1 *Hail smiling morn, smiling morn, welcome the day that I was born.*

The Life Story of Charles Bacon.
(as told by himself)

(1) On June 28th 1871, a lovely summer's day, a child was born in a cottage at Newbold Verdon. That child was me, at least so I have been told. There had been nine others born before me in the same cottage, and a younger brother three years later. The cottage in which I was born consisted of one living room 12ft. x 14ft. and a kitchen 8ft. x 6ft. and two bedrooms the same size. It was the middle cottage in a row of eleven. A pump outside the cottage served the whole row, and a wash-house with a large copper installed was situated at the end. This also served all the families, and it was quite a business for them all to agree as to the times they should use it. There was a small strip of land to each cottage and at the bottom of each strip was a pigsty and a coal-house. At each end of the row of cottages was a lavatory for the use of all the tenants. The inclusive rent for these cottages was 1/9d. per week. The whole row stood on 3,250 square yards including gardens, pig stys, coal-houses etc. These houses are still in existence. The tenants at the time I was born were either miners or farm labourers, but all good friends. My father was a waggoner and had to do Sunday service and extra time during Harvest for a weekly wage of 16/- per week. (2) In front of the row of cottages, was a gravel path six or seven feet wide which led to the Church, so that we had all the excitement of seeing Weddings, Funerals and the Bands at the club Feasts coming to and going from the Church. Plough Monday early in January was always a big event for us. All the bigger boys would borrow a plough and coat or threaten to plough up the causeway if no cash for the hat. Church and Chapels, both Baptist and Primitive Methodist, were very much apart those days, my parents thought it very rude to have our front door either open or even ajar when the Church people were passing. Then my father, brothers and myself met the vicar or his wife we always touched our caps, while my mother and sisters curtsied. I had a feeling then that

we were inferior to them, but now, like Burns -

"I feel and pray
That come it may
That man to man the world o'er.
Shall brothers be for a'that.

Although wages at that time were so low for men and boys and as there was nothing for young women to do, except go into domestic service, either on a farm or into the towns. I never remember being hungry and we always well shod, and always had two suits of clothes. I was indeed fortunate to have such good parents. But unfortunately, before I was old enough to earn enough money to repay a little of my debt to them, they had both passed away. They were happy though poor, they played a noble part.

An Englishmen's home is his castle they say, and don't I know it. In our village there was a Church, two Chapels and four public houses, there was no other recreation or amusement indoors unless they made it themselves, and as we belonged to the Chapel we often found pleasure that way. There were a few that were mentally unfit to take their place in life to the full. My parents taught us to help those all we could, never to make fun, and to always advise our pals to do the same, to help them and to count our blessings. I am glad to learn there are social clubs now being formed in towns and counties for the young. I shall copy my father and do all I can to help.

It [illegible]th pride I set out an inventory of my early home furniture.

Living Room:- Square deal table, oak side table, 1 long case clock, armchair, easy chair, 4 small chairs, 1 stool and a home made couch, 4 pictures and small book case. On the table was the family Bible, Pilgrims Progress, and Sankeys Hymns and others. On the floors were home made rugs. The floors downstairs were common bricks whilst upstairs were of plaster and straw covered with home made mats.

Kitchen:- Small brick wash stand, shelves and pantry under the stairs.

Front Bedroom:- Two beds, 1 wooden box. In one corner was a clean sheet hanging up for a wardrobe. In this were 4 long silk top hats with long crape hat bands. My mother lent these to neighbours at Funerals. She also attended many at sickness and death.

Back Bedroom:- One three quarter bed, one stand, two small wooden barrels and bottles for keeping wine and home made herb beer. In the Winter we often had to set a sack of pig meal in stay from the mice. One night and a day we had to wash outside for then we had the pig killed there was no room whilst he was hanging there awaiting to be cut up and put in salt for bacon. For

3 *You may help a load to lighten as you go.*

this the butcher lent us a salt trough. Whilst that was there we had very little room but we never believed in crossing a bridge till we got to it.

The allotments in the village were about 1½ miles away. Then I helped in turn a Grocer, a Baker and a small Farmer. I also had plenty of interesting work to do in taking horses to the fields and to the blacksmiths, feeding our own pig in the lanes, getting manure for the allotment, and drying grass for the pig's winter bed. When it was dark we helped Mother to do stamping to the tops of hosiery from Leicester. Each Autumn I gathered acorns to help feed the pig, and gleaned corn in the fields, which we sent to the mill to be ground after we had threshed it with flails on sacks in the garden, the wind doing the winnowing. We seldom had to buy any pig feed or bedding for our pig. My Father was very fond of children and we were glad to help him at home, the Sunday school or the garden although both my Father and Mother were over 40 years of age before I was born. When I reached the age of 10, he bought me a wheelbarrow made by the village wheelwright which cost probably 15/-. I was very pleased with this as I was now able to earn a few coppers with it. I was its true owner, for it carried my initials on it. I have owned a good many vehicles in my time which have carried my name on them, but not one of them have made me feel nearly so proud as did my first wheelbarrow, as previously I only possessed a few home made toys. We derived two pleasures from toys, first making them and then playing with them.

My boyhood had been very happy up to now, but soon I was to learn something of other peoples troubles and sorrows. One day I rushed out of school as usual to go to the meadow to fetch up the cows for milking for my friend, the small Farmer. I had grown to love both him and his family as his two children were about my own age and we often played together. They were Church whilst we were Chapel, but this did not make any difference. No, we were somewhat wiser in this respect than some of the older people. On arriving at the meadow I found two strange men there. They asked me a lot of questions and not knowing Bailiffs from real men I probably told them a little more than I should have done. I got the cows out of the meadow into the lane, when one of the men shut the gate. I told him to open the gate again as I should be bringing the cows back after milking. He then told me the cows would not go into that meadow again as they were taking everything over including the farm itself. That did it, I seemed to lose my speech. I had already told the Bailiffs that

I was going to town the next day which was Saturday, with the Farmer's son, and we were starting very early in the morning as we were taking two cows to the market to sell. The waggoner was also going to town early with a load of clover which had been trussed and loaded that day. Alas! my hopes were squashed, and I soon found out what the trouble was, when I went back to the house and saw all the family crying. That to me was real grief, for I knew the family were all good workers, and had done nothing to deserve this fate. The Bailiffs took over the next day and some of the men were dismissed. The Bailiff gave me a can of milk and sent me to ask my mother if she would cook a fowl for them the next day, and also to ask her if I could keep going to the farm to run errands until everything was sold up. I went home, very sad, and told my parents all I knew but they didn't understand much about it. They did not understand (as I do now) that the owner of the farm could not exist if the tenants did not pay the rent when it became due. My father decided to take me back to the farm with the milk to find out, firstly, whether the Bailiff was in order giving milk away, and secondly, whether he could help my old friend, the young farmer, in any way. He could not help in money for he seldom had more than a shilling in his pocket. However, there was nothing he could do. The Bailiff was in possession and the Farmer and his family had gone to stay with friends in Leicester until after the sale. The Bailiff told my father he was quite in order in giving away half a gallon of milk a day, and the expense of this food so, would be charged up to the owner of the farm. I helped all I could until after the sale, but I did not take too kindly to the Bailiff, not only had he robbed me of a trip to Leicester to sell two cows, not to mention a ride home in the waggon, but he had caused much trouble and grief to us all. I was very young and this was my first goodbye, I was very sad for I felt I was losing all my friends, not only in human beings, but the animals that I had quite an affection for.

I stayed at the farm until the sale was over, the new tenants soon brought in their furniture and stock. They were a middle aged couple with a son and daughter, but these did not come with them as they were attending High School. I was asked to stop at the farm and help them out, but somehow I felt very lonely. That spare time I had on Saturdays and holidays I prefered to spend at the Grocers, or delivering goods for the Baker for a few coppers a day, especially as I was usually provided with a good dinner and some hot rolls and butter for tea.

The farm had been very sadly neglected by the previous tenants and I learnt that my first farmer friend had spent practically all his capital trying to put things in order. There have been numerous tenants in that farm

during the past sixty years, ; I have always thought of my first friend, the farmer, whenever I have heard of the farm changing hands. I have seen and heard of many similar cases since then. I myself have made many mistakes through lack of capital and experience together with opposition, but in my case this only acted as a stimulant and urged me to push harder towards the goal I had set my mind on.

I have now learned , and I can therefore feel very deeply for anyone who does fail in business through no fault of their own. Now it is said that a cat has nine lives, but I say if this is true some men have ninety. Men are risking their lives hourly for the benefit of us all, and the average man hardly ever gives this a thought. In my humble farm life and up to the age of sixty, I had many narrow escapes.

