass their weekly respite as well as man."

To Netta in afterlife, her home seemed not so much a religious home as a home of strict religious observance. To the young Bethel Solomons, the future Master of the Rotunda, their father always seemed a figure of stern and terrifying orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the big, bearded Mosaic-looking man who, traveling on small cargo steamers to France as a young bank courier in charge of bullion, used to deny himself even a cup of soup lest he should thereby be breaking the law, could be wonderfully gentle in his dealings with his children. Lily has told how he might be called in to soothe their night terrors. Very gently, he would repeat the words: "The Lord is with me, I shall not fear. Stand in awe and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.—Selah." Or the mother would soothe the frightened child off to sleep with the words: "You know, Papa is such a good man, God would never make him unhappy by letting his little daughter die."

It is Lily, too, who writes: "He never imposed his religious opinions on his children and was satisfied so long as they conformed with the observances which he practiced. He did not insist on weekly synagogue attendance, and partly, perhaps, because no compulsion was used, nearly all the children grew up to appreciate regular public worship. He liked family gatherings, especially in connection with religious observances, such as the feast of Purim and the Passover nights, and punctiliously attended any family celebrations."

She goes on to say, "He was always particularly fond of any educational

successes achieved by his children, for he liked to see the tangible results of strenuous effort. He esteemed intelligence above many other attributes and was indeed always rather intolerant of 'stupidity.'" Many of these traits reappeared in his eldest daughter—the moral earnestness, the intense family feeling, the respect for the things of the mind, and the impatience with all trifling and ineptitude.

Netta left school at fifteen, owing to a curvature of the spine for which, in those days, lying on a specially constructed couch was considered the only cure. It was her first encounter with physical disability, and she rose superior to it, just as she was to triumph so decisively in later life. Stretched on her invalid couch, she had private lessons from a Mr. Vigniols. Later she was able to pass both the Senior Cambridge and the College of Preceptors examinations, and, having recovered from her spinal trouble, she went on to attend classes at King's College for Ladies under the famous Miss Faithful. She was already a seriously minded individual. A poem written in April 1881 makes this abundantly clear. It has twelve solemn and fairly carefully scanned verses, beginning with the portentous reflection—

> I stand now on the very line
> 'Twixt childhood and maturity.
> It is so narrow and so fine
> That it dwells in the mind only.

From there, it continues on its earnest and rather gloomy way to a wholly characteristic encounter with a vague, heavenly figure who announces—

> I am the goddess of duty,
> And for those there is perpetual light
> Who never cease to follow me,
> Whilst others dwell in endless night.

The heavenly figure does at least vouchsafe that those who take its advice "will truly happy be."

If one were looking for the whole text and tenor of Henrietta Franklin's life, one could find it in these ink-faded and prophetic stanzas, which predict both the line she was to take and the reward she would earn as a result of taking it. Another visiting-card photograph, taken in May 1883 at the age of seventeen, depicts her as already the youthful devotee of the stern goddess of duty. She is wearing a heavy bead necklace and a high-collared blouse

with a tucked fringe that just touches the curve of her neck and her chin, and her large black eyes look out on life already with the steadfastness of the dedicated soul. The forehead is higher than ever, and the black hair, divided in the center, is drawn down smoothly on either side of the head. If she were a Roman Catholic and not a daughter of the synagogue, one would say that she was definitely destined for the convent.

Her commonplace book, dated 1882, full of ponderous and earnest moral pronouncements, contains nothing more obliquely frivolous than this observation from Paine: "On croit trop volontiers en France que si une femme cesse d'être poupée elle cesse d'être femme." Netta was to be in the forefront of a generation whose set determination was that woman should cesser d'être poupée. She grouped the quotations under vast and comprehensive headings, such as Duty, Friendship, and Education. A resolute idealist, she notes Charles Kingsley's impassioned plea for "a well-educated moral sense, a well-regulated character." She garnered Carlyle's "A man thinks as a slave, a coward, till he have got Fear under his feet," and Emerson's "Always do what you're afraid to do." She reminded herself, "Better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo."

Lily bears witness to the forceful young woman who was her senior by seven years: "Although she married when she was so young, she left an impression on the home life which convinced us that her opinion was worthwhile. She was strong-willed, and her intelligence was so alive and her interests so diverse that she loved to be told details of every passing incident in the lives of her brothers and sisters. She was always consulted by our mother before any decision was made, and our father enjoyed hearing her opinion about passing events. Very much the eldest of the family, our lives were very much dominated by her."