Poisoned

The first I recollect was on a very hot June day when I was leading a young horse that had been put between shafts, in a horse rake, for the first time, the waggoner working the rake. When we stopped for lunch, the waggoner asked me to go to the shed and fetch his bottle, telling me at the same time to have a good drink out of it. This I did, and then found out it was the wrong bottle, the same type of stone bottle but with poison in it. It was the bottle the shepherd used to dress the feet of the sheep. I had taken a good swallow before I realised what it was. This made me ill and giddy, but we thought it would work off and started to rake the field again. I soon fell down and the young horse galloped off and dragged me under the rake until he stopped at the field gate. Later on, giddy and ill, I was able to get home when my Mother gave me mustard to drink, and put her finger down my throat. This made me violently sick, and a few days afterwards I was quite well again.

I spent the next three years or so helping the Grocer and the Baker in my spare time, and when I was nearly eleven years of age my Father heard from a friend, a butcher, named Moore from Leicester, and who had a stall in Atherstone Market every Tuesday, and who sold meat and offals. He called at Cadeby to serve a few customers there on his way to market. It was arranged that if I could meet him in this village at 8 a.m. each Tuesday, he would supply us or others. This was too good an offer to be missed, so each Tuesday, I had to clean my boots overnight and then walk over many fields, a good two miles each way, to fetch the meat. I had to take a snow white cloth with me to wrap it up in, together with the last week's copy of the "Christian Herald". This was the only paper we ever had and always reminds me of home.

It is Tuesday again. I was up early to go to Cadeby for our meat. It had been a rough night. This time I take a bag hoping to get some acorns for our pig. I found a large oak blown down and a great many on this made it easy, and I soon

had my bag filled. That day when school was over we went again and got more. We saw a squirrel, who like us was gettin his winter's food.

Although it was very dark in the Winter and I was often very frightened to go out in the dark and cold, I enjoyed the walk in other seasons. The order for the butcher was invariably- 3lbs of breast of mutton and two-pennyworth of suet, mind your manners, and keep the cloth clean. That meat, with an oven full of roasted potatoes, made us several good meals. The journey usually meant that I was late for school on Tuesdays, but the School-master did not mind this after my Mother had explained the reason. Probably the fact that I worked for hours at a time in his garden during school hours, and did other odd jobs had a lot to do with his leniency. I know I was happier in the garden, but my mind was young then. I thought little of my future, some of the boys envied me. Poverty caused most of us to work or starve, but being ignorant of it, life was pleasant. Education, I can see now might have made life easier, but probably not so happy. Now I feel glad that I have made the best use of the talent I had and I have tried to improve upon it. With that and the teaching I had from Parents and Teachers I have been able to find, and keep, good friends, and with them always love to sing "For peaceful homes, and healthful days,
We owe thee thankfulness and praise.
Who givest all".

Now, I often think that if my Parents had not belonged to the Baptist Chapel, my young life, from the age of seven to ten, would have been a drab one, for I never remember having a toy bought me, although my Father would sometimes make me one. We used to make our own whistles cut out from an ash plant, and bird lime, from chewing holly bark. Catching birds was great fun, by using sticks spread over with home made bird lime, but it would have been no fun for us, if we had taken the bird or any of their eggs home.

Visitors

We had all kinds of beggars, a Russian, with a Polar bear and a pole. He was never popular for we were scared of him at night. We liked the travelling actors the best, who, to attract attention to their tent, would beat a big drum while one of their daughters would dance outside under hanging paraffin lamps. Usually, when the boss of the show came in to count the audience, he would find a number of us had crept under the canvas without paying, but he dare not turn us out for fear of keeping out other people who were willing to pay. Usually one night was enough for them at each village. That was another side of our life.

When I was a boy there was no recreation other than the Church, the Chapels, and the four public houses. I was very lucky to have parents who belonged to the Chapel. Had there been a Social club with other amusements and recreation, their minds might have been broader, but theirs was a wise choice.

From an early age I was fond of animals. I would sooner feed or take them to the field than I would play cricket any time, and I was not the only one for I have seen many that have made a success from an early sensible hobby, but like me, short of cash to achieve it in many cases. But as I see it now it is better to have little than have too much unearned money. I found it grand to earn money on a job I loved to do. Today the waggoner, another lad and myself start off to Breedon Cloud Hills, a distance of ten miles, with a waggon and two carts for land lime. We start at 4 a.m. for the works close at 12.30. We go through Belton, Nr. Loughborough, it is their Wake Week and I saw a pony going round and round pulling a set of Hobby Horses with a belt attached to drive the organ. The first time I had seen a pony play music. The following Monday was their Annual Horse Fair, one of the largest. I wished we were going again.

Sheep Dip par 1

Another Saturday was sheep washing. The shepherd, Old Floss (the sheep dog) and I set off to fetch a drove of sheep and lambs to place in the Brook Meadow near the sheep wash. This was a brick made tank with a tub in one corder for the shepherd to stand in. This tank was about five feet deep and full of running water. One of the men and I caught the sheep and rolled them into their bath, then the shepherd would sprinkle some of Coopers' Sheep Dip Powder over each one and give them a good wash, and all the time the old ewes were bleating to their sons and daughters and they would answer back. And I for one thought it grand, and I believe they did after it was all over and they had shook themselves well and they were all spread out in the sun again and could talk in their way of the experience gained. I well remember a large ram butting me into the water. I was very ill after that, and was deaf a long time until one day we saw an old gipsy and she told father to get a hedgehog, roast it and put some of the warm fat into my ears. That did it. But like making Hare Soup you first have to catch the hare, and Father was some time before he found the hedgehog, and I was glad to hear again.

par 2

I always had plenty of plain food, often a change. Sometimes hot wheat with a few currants in for breakfast. Dinner, often a sheep's head in a pot for soup, with plenty of home grown turnips and carrots, home made ketchup and when in season mushrooms and home fed bacon for breakfast. Then sometimes we had a fishmonger named Dawday from Leicester, and we often had Sprats at 2d per lb., and White Herrings at seven for 3d. - a treat. Others would come with early radishes and onions long before ours were ready. Sometimes a cheap Jack-man would come and fix his stall, and his paraffin flare lamp near our house, and give me a shilling to hand round the goods for sale, while he told the tale. And as I see it all now, I was well off as a youngster.

Towards the end of harvest, before I was useful on the farms, we used to go gleaning corn. We each had a coarse apron on with large pockets to put the ears of corn in. The long stalks we bunched up and placed all round our hand cart with pride. Coming home we would look for blackberries, elderberries, mushrooms, or anything in season. We were never afraid of anyone for my father had worked on the land all his life, and had so taught us to shut gates anywhere, and when we saw beast or sheep in growing corn or turnips or in the lanes, to put them into the proper fields, then let the farmer know so that he could mend the fence. Sometimes the farmer's wife would buy mushrooms or blackberries from us, and very often give us a drink of milk or a can of skimmed milk or whey to take with us into the fields.

Then again I well remember when going errands across fields when just before lambing time I have seen a sheep with its heavy wet wool roll over when trying to get up and at times get the cramp and unable to get up by itself, and a little help from me or anyone saved it from dying. When I was big enough, I was sent on the pony's back to count up sheep, lambs and beast, whilst the shepherd was busy in the hay field. I loved it, but was often sorry, when it was late, and I had to tell them that something was amiss to any of the stock, either through fly or an accident, for I knew they were all tired but had to attend to them. All through the summer we had herb beer made from nettles, burnet, comfrey, ginger etc. and at the end of harvest would have a good store of wine, mushroom ketchup and wheat for us and flour for the pig. All this meant a great effort for us all, and the storage must have been a big problem for Mother. Sometimes we could hardly turn round. I have often wondered how she got the sugar, but then I was too young to think that way. I know now that mothers today have plenty of worry to get food and get very tired queueing, but I can now see that each age has its own trouble only in different ways.

In my business I often get in contact with farmers from all parts of England and often call on some, not too far away, and I find that there is not the co-operation there used to be amongst the villagers as there was years ago, when the colliers would help the farmers at harvest time and get some home brewed ale every second load, often a good tea in the field. I know, for I used to bring it back in the empty wagons. Then for supper, some home made bread and cheese and beer. Then when all the harvest was in, a grand harvest supper, when all were friends. Today, the farmer has Germans, who not long ago were at war. Let's hope the bitterness of war may teach us all to get back to the good old days.

Today I leave the National School (now condemned). I had little sleep at the thoughts of leaving my home, my parents and my pals, and all they had meant to me, and what farm life would be when I was on it all the time.

"What ever are you kicking up that row for" said my mother, "it's enough to aggravate the stones in the street. Stop bellowing, or I shall go stark raging mad." (The more modern words would be, "You get on my nerves".) I had the toothache. Her advice was, ask Old Bill, the cobbler, to give you a bit of statchinend (waxed thread), then your dad will pull it out tonight. Dentists and nerves were unknown then to us. Sunday was Missionary Day. All the boxes had gone in and at the end of the service a report given of the amounts collected in each box. I was anxious about ours, for as I did a lot of errands for the baker, grocer and farmers, I had helped to fill it that year, for I felt sorry for the children in foreign parts over the seas that I had read of. So that I wanted my tooth out. I had tried stopping it with salt. I little thought then that when I was a man I should see these children having lessons in a school too hot for windows. Then at another town, a crowd was round our charabanc when it stopped after we had been a long trip across Lisbon in Spain. There were the same kind of children all round shouting "Penny please". I think that was all the English they knew and I could only understand those two words. Many of them had sores on their close shaven heads and plenty of ointment, and flies galore. And I think we all felt sad at that sight although on holiday bent. And I was glad that when as a boy (their age) I helped to collect a few pence to help them. I have thought since then of a little missionary hymn we used to sing something like this -

And every penny I can spare, shall go to send the Gospel there
And men of God the truth to bear, far away, far away.
Oh how I pity children there, far away, far away.

Children in my time, before the motor car, seldom heard a lecture on any subject, or a lantern lecture, same as the children in towns did. But today, with wireless and some of the Pictures they have a better chance to learn more of their own country, and abroad too. The country children have a much broader outlook today, but not the same pleasures we had, and I feel sure we were as happy then as they are today, and we might have been much happier had there not been the difference in religions. The Church Parson had his pony and carriage whilst most of the local preachers at our chapel walked miles, and often the gardener at the Vicarage would in those days resent we chapel lads only looking through the iron rails and would soon shout out and say "If you're not off I shall clout you". I dare not tell my parents for they would have said that we had no business to look in. Today I fancy this might cause a scene not only with the lads themselves but their parents too. Let us hope that the wars have taught all nations the story of the Good Samaritan and who is my neighbour story. On Sundays, most of the villagers seemed strangers to any one not belonging to their church or chapel, about 1881. But on Whit. Tuesday they all seemed to thaw out and most of them followed the bands and the different flags of the Sick Clubs, marching to the vicarage (for the Vicar) then on to church, then after service to the White Swan and the Engine Inn to have a good dinner and beer, a General Meeting followed by dancing, and all seemed to forget their class and to be happy together.

Pig-killing was always a great event in our young days. Whenever one of the villagers decided to kill a pig, it was soon public news. The butcher would come along with his cratch and kit on a wheel-barrow, and usually arrange to kill two in the same row of cottages at the same time. Some villagers preferred scalding the pig to remove its hair, but others preferred singeing. We preferred the latter as it was more fun to burn off the hair. The pig would be coaxed out of its sty, half way up the garden, and there he would be killed, telling all his pig friends in the village what was being done to him. Then he would be tipped off the cratch on to a batten of straw which would be set alight. Then the "hurrahs" would start. He would be turned over and over until most of his hair had been singed off. He looked a real Christie Minstrel before this operation was concluded, but after a lot of scraping, assisted by plenty of scalding water he looked better. After more shouting and tugging he would finally be hung up in the small kitchen all night to settle ready for the butcher to cut out the hams, sides, shoulders, and hocks to be laid in his salting trough for a time. The neighbours and helpers would each have a fry, the butcher a pint of ale, and one of we lads the bladder. This would find us real pleasure for days. Now I suppose they use the pigs squeal for Broadcasting so that nothing is lost.

A real source of enjoyment for us was our annual Sunday School treat, to which we looked forward for months. About noon a farmer's waggon drawn by two horses would be drawn up outside the Chapel to convey the scholars and teachers to Barton Fabis about six miles away, where the Mother Chapel was situated. Other scholars with their teachers would all meet there, brought by the same means of transport, unless they happened to live very much nearer when they had to walk. This, they said, was very unfair as the ride was the best part of the treat. We all were a very happy band of Pilgrims. We used to sing all the way there and back, and I'm afraid we did not give much thought to the meaning of the words we sang. The swing of the chorus was all that mattered to us. I remember the star choruses were :- Oh, "Oh, what shall the Harvest be"

"When my final farewell to this world I have left,
And gladly lie down to my rest,
I'll be watching and waiting for thee".

"In the sweet bye and bye,
We shall meet on the beautiful shore", and many others. We had neither the thought or the cash for the now usual whip round for the driver. Our tip was a childs smile. Since then I have seen Children on holidays, and at pictures and other places, but none happier than we were. When a child has happy surroundings, their life is happy.

Bike

I remember our School Mistress as the first lady we saw to ride a tricycle, and my mother and the other neighbours called her a brassy cat and said she ought to be ashamed to teach their children. Later on the fox hounds ran a fox to death near to the Vicars garden. The huntsman cut it up and divided it amongst the hounds, and gave a lady the tail. I know we children thought it great fun. No more school that day. Some of the ladies rode straddle legs then and my mother wondered what the world was coming to. Soon after, father told her he had seen a gipsy woman smoking a pipe and had asked him to give her a bit of bacca. That made her very disgusted. When I was a boy I remember my father and several others walking to give what help they could at a railway accident near to Kirby Muxloe. They worked until late to help clear the line. This was near to Newtown Unthank and it is said that it derived its name from the fact that a gentleman who gave this land never received any thanks for the same, so he named it Newtown Unthank. I imagine there are many unthanks about if not in land but of service, where thanks would mean a lot. In my father's later years when he got past walking behind the plough his master helped him to get a roadmender's job for a few years. This found him a lot of friends passing to and fro, for man seemed to have more time to live then. At his funeral there was not a row of motor cars outside, but many Sunday School children to sing and to drop a few flowers in his grave. What better respect than the smile of a child. Near to us is Mop Hall, built for Mr. Thomson who had it built with a dome on the top much like a mop. He had a large factory for making mops near the North Bridge at the back of Abbey Park.

When first I came to Leicester there used to be a North End Flower Show on Holiday Monday and with a lot of side shows and other attractions. This gave a lot of pleasure to many. At Market Bosworth 13 miles away there is what is known as King Dick's Well where the Battle of Bosworth was fought and King Richard the 3rd offered his Kingdom for a horse. My mother told us how when she lived on a farm there they fetched water for the cattle from that well and the men cut branches from Ash trees for the beasts to eat as it was a very dry summer.

One Saturday before I left school father gave permission for me to go along with the cowman to Leicester October Cattle Fair to help him to drive six young beast. It was dark when we set off I remember. They were a wild lot and when they saw any others in a field as we passed and the hedge was weak or low they were soon over. I know we ran miles after them. I have never envied a drover since. We were very late at the market and they said most of the buyers had gone. We were nearly there when our beast saw a lot more on a piece of land which I found out later was the Bedehouse Meadow. This caused us a lot of trouble sorting ours out and getting on to the road again. This Bedehouse Meadow is where the L.N.E.R. is now, the Great Central Goods Station then. It is on the Eastern Boulevard. After we delivered the beast into the pen the farmer had arranged for we had some bread and cheese at a stall and a cup of tea and had a look round, then made for Lee St. where Bill's sister lived. She was glad to see us from the country. She got us some tea, bread and butter and a small plate of winkles. I had never seen any before. She gave us a pin each to get them out with. We made a good tea. When we got to the Hare & Pheasant we found the carriers had gone, so we went to the Midland Station then the entrance in Campbell St. booked to Desford and walked the rest. Two miles home very tired and never saw a soul for a lift home.

I required. After an argument, they were friends, and I soon learned that a still tongue makes a wise head.

Before I left school, the waggoner got Father's consent to take me to Ashby with a load of barley. This was a real treat until one of my shoe soles came off, and then I had to ride on the waggon instead of the front horse. This to me was a poor holiday. I have had plenty of journeys, to and from Ashby, since, but I often think of the lost sole. I ave never heard of any rich man finding it,as in "Cinderella". On arriving home after my day trip to Ashby, I was cold, and my feet were sore. I was glad to stay at home and listen to my Father playing his old violin, and singing a few of the old Sankey Hymns we all loved. There were no pictures then, and had there been any, we had little money to pay for them. There was more pleasure in the homes with music and singing, with fellowship between parents, children, and friends, and I actually don't remember having many dull hours up to now.

When hunting started and the fox hounds were anywhere in the neighbourhood, I usually played truant from School, and when I was found out, I got two thrashings, one at home, and one at school. This, however, had little effect, my love for good horses and scarlet coats was too much for me to miss, regardless of the consequences. After my father had done what he believed to be his duty, with the strap, he would always end up by saying he was sorry, but he did not want me to play truant. He did not mind paying his threepence per week for school fees until I was fourteen, so long as I attended regularly, as he wished me to have a better job than his, and did not have to follow the plough all my life. What he wanted me to do was get my living with by boots blackened every day, like Jim Brown, our Insurance man. Poor old Dad, he wished me well, but having had no experience of business or town life, he little thought of the temptations I should have.

I was very keen on paper chasing, and imitation fox hunting, with iron hoops. They were usually made for me by the blacksmith in return for old iron, which I collected for him. Yes, I was buying my pleasure for exchange of old iron. What a price is paid today for artificial pleasure. Try to always look for healthy recreation, for I have always thought that kicking the ball is more fun than watching someone else.