She might be her mother's consultant on most topics, but Victorian reticence prevailed in the Montagu house, as elsewhere, in one particular respect. Although she already possessed five sisters and three brothers, Netta was banished from 96 Lancaster Gate at the age of seventeen, before the arrival of her youngest brother Lionel. "I was sent away because I was supposed to know nothing about babies and their advent. Of course, I did. If my mother had breakfast in bed, we knew the reason for it. I have never known either of my Spartan parents have a fire in their bedroom. Only when a baby arrived were any modifications made in the severity of the régime which both parents imposed on themselves. My father hated

the sight of sickness or anything to do with illness. From the age of four, he could not remember a single day's illness until he reached the age of seventy-six."

In her dealings with her younger brothers and sisters, she was the good friend but also, it is plain, the firm dictator. But in her contacts with the outer world, her self-confidence was liable to melt away. The prelude to her coming-out dance, despite all the monitions of Carlyle and Emerson, was a fit of abandoned weeping upon her bed, followed presently by a reading of Schiller's *Wallenstein* as a means of reassurance!

ERNEST AGED 4 IN 1863

NETTA AGED 3 IN 1869

3

IN 1885, NETTA MARRIED her cousin, Ernest Louis Franklin. He was seven years older than she, and his earliest recorded appearance is in a *carte de visite* photograph dated 1 October 1863—a slightly wistful Dickensian figure that might be David Copperfield at some early stage of his career, standing with one white-gloved hand fallen to his side and the other resting on the back rung of a cloth-seated chair drawn alongside. One would think that this was sufficient support for a healthy four-year-old, but two of the three legs of a much-contracted photographic headrest splay out on either side of the tiny feet of the subject of the photograph. No doubt this infernal machine, firmly clamped to the back of his head, may account for some of the wistfulness in his expression. A small ornamental table supports what looks like a brazier for burning incense, but it may be a fruit stand. On the side of the chair rests a very smart peaked cap like the cap of a French *cuirassier*, and an amazing velvet jacket decorated with elaborate coils of braiding down the front and down the sides of the rather baggy trousers—exactly like the Chocolate Soldier—adds to this slightly continental air.

It is difficult to envisage a person in their youth whom one has only known mellowed by seventy years of living. Even then, Ernest did not suggest age, nor did he seem to grow any older with the years. He played golf, climbed Peat Hill, could tell an excellent story, and was obviously beloved by his sons and daughters, his son-in-law and daughters-in-law. To a new acquaintance, he seemed to possess something of the courteous charm of an elderly Frenchman. His humor and his quiet self-sufficiency—liking his own routine but never giving trouble, always ready to arrange his own orderly days—were a sort of foil to Netta's dynamic energy and her gift for extroversion.

He had retained vivid memories of the 'sixties and wrote some of them down for his grandchildren. Apart from the fact that there was then hardly any income tax, no death duties, and relatively small national expenditure, he was without nostalgic regret for that epoch. Furniture, he maintained, was heavy and hideous; men and women ate far too much, mixed the wines

they drank at dinner ignorantly and indiscriminately, and took little or no exercise, so that "old age crept on very quickly, and a man or woman of sixty was physically older than one of eighty at the present time." He remembered the jugs of tea-water and toast-water in the nursery for children when they were thirsty, the Lipscombe water-filter, and the cotton nightcaps—a survival from the days when men wore wigs and required protection for their cropped heads during sleep. His toys had been Dutch dolls, the Wheel of Life—a forerunner of the cinematograph—and the ever-popular Noah's Ark. There was one golf course in all of England; pajamas were unknown; their introduction by some returned Anglo-Indian sent a comic story going the rounds—Binks: "Do you like bananas?", Jinks: "No, I prefer the old-fashioned nightgown." Most vividly of all, he remembered the bathing machine of those days and the ritual of a woman's bathe: the door at the back, with its huge calico canopy furnishing even greater privacy against prying eyes; the fisherman mounted on his great horse to draw the box into water waist-high; the mob-capped bathing woman to "dip" or "duck" the screaming children; and the heavy cloth bathing overall from neck to feet, tied at the waist and concealing equally heavy undergarments of the same material. When he saw his grandchildren running naked upon some Donegal beach, it may or may not have occurred to him that it was his wife and her friends who had helped to change all this. During his lifetime, there was a revolution in manners and customs, and it had come partly because women insisted that it should come.

Ernest had married someone who, even if she had tried deliberately to subdue her own personality, would have found it impossible to make herself a well-intentioned cipher in any home. Netta was born to direct and to explore, if not to dominate. And it says a good deal for Ernest's strength of character that, even after sixty-five years of married life to this tornado of energy and high endeavor, he remained firmly and implacably himself in all that really mattered, while at the same time admirably patient and cooperative in lesser trifles. There were a few who thought he had too little say in things. But actually, he had all the say he either wanted or needed. Netta was as solicitous about his golf or his game of bridge at the club as the most self-effacing wife could ever be. She encouraged his interest in pictures, freely acknowledging that in this respect his knowledge far outran hers, and, if she snapped his head off sometimes, he nevertheless appeared to survive it very well. They had sailed the seven turbulent seas