We had singing practices at the Chapel, either for Service of Song, the School Aniversary, or for Christmas Carols which generally resulted in a few concerts. I remember once trying to recite "Buy your own cherries", but failed. I found in later years it was easy to see someone selling oranges, but another thing to sell them yourself,it requires courage. If you are thinking of starting in business yourself, get a little practice first and it will pay you.

I was thirteen years of age, when my eldest brother, who was a soldier, and seventeen years older than myself, came home on furlough from the Egyptian War. He was in the Coldstream Guards, and wore either a white tunic or a Scarlet

coat. However, I never longed to be a soldier. About this time I met with a further accident. I was putting up a load of hay on a two wheeled cart when the horse moved on and I was thrown heavily off the cart, striking my head on a sharp stone which cut it open. I was very ill for several weeks and as a result of this, I still possess the scar as a memento. I still kept walking on the sunny side of the street, and I always believe in the proverb:- "Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone". Soon after I recovered from my accident, my love for good horses earned me sixpence, a jolly good ride, and a meat tea. I was playing in the village soon after dinner, when a gentleman with a good horse and trap came up. He was a grocer's traveller from Leicester and just as soon as he pulled up at the grocer's shop, I was at the horses head. He asked me to hold the horse for him whilst he was in the shop, and I could see visions of twopence for doing so. However, when he came out, he asked me the way to Thornton. Thornton was only five miles away, but I had never been to the place, and to my young mind it seemed a long way off. I told him the way, as I knew in which direction it lay, but I then asked him if I could go with him and show him the way. It was Shrove Tuesday, a half day holiday, and he seemed quite pleased to take me, but not nearly so pleased as I was to go. This was really a case of the blind leading the blind. It never occurred to me to run home and tell my mother where I was going or did I think that a still tongue makes a wise head, so off we went and I kept my eye on the finger posts for Thornton but I could not see it. However, I could see Bagworth and as the gentleman wanted to make a call there I was glad, for I was able to make enquiries. All was well, and after he had called at several shops we made off for Thornton which I found was only 1½ miles away. Here he put the horse and trap into a shed and went into a shop taking me with him. The lady in the shop gave me some sweets and a stool to sit on against the fire, while they conducted their business. What a relief it would have been if I could have rang home to let my parents know where I was. Later on we all had a jolly good tea and the traveller wanted to pay for mine but the lady would not hear of it. As I see it today, I believe they were just as happy to have me with them, as I was to be there. I have felt like that with young boys many times. It was beginning to get dark when we started off for Leicester again, going through Desford and passing Thornton reservoir. I had never seen so much water before. The horse was a fast trotter and the hedges, trees and telegraph posts seemed to be flying by us. I did not know then that any horse will often go faster when he has his head turned towards home. When we got to Desford, the traveller stopped and told me I had better get out and walk home about a distance of two miles. He then gave me sixpence and told me to be a good lad. I now made for home. It was dark but I was not frightened about this, what I was perturbed about was how I should get on

when I reached home for it was getting late and I was seldom out much after 7 o'clock at that time. I thought, however, as I had sixpence for my Mother, and had not been up to any mischief, everything would be quite all right. On arriving home, things did not plan out that way. My parents were very upset as no one had seen me go away. The first thing I did was to give my Mother the sixpence, and the next thing I got for my pains was a jolly good thrashing, with the explanation afterwards. I went to bed supperless and was soon dreaming of hedges, trees and telegraph poles flashing by. A day or two afterwards we had a geography lesson at school. This was a subject I hated, I thought all we should be taught was reading and writing and not the Spanish Armada. Anyway, I had travelled further than any of the other scholars, so when the Schoolmaster asked which was the biggest piece of water in England, my hand went up at once. It was Thornton reservoir of course and was the largest I had ever seen then.

The end of the Summer of 1884 was now in sight, and this meant that I should soon be leaving home and all my Sunday School companions to go to work. I often think what a lot the youths of today are missing in not having anyone to try and get them interested in Sunday Schools. They drift away and try to obtain pleasures in other directions and they seldom make, and keep really good friends like I did, through their fellowship. It was there I found my wife who has been my life's partner and best friend, besides many others who helped me to work for the Adult School movement, where, I am glad to say, I have not only the health, but a desire to still meet, and enjoy, the company of sensible men, often better educated than me, and by their aid I have profited.

The time had now arrived for me to look for work, and I next remember finding myself standing by the side of my Father, in row with other youths and their Fathers, at Bagworth Hiring Fair, awaiting for the highest bidder for the services of a strong, active youth of 13 years. I had a knot of whip cord in my button hole to indicate I wanted to work amongst horses, whilst others had cow hair in their buttonholes to indicate they wanted to be cowmen. After a lot of arguing as to what I could do and what I could not do, I was engaged for one year from October 11th 1884 to October 11th 1885 for £3, at the Home Farm, Osbaston for Mr. W. Drackley. Before I left home I had read "Uncle Tom's Cabin", and when I saw us all lined up in Bagworth Hiring Fair, I remember thinking it was much the same in England as in America bar the whip.

Later in life I became a furniture remover, and for thirty years I moved furniture to all parts of the British Isles from all types of homes, cottages, farms and mansions. The furniture I removed from some of the homes was like that found in my childhood home, not worth £30 all told, while furniture removed from other homes was insured for £3,000 in transit. Notwithstanding, the difference in values, I have yet to see a home which I like better as a home, than the one I was brought

12 *There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.*

up in. I have seen tears very often shed in big houses.

On October 11th 1884, I was up early to look after our pig, clean him out, and take him out into the lane, so that he might find a part of his breakfast there, whilst I was finding a barrow load of manure for the allotment. This was my last pleasure I found in that way. Soon after I went home with the pig, and gave him his hot breakfast, I had mine. I was ready to go to the farm then, but my Father said that after dinner was the usual time, and always had been. I bade him goodbye, as his work was too far away for him to get home for dinner. I did what I could in the house and small garden, also a few errands for my Mother. It seemed a long morning. After dinner I set off, with my red handkerchief bundle, one pair of boots, one pair of socks, a new leather collar, and one clean tie and shirt, a home-made cake, and a few sweets. I felt then that at last, I had a chance of getting on. I well remember my Mother's last words to me when I left her, "Be a good lad, and never touch the weight of a pin that isn't your own". I also remember my Father's last words to me, they were these, "It won't be easy Son the first year, but be a good lad and stick it until Michaelmas, then you will not only get more money, but a good character as well". I didn't let him down. Since then I have thought many times, that Man had advanced slowly from the slave market to the last of the Hiring Fairs although I had good Masters and food.

On leaving home, I was naturally a little upset, but the thought of earning my own living fed the spirit. I was nearing the farm, when I heard one of the most agonising screams I had ever heard, for a stoat was sucking the lifes blood from a defenceless rabbit. This was my first experience and it made me very nervous, but I have seen many similar sights since then. I dare not go anywhere near the stoat for fear. I little thought that in later years I should be listening in by the fire, of men in all parts of the world who were doing the same as the stoat and killing each other. The only difference, one was civilised and the other was not. But I was young then, now I am glad to read and see all round than man is getting more sane.

I arrived at my first farm at 3.30 p.m, the farmer was looking out for me. All he said was, "I've been waiting for you, put your bundle down and come with me to the stable". There was an old horse with its harness on, he told me to fetch him out, and showed me which cart to put him in. There was no one home from the fields then. He showed me a field where I could see a lot of cabbages ready cut off. "Take that cart, and fill it, then take it to yon meadow and spread them each side of the cart for the beasts, and make haste or it will be dark", he said. I found the field and the cabbage alright, the Boss was watching me as long as he could. I soon had the cart out and piled it up. I had done a bit of that before, but not on my own. I was soon at the meadow gate, and there was about

fifteen, strong, hungry looking bullocks, and I felt a bit timid. However, I drew past the gate, and got along side the hedge, threw about twenty cabbages over, and that took their attention away from me for a bit. I then turned the old horse round, and went back through the gate, and shut it. I felt brave now. Then I got on the load and soon had the cart empty, the horse out of the cart, and his saddle off, and put a pair of gears on. After that I fastened him to the chaff cutter pole, the waggoner shouted, "Whoa", and said that we had cut enough chaff for that day. I told him how it made me feel giddy and he said I would soon get used to it, and if I felt giddy again, to go and sit down, or ride on the pole. I never wanted telling again. He then told me to go to the kitchen, and see if there was any dinner about, then to come back and help him finish for the night. This I did, and found a pint of cold ale, and a good dinner. I went back and helped him all I could, and began to feel more useful. It was dark then, too dark to look round much, and too early in the season to be very busy amongst the stock. After we had had dinner, I went to the kitchen and found the cowman. He was to be my bed mate, and was about ten years older than myself, but as he came from our village I knew we should be good pals for the year.

I really expected that I should have to be satisfied to be a waggoner and handle the ploughs and mowing machines myself, some day, yet I never really wanted to remain always a clod hopper. I could read and write well and I hoped that one day I might possibly get a job at the station or in town. When ploughing was in full swing there was plenty to do. After ploughing was finished, and stable work done, there were plough knives to take to the blacksmith, 1½ miles away who often worked very late. I always enjoyed going, as other lads were there, and there was a good blacksmith's fire, but coming back in the pitch darkness, across a meadow and two fields was not so good, and I had to whistle to keep up my courage. I was always afraid of seeing ghosts, and on this occasion a new gate post had been put up in one of the fields, which I had not noticed when first I went through. On my return, there it was, one of the ghosts, I had long expected to meet. I hedged away a bit in the ploughed field, and as the ghost was motionless, my courage gradually returned. I picked up one or two good stones, and threw them at the ghost with all my might. The stones hit the gate post alright, there was no squeals from the ghost, and my fears vanished. This experience stood me in good stead, I had slain my ghost and had no fear of them after that.

There was never much spare time in the evenings, if no plough knives had to be taken to the blacksmiths, the harness had to be taken to the harness maker for repair, or a draught had to be fetched for a sick horse or cow. These errands always had to be done after working hours, but as I was very strong and enjoyed exceptionally good health I did not mind very much as there was little interest in the hamlet.

Tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stone, and good in everything.

We have now sown the last field of winter wheat. It has been a busy time and I have enjoyed it, for there have been several teams at work, and the Irishman and his two sons who had come over to help with harvest and had not returned, so that I had plenty of company. The waggoner and myself start ploughing the eleven acre the next day ready for oats in the spring. This land was heavy and requires three horses. We plough one acre each day, a dreary sort of a job. The waggoner was not very talkative, for he was a man and I was a boy, and strangers, so that we neither had much to say; and to walk up and down a large field, our shoes covered in clay, and our only company an occasional dormouse whose nest the plough had disturbed. Often our clothes would be damp and cold. Much as I disliked school, I often wished I was back again. But my father had said, stick it for a year and I was determined to do it. In fact, I dare not go home. After a few weeks at this, one day the farmer came to say one of the horses which had been ill for days was now worse. He asked the waggoner if he could manage and if I could ride on the nag horse to fetch the farrier (there were no telephones then). I was glad to say I had often been errands on Mr. Brown's pony, so I was soon off to the stable to put the saddle and bridle on the nag and was making off for Heather, and I was glad of so welcome a change. I was soon there, delivered the message, brought back some medicine and as it was nearly two o'clock, and we finished field work at three, I had other work to do and was glad I was not going ploughing again that day. I was as pleased as the master that the horse got better, for I felt that I had played a little part in that act.

Whilst I was oiling some harness and waiting for the team horses to come home the master told me that when I had a little spare time to see the cowman and ask him to shew me a quiet cow and shew me how to milk her. For in the spring when the horses were in the fields I should be wanted to help with the milking. I had not bargained for that, but I was too young to say so. But not too young to think, and after all I was out to learn. Later on I learned to milk. The old chap expected a lot, both Sunday and at night. But he never expected the seed he was sowing into my young mind would like the wheat get ripe and if at any time he wanted me to stay a second year he might be reminded of it. I found the farm work a slow job, more so in the fields than among the stock. I was not so happy as I was at home. But I was longing for the spring and I was learning and this meant a lot to me. And the more I learned the more satisfied I became. But not with my present situation, for I had no pals now that the Irish lads had gone, but of the thoughts of sticking it; and although I was unhappy I never told my parents - to make them feel unhappy. For they had their share when my brother left home to enlist for a soldier a few years before.

As time goes on, and the seasons change, I now find the farm more interesting than at first, but have little leisure time either at night or on Sundays, especially in the winter. The master and his wife were very industrious. They bred good cattle and horses and kept the farm in good order, but having no children they just lacked that little bit of thought and sympathy for lads under their charge. But we had a good bed and plenty of good food, but little else besides work. I have plenty of errands now on the nag horse, but not in the day time unless it was very urgent. Today I had orders to rush off again to the farrier's. This time it was a cow staked in a field She was a grand milker, and this was the first cow I had seen dead. After I had breakfast I had to ride off again to stop the farrier from coming, and then on to Mr. Saddington of Newton Burgoland to order the dead beast to be fetched away. I was sorry this had happened, although he was a hard master. But I have found that worry does not help. At that time I was too young to understand insurance. But as I see it now, I would say that my old master was too keen a man to carry the risk of all his stock on his own shoulders without the help of insurance.

It had been a trying time for the master both in weather and in losses in cattle and sheep. But there were good wheat crops, and during a spell of good weather and with a full moon we had two good days and moonlight nights, and were able to get it all safe into the stacks. The old master was in a better frame of mind, now that his crops were safe. That night he asked me if I was satisfied, and would I stay on for another year. I told him I would like a change; then he offered me two pounds extra to stay on. I told him I would ask father when I saw him. In the meantime I met the foreman at Hall Farm. He asked if I was staying on, and when I told him I was offered an extra two pounds and that I was to see father first, he then offered me another ten shillings. I was glad, and my father came to see him and arrange a holiday and when I was to start work.

When I had been home and my father had arranged for my next year, the old master asked what father had said. He was rather disappointed, but could not say much about it, for he was renting his farm from the Squire. He asked if I had been satisfied, I said Yes, but wanted a change. I did all I could to please him until Michaelmas, but as both the farms joined each other, I wanted to be friendly. I might have told him that for two days and two whole moonlight nights, I had been leading wheat, and that he paid the men extra, but he never offered me a penny. He was a keen buyer and a good farmer, but he lacked one of life's greatest gifts, the sunshine of life, so that others may benefit by its rays. The next year the old chap died. Most of the farm hands followed him to the grave. Fifty years later, I saw his grave - it brought back many memories.

The third morning I was in farm service was very wet, that kept us from taking the teams out to plough. But instead, we put the barn order, oiled the chaff cutter, the root and corn grinding machines and the overhead pulleys and the wheel outside. I was glad to see how they all worked, for I had only seen the old horse going round and round turning the big cog wheel outside, feeling giddy myself and often wondered how Prince the old horse felt about it. But he was not sick like I was. Nature has been kind to horses and many times we are apt to say as sick as a horse. I have yet to see one sick the same way as we sometimes are. But I have seen many horse ill, and although they cannot speak they can by their manner tell you what's amiss, that is, if one has any love for them.

At that time a farmer with a patent chaff cutter wheel with a pole for either one or two horses outside his barn and several oth labour saving machines inside was looked on as being quite up to d But today there is electric light in the sheds to displace the dis old candle lantern with thin horn for glass. Then came the hurri cane paraffin lamp which was, and has been, a big improvement and been a big boon to haulage and many other night workers. But tod after many years the up to date farmer not only lights his sheds w electricity, floodlights his yard, and sometimes a field, but mil his cows, churns the butter, unloads the corn into the barns, and can plug in to a machine which shows his profit & loss a/c at the end of each day, week or year. The wireless tells him when to pl to sow, to reap and to mow. But there is one condition, he must still use nature's gift of clear thinking and allow others older than himself to do a bit of the thinking and if he treats his labo as human beings he will get his reward. For I have found that to to others as you would they should do to you is the best way to manage labour and study their interest and life, that is far bett than paying someone else who has done little labour.

Its over sixty three years since I worked on a farm, then wh we had anything new, a wagon, dutch barn, a patent digger plough the first in our district, then it never occurred to me what they cost for I was too young. But I suppose the farmer, same as othe business men could buy in those days on the hire purchase plan. have both bought and sold on that system, and if a man has a good business, a good character, and a will to work it pays him if he does not abuse it. It is a dear way but if he can earn the extra expense in the time he is paying for it, the investment is good. But to buy say an expensive binder that way, although it saves labour, I should think twice and hire one, for like the motor car which were stored in sheds during the war years, they soon went wrong in many parts. But to buy new vehicles of any kind which a in daily use, is always the best and by having good tools you can a good job and will soon be able to ignore the hire purchase firm but thank them for a lift on the way. Some would say, thank God I never had anything without I paid cash. There are millions lik that. They are lucky. But perhaps some of their family have. B for my part I would sooner be born poor and learn the value of mo than be born rich and not to know its value and waste it. But th are many rich parents that have shewn their sons and daughters th way to conduct a business, to work and be happy, even if they hav enough cash to be idle, for they have learned to choose ye this d whom ye will serve, God or Mammon, or have read, Go to the ant th sluggard, learn her ways and be wise.

Sunday was the first day of the Harvest I had permission to attend my Sunday School again. This time to receive a Bible for regular attendance. I have it now and prize it very much.

I had plenty of errands to do in the evenings with being the only lad on the farm, after I had been working all day. Then I saw a lad at the blacksmiths, and he told me that on account of some grievance, he was thinking of enlisting for a soldier. This gave me an idea. Although I had a brother a soldier, I had no intention whatsoever of becoming one, I thought the idea might serve its purpose, some day. Sure enough it did. Soon afterwards, another draught was required for a sick cow, and as usual, it had to be fetched after dark. I said I would go if I could take the nag. I was soon told not to be cheeky, but do as I was told. Now it happened, that the poor old farmer had gout in both legs, so I did not fear him, but respected him. I again told him, that I did not mind going on the nag, but I was not walking, and if I could ride in his time on errands, I could ride in my own time, and in any case the nag had done nothing for two days. After a good argument I told him he was unfair, and taking the advantage of the fact that I was only a youth. I was not just going to be made a lacky, and if it did not alter, I should run away to Wigston Barracks and enlist. My mate the cowman, had a little to do with this. This threat worked, and I always went on the nag to do the errands after that. I remember on one occasion, in the middle of the night, I took the nag to Heather, near Ibstock, to fetch some medicine and ask advice. Part of the journey had to be done on a bridle path, and along the side of the fox cover, I could hear the foxes barking, and owls hooting. but I was not afraid for all my ghosts had been slain, I had slain them like David, with a stone. My fears had gone, I have found out most of our troubles never come. Never trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you.

Arriving at the Farriers, I had a little trouble in arousing him, but after a while I saw his nightcap as he peered through the bedroom window. My ghost, like Marley, was dead, or it might have been him, I was very frightened. He came down grumbling, mixed the medicine, blew out the lamp and went back to bed. I put the medicine in my side pocket and went to get on the nag, but not being used to either mounting, or riding much, and feeling very sore too, I, like the circus clown, went over the other side, smashing the bottle of medicine. Now I had to go back and call him up again, I explained, and he swearing and grumbling at me all the time, mixed another bottle, telling me at the same time, to be sure to tell my boss, that it would be double charge. But. did I. No!

When I arrived home I was very wet. I put my coat on the brewhouse copper to dry. After I had stabled and fed the nag I was soon across to the heavy horse stables, and when the waggoner had mixed the drink I had brought he asked me to get in the manger and hold the horse's head up whilst he poured it down his throat with a

15 *Honour thy father and mother that thy days may belong in the land.*

drenching horn. There were no questions asked about my journey. This was all in to my £3 contract. I was soon in bed thinking of Michaelmas and a few days at home on holiday. Later we all had a grand harvest supper in the barn - plenty of home brewed ale, roast beef and goose, plum pudding, and after a speech and many thanks by the squire there was dancing. The music was two fiddles and a flute. The old master had asked me to stay on another year.

and I felt very proud although I was glad to get home to have a few cups of tea and some home made cake. I had nevertheless, had some good food at the farm, bacon, cheese and a basin of bread and milk for breakfast. Bacon, cheese or cold mutton and a pint of beer for lunch in the fields. Work was finished at 3 p.m. in those days and I then went to the farmhouse for dinner and supper together. This meal usually consisted of beef and vegetables, meat pies, pudding, and plenty of beer to wash it down. Usually I had two apples before going to bed at 8.30 p.m. However, like a Doctor, I never knew what was going to happen in the night to disturb my rest. Often there would be an increase in pigs or calves which necessitated me getting up anytime. One day, the farmer, being a Parish Councillor, engaged a youth from the workhouse. This poor lad was two years older than me, but had not been nearly so fortunate. His father had been killed in a coal mine and left a large family. There was no workmen's compensation then, as there is today, so Jim, that was the youth's name, with another brother and sister, had to go to Market Bosworth workhouse. His mother had to go out to work to earn a little money and she also drew Parish relief. It took Jim quite a long time, to get used to the farmhouse and our way of living. We were good pals and I helped him all I could but he used to be afraid of the dark, and as we had a long dark passage across the stable yard, he used to be very frightened. We never had a candle to go to bed on weekdays, but the housekeeper would bring us one at 5 a.m. She would knock at the door, put the candle inside, and tell us it was late. On Sunday nights, we were allowed a candle to put away our best suits. We were supposed to have a tin box for this purpose, but being my first year, I had not got one, so Jim and myself hung our best suits on the back of the door. We had never heard of either wardrobes or drawers, and in fact had very little to put in, even if we had but my Mother often said that you never miss what you have never had. Now my first year away from home brought me many changes, which in a sleepy hamlet like Osbaston, hardly seemed possible. The Atherstone hounds used to start there exercises in the Spring and I was instructed to get out several sheep troughs on the paddock and fill them full of whey for the hounds to drink. This was supposed to act as a tonic. (Whey is the thin part of milk after cheese is made). The hunt was a wonderful sight, the well groomed horses and hounds, and the scarlet coats were a picture.

It is now Oct. 11th 1885, my first yearly wage due, about 9.30 after I had breakfast and cleared sheds and stables up I went in for my £3. I felt sorry for the old chap, I was better off than him I thought. He looked ill, he sat in an armchair, his legs on a cushion on another one, a sad sight. He told me I was plenty early enough and had I left all straight. He wanted to deduct three and sixpence for a hurricane lamp I had broken but after I told him it was not my fault and that I wanted three pounds or my father would come for it, with that he paid me, shook hands and asked me to call and see him after I got settled at the Hall Farm, which I did, and had some apples given me. He was a hard master, but somehow I liked him

After I had left the Home Farm at Osbaston and had a few days holiday at home I was eager to start again on my second years farm service.

The Hall Farm, Osbaston.

I did not feel so homesick as I did the last time. When I arrived, I met the foreman and found that a waggoner and myself were to live together at the farmhouse. It had been arranged that I should attend Cadeby Church, every Sunday morning and that I should look after the house in the afternoon while all the others went to Church. There was no service at night during the Winter months, so most of the lads, including myself, went to the Hall, where classes were held for boys, as previously I had always attended Chapel, this was all very strange to me but I enjoyed it nevertheless. There is an old saying that when you are in Rome, you must do as Rome does.

I eventually settled down to my new surroundings, this farm was known as a three horse farm. The land was not heavy so the waggoner could do all the ploughing with a pair of horses, and I was left with another horse to do the chain harrowing, cart turnips and cabbage, and fetch coal from the neighbouring coal pits for use at the Hall and the farmhouse. I also had to mow the nettles with a scythe and give the place a general clean up now and again. The waggoner tried to instil into me, that all my work was outside and that I was not to help in the house, as there was other staff paid to do that. However, I liked the housekeeper very much and could not refrain from helping her. I knew that my Mother was her age and I was sorry to see her working so hard. I used to get the sticks and coal in, help in the dairy and do other little odd jobs. This used to annoy the waggoner but I was rewarded by special tit-bits that I wouldn't have had if I'd followed his advice. He did not appreciate that I was being shown these little favours and the housekeeper was putting into practice the first line of that little hymn, "If you have a kindness shown, pass it on".

After my first visit to the Sunday evening class, a lady came to me with a cup of tea and asked me whether I had been confirmed, and if I had been brought up to go to Church. Of course I told her that I had not. Next came the question, where were you christened, and I had to tell her that no one in my

family had been christened. She was amazed, and could only say "What a pity". After thinking over the matter, she next asked, "Will you try to get permission from your parents to be both christented and confirmed". This was a pretty problem as we were all Chapel people. However, the following Sunday, I went home, as I did every other Sunday, to take home my washing, and I told my Mother what the lady had asked me to do. My poor Mother did not know what to say for some time, but eventually she said, "Well my lad, I don't want to stand in your way, and one thing is certain, if it does you no good, it can't do you any harm. We had better not say anything to your Father about it, for he will only think that they are trying to take our Chapel principles away. There is only God and one Heaven, but there seems to be so many ways of getting there". I thus obtained her consent and was now on my way to becoming a member of the Church of England. Sometime later, I was both christened and confirmed and we had the usual Sacramental Service at the Market Bosworth Church, followed by half a days holiday and tea, at the hall. As far as I know, I have not suffered any ill effects in consequence of my action, my only regret being that my Father never knew what I had done. Soon after that I joined the Primrose League but I dare not wear the badge when I went home because it would have been like waving a red rag in front of a bull. That's how life runs, and although I kept going to Church each Sunday I never really did get used to the services.

Christmas 1886, will always stand in my memory because we had a marvellous party at the hall. There was a huge Christmas tree, plenty of nice things to eat, and I was given a warm top coat, and a Prayer Book.

The family that I was working for at this time, were really good people. Their Religion was not just in words, but they acted up to it.

In due course, Spring arrived, a time when new life is breaking forth in field, tree and fold, and all farm workers are thinking of turning the beasts out of their Winter quarters into the pastures, and hoping in consequence that they will have a little more leisure time, and the chance to put on their best clothes a little more often. I really felt at this time that myself, and my horse, were becoming a little more useful, getting the land ready for the sowing of oats and barley, and otherwise preparing for the Harvest we all hoped for. Sometimes we had to cart away all the rubbish from the fields and hedge-rows. This all had to be burnt. I began to feel like a man now, I was interested and saw that my work was really appreciated at this farm, a very different state of affairs to which existed on the previous farm I had worked on. I only hope that anyone who may read this story, and who have lads under their charge, will remember what a difference it makes if they think they are being noticed, and their work is appreciated.

18 *Up to this moment peaceful strife is best.*

Now arrived the time, when the young corn had to be cleared of weeds. An old farm labourer who had retired, but was still able to do a few hours work each day, supervised myself and several other lads. We had a spud each, to grub and pull out the cadluck, thistles etc., This made a nice change for me, although for a long time, I had a job to keep in line with the old man. The poor old chap was nearly double, and had worked on this farm all his life.

Then came the hay Harvest. It was my job to rake out the swaths from the hedgerows and from under the trees, also to help with the haymaking. I also took the cows up, milked them, and took them back again. We only had four milking cows at this farm, just sufficient to supply both the hall and the farmhouse with butter and milk. I was responsible for running the haymaking machine, which was something quite new in the district, very different from the old type, we were able to ride on it. I seemed to be no longer a lad but realised that I had a lot to learn, before I became a man.

Now came the corn Harvest. The old days of using the old cutting machine, where the lad drove a pair of horses, and the waggoner sat on another seat behind him operating the machine, had gone by for the last time. This had been replaced by a reaper, a giant looking brute, with sails on it like a windmill. This required three horses to draw it and the man driving the back pair of horses often got a rap from one of the sails when it started. I rode on the front horses, and was very glad when the last field of corn was cut, for before we had finished the last field, both the waggoner and myself had had a real sickening of this new fangled machine. In the last field we had the misfortune to run over a nest of wasps, who in their fury, stung the horses, causing them to bolt across the field throwing the waggoner and myself, in a huddled heap to the ground. Fortunately, both of us fell the opposite side to where the knives of the machine were working, or we might have been cut to pieces. This experience, so unnerved both of us that the farmer had the remaining corn cut with a grass cutting machine, and we cheered when the new model reaper was returned to its former owner. The corn, all cut and dried, carrying commenced. The labourers off the various farms used to help each other out at this time, and some of the other workers that used to be employed at the farm where I was previously, came to help us. We were having a very wet period at this time, and so it was midnight Sunday we could commence carrying but it was very nice working by brilliant moonlight. Neither farmer or farm labourers, ever used to work in the fields or gardens on Sunday, unless they could possibly help it.

Now, the question arose as to what I was going to do the following year, and it was agreed, with the consent of my

Father and Mother, that I should stay on for another year at this farm for a wage of £8 yearly. I was very pleased to stay because I had got used to everybody there. One of my sisters was married, and was living in a village near by. Two other sisters were in private service in the town, two brothers were working in a coal mine, and the other brother in the Army.

I had my weeks holiday at Michaelmas, but spent most of it helping my Father to get in his potatoes and dig his allotment, I also got quite a lot of enjoyment out of helping my Mother to straighten things out at home. After my holidays were over, I returned to the farm, and was just in time for the job of threshing the corn. Now this was a job, I was very fond of. I had loved threshing tackle since I was about eight years old. I remember my first job was to carry water for the engine. I further remember one day starting to make a lantern out of a large turnip. This was often done in those days by t lads, when I noticed the engine driver turn a handle so that the engine did not suck up so much water. I was interested and wanted to finish my lantern before fetching this so I waited until his back was turned, and then turned down the handle still further. The steam soon began to go and the driver found out what I had done. Needless to say, sufficient punishment was administered to me to make me remember it for a very long time. One day I had to pitch sheaves from off the stack and into a drum. To my young mind threshing was one of the most exciting events in farm life, plenty of company and the sound of the engine and drum, seemed to me to keep in tune together.

Now I had been a farm hand sufficiently long enough to know just what my job would be for weeks ahead. I knew for what each field was being prepared, I knew just when we should require the threshing tackle again, when to get corn for the horses, and meal and chaff for the cattle and also when to get seed wheat. We used to either exchange this with another farme in some other district, or sell what we had to buy a change of seed. I had a great deal to do with all of the transport on these occasions and also with the fetching of the oil, seed cake, and patent manure from the station. So my life went on, day followed day, seasons came and seasons went. I knew my job and had a contented mind.

Since then I have had many changes in life, but have always remembered that it is essential to crawl before you can walk. I have gone one step at a time and each one has been a little higher. I remember an old saying of my fathers, "The sweetest apples are at the top of the tree, but you must be careful how you get them", and it is just the same with friends Don't always choose the friends with money, but with true character and you will never regret it.

Next came the sowing of wheat, followed by Winter ploughing, turnip and mangel cutting and carting into camps. This is not a job many care for, but unless one is prepared to take the rough with the smooth on a farm, the life is just boredom. Try to turn your face to the sunshine, then the shadows will fall behind.

Christmas was soon upon us once again. I had a little money in my possession, not a lot, but I felt quite a rich young man. I had picked up the few shillings I possessed by going errands on the horse, and carting to the station, the mill, the colliery and other places. I had also been given a few shillings as Christmas boxes. My thoughts then turned to my Mother, and the housekeeper whom I had learned to respect, came to my aid. She was a widow, and when her husband was alive, she used to have a stand in the Leicester Market so she knew the ropes and told me what to buy for presents as this was the first time I had had any money. She had to go to Leicester in the dog cart to do the Christmas shopping. I remember she bought for me, a few Christmas cards for my brothers and sisters, a pair of socks for my Father, and a shawl for my Mother. I did not have quite enough money, so she lent me some. I took the presents home on Christmas Eve, and had a sing song with my parents and friends, and a glass of home-made wine. I was very happy because I had made my parents, and brothers and sisters happy.

As I went back to the farm I heard carol singers in the village. I passed through and truly did I feel "Peace on earth, Goodwill towards men". I spent Christmas Day quietly, but the next day we had a party at the Hall. The masters with their wives, the men and servants with their wives and children, all had a rare time. I began to feel quite at home and felt that I was going to be very happy at this farm. Never did I feel like singing more, that grand old hymn:-

O, Life that maketh all things new,
The fruitful earth, the thoughts of men,
Our Pilgrim feet wet with thy dew,
In gladness hither turn again.

One Sunday morning in the Spring, we had finished milking, and I had taken the cows to the field, and come back, cleaned the sheds out, and tidied the yard up before going in to breakfast. We were free now until the afternoon milking time again. We'd go upstairs, after making our toilet at the pump outside, change into our best, ready for a stroll. The farmer picked on me, the youngest, and gave me a pair of clappers and said, "If you are going out, take these with you, and walk round the wheat field and frighten the crows". I know it was a small job to do, but it was an order. It would have made all the difference to me if he had asked me to do him a favour, if I was going that way, but I felt a little hurt at the way he had said it. I had not been at the field

long before I heard the Desford boys Home Band practicing some lovely hymns that I used to learn at Sunday School. It made me feel home-sick and I had a feeling that if I could do something bad, the police might send me there. But then I reflected, No, that would not do, It would only bring disgrace on both myself and my parents because the home at Desford was for boys who had broken the law. Still, their band was very good and while I sat on the fence, feeling perhaps a little depressed, It struck up even louder, that favourite old tune 'Oh Worship the King, All glorious above' This seemed to be sending a message to me and I put all my cares away and went home in a much more contented mood than that in which I had left.

My next experience which taught me a real lesson was an amusing one. I was at work in the field with two three horse teams, another lad and two men. It was a lovely spring day, and after we had eaten our lunch, the men had a nap on the bank, laying on one side their pipes, tobacco tins and matches. We thought this was a good chance to learn to smoke so we took up the pipes, filled them and went under a tree to have a quiet smoke. This did not last long however, we were soon feeling very sick and all the rest of the day, we had a job to keep on our feet. Of course, the men took a rise out of us for days after that. This incident occured over fifty-five years ago and I have never smoked since. The night after this happened, I was really very ill and also had a very bad tooth-ache. The farmer sent me to a chemist over two miles away to have it removed but before I arrived there, the tooth had stopped aching. I returned with the tooth still in my jaw but I never told the farmer that I had not had it out.

Farm lads in my day, seldom saw a fire except on a very cold winter evening and then not for very long because with being in the open air so much, as soon as I sat infront of the fire, I went to sleep. It may sound strange, but I never had a desire to read in those days although now I realise that to get the best out of life, we must put the best into it. I always had to work hard on the farm but I have no regrets.

Christmas came round once more. Everything is much the same at the farm. It is the most busy time of the year for most of the stock is in-doors and has to be cleaned and fed. Some of us were able to go to church but others could not find the time. A party was given at the hall where there was as usual, plenty of good food. Still we used to have plenty of food at the farm all through the year. I used to enjoy the games we always played at these parties Every-body used to get right into the spirit and we were always sorry when they were over. There were not the attractions then that we have now and so every-one looked forward to these parties for months to come.

I now start work at the Lindridge Farm.
At this farm we not only made cheese and brewed our own beer same a they did at the Home Farm, but they baked our bread in a long brick built oven. To get it white hot ready for baking we put a lot of dry faggots in to burn. We had a stack of these in the orchard put there after hedgecutting. After the sticks had burned out and the oven well hot we had a long pole with a piece of sack on it to clear it out, before we put the batch loaves in. Some of these would be about four pounds each, besides cakes, puddings etc. No tins then. We baked on Tuesdays, sometimes extra for harvest. Beer brewing twice a year and cheese making Spring and Summer. Bertha Callis the dairymaid always used to say men were too clumsy to make cheese and would insist on loading the wagon and packing them with clean straw to keep them warm and to avoid cracking going to Leicester Fair. She would have loved to have gone to unload but was too modest. Before going to town it was a problem to get the clay out of the long hair round the horses' feet before we took them to be pared and shod. Some of the young horses after we had broke them in often had no shoes on the back in the winter. The cheese were in rows all along the granary floor and Bertha was as proud of them as the modern girl is of a pair of silk stockings. It took three of us most of the afternoon to load the wagon ready to be off to the fair early next morning.

As I look back on my home life, and my farm too, and although I have always had good plain food, and a good appetite to enjoy it, I never remember having a fried egg and bacon breakfast until I came to town. When a boy and on special occasions my brother and I had the top off a boiled egg when our parents had one boiled - never fried. We neither had fry pan or a tin opener. Anything required roasting was done in our small oven or boiled in the hanging pot over the fire and then mother was afraid of taking the polish off the firegrate of which she was proud.

Very few kept fowls only the farmers. We were often promised an egg, when they were twenty four for a shilling. Then on the farms I never remember having an egg either boiled or fried, neither do I think anyone else had, and strange to say that although I collected scores after I had done work and had a penny a score for doing so at this farm I never remember either me, or anyone else, ever sucking a hen's egg. But in the fields, when any of us found pheasant, partridge or a peewit's egg we thought it great fun to suck them, for they were our own property. At this farm the foreman asked if I would care to ride the nag to the village to ask an old man to come and spread a six acre field of manure we had that day put in heaps, as the other men were too busy, and he wanted us to plough it in. The old man was ill, and knew of no-one else. I asked him how long it would take, if he had been well enough. He told me the price per acre, I forget how much. But I told my mate the cowman, he was older than I, so that we arranged to do it in our spare time at that price. It was a good change for us, and the extra cash was useful to us both, for we left at Michaelmas for the town.

I was willing to learn all I could, for at the end of the year I should want a change, and another step up, either working at a bigger farm, or else a dreyman on the Railway. I was determined to stick to horses, for I loved them then, and would have one now if I could find the room.

Michaelmas soon came round again, after a lovely Summer. The blacksmiths and the saddlers in the district always got to know which lads were staying on and which were leaving, and they were more or less the Employment Bureau at that time. Through one or the other the Farm Bailiff at Lindridge Hall Farm, called to see my father and arranged to see me to offer me a job. I was engaged as an under waggoner at £10 per year.

The next farm was more up-to-date that the two I had worked on previously, possessing seven beautiful dapple-grey horses, and many milking cows, besides a large herd of bullocks in the fold yard. Besides myself and four men at this farm, was also the cowman, the dairymaid, the housemaid and the housekeeper and farm bailiff, and we all got on well together. Another lad, and several men from the neighbouring village also worked at this farm, and in the spring and autumn two Irish labourers were engaged to help out. The work on this farm was much the same as on the others. The farmer, Mr. Robinson, however, had a grocer's business at Newhall, near Burton, and in the winter we fed a lot of pigs, which were killed at the farm, the bacon cured and sent to his shop. We had so much pork, and so many pork pies, in those days, that we were almost ashamed to look a pig in the face. Food also, was very plentiful at this farm, plenty of home fed bacon, butter, and cheese with the usual three pints of home brewed ale each day. One thing I specially liked about this farm, was that it was a little nearer home, only about 1½ miles from Desford, where I was able to attend the Baptist Chapel on Sundays. All went well for me until the second winter, when the Bailiff asked me to take full charge of the horses for a few weeks. I was delighted, and felt like a Boy Scout with his sleeve full of badges, someone really important. I was able to use the best pair of horses to set out the furrows, and was very proud of my work, while the waggoner and the bailiff were glad of the change. The waggoner was only a young man, but very skilled a and could turn his hand to anything. During the time I was in charge of the horses, he helped an old man cut and lay hedged around the farm land. One day the bailiff told me he would want me to take a pair of horses and the waggon to Leicester in a few days time as he wanted some grass machines overhauled there. I worked hard in my spare time getting the waggon oiled, and the horses tails and manes trimmed up ready for the final plaiting, for although Leicester was only eight miles away, I had only been there twice, and I was very excited about it all. The morning arrived when I was to set off, and the farm bailiff came into the stable to tell me that

as it was a wet morning and the waggoner could do no hedge cutting, he had decided to send him to Leicester in my place. This was the last straw. I said "Very well", but in less than an hour I purposely met the bailiff with my bundle on my back. He wanted to know where I was going, and I told him to Wigston Barracks, to enlist as I could not take the waggon into Leicester. I won, he soon told me to take my bundle back and get off to Leicester. It is not fitting that one man should know what is at the back of another's mind, I had not the slightest idea of becoming a soldier, but I could not tolerate the idea of getting the horses ready for someone else to drive them into Leicester. I did not feel so happy at my work after this. I did my work but thought a lot of the future.

Now at this farm, some of the fields were adjoining the main turnpike road, and a lot of horse drawn traffic went along it, tradesmen of all kinds from Leicester, and the neighbouring villages often passed by. I had been at this farm for nearly two years, and paid very little attention to the traffic until now. However, I was no longer happy at my job, so I decided to have my lunch each day near a gate, leading on to the main road, so that when a grocer's van or any other tradesman's van came along, I could go out and ask the time, and then get to know all I could about hours and wages in the town, for I noticed that they all looked a little better off than myself and better dressed. My father was now nearly seventy years of age, and was in ill health, so that one day I got permission to go and see him. While I was there a grocer's traveller, from Leicester turned up for my mother's usual order. God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform, and after my mother had told the traveller I was her son, he said it was a pity that I could not get a job in Leicester. He asked me if I could write well, and I soon wrote down my name and address for him. After some conservation, I told him I should be leaving the farm at Michaelmas.

On a Sunday morning in Spring, whilst I was at the Lindridge Farm, I was showing two Irish labourers round the disused hall. Now on the roof, over the large staircase, there was thick glass, I had a pair of heavy boots on, and I was demonstrating the thickness of this glass, by stamping on it, when my leg went through it. One of the men managed to stop me from falling through, but I cut my hand, and the inside of one of my legs. I still have the scars to remind me of my youthful folly. I managed to limp home for dinner, got some rag, and tied it up and told no one, but when milking time came I had to own up how it had happened, for I was found out. I could not hold the milk bucket between my legs, so that the Master sent me to the housekeeper to dress it, and I had a lighter job for a few days and no milking. As the hall was empty, they sent a man to cover the hole I had made, with a

piece of sheet iron and stopped 10/- out of my wages at Michaelmas.

My father died soon after this and the traveller who came for my mothers Grocery order wrote to her and asked her if myself and sister would call on his employer, Mr.S.Patey at his warehouse. I was engaged as a vanman at 16/- per week. In the meantime my youngest brother had joined the army and my mother went to live with my married sister. Mother never cared for the idea of me going to Leicester for she said the people who lived there were dressed to death, and there was far too much dancing etc:going on for her liking. I hope this account of my boyhood days will encourage other young lads to try to get the best out of life as I did, and to always remember, as I shall never forget, that it is always true - "A boy's best friend is his Mother".

Soon after the death of my father, our little home was shared up. This was not a long job and did not require th services of a solicitor. My mother was very comfortable with my sister the last few years before she died and I remember he saying to me during the last week of her life with her face full of pride"I have managed to save enough money to pay the expence of my burial". I do believe death had terror for her, for she died as she had always tried to live - independant if poor. I have always been anxious to climb up, and I have been favoured with good health and good luck. I always had the urge to act wisely. In those days I had never seen the verse below but I know I had always felt on the same lines:-

I sel the winds of God today,
Today my sail I lift,
Though heavy oft with drenching spray,
And torn with many a rift,
If hope but light the water's crest,
And Christ my barque will use,
I'll seek the seas at his behest,
And brave another cruise.

When I was at my last farm I assisted in baking our bread and making beer and cheese. My job each morning was to turn the mellow cheese over and this being greasy made my hand very sore for a time. I remember well going to the Michaelmas cheese fair with a large load. We pitched near to the John Biggs monument which has since been removed to Welford Place. There were very few, if any, sent to the fair after that as th farmers sold them all privately. After putting up our horses at the Blue Boar Inn and finishing our breakfast, we bought some coloured braid and other trifles and went to the pleasure fair in Humberstone Gate, saw a few shows, then made tracks fo home. We were very happy because we felt that we had had a wonderful day.

Thus ends the six years of my interesting farm life. It was hard, every day of it, but I think if I had my time over again I should choose the same life. It had prepared me for my later struggle through life, had been the foundations

My first Sunday of Town Life. I was up early, had breakfast, then went to look after the horses, for I wanted to see some of the Town in daylight, and to notice the street names, ready for when I started delivering the goods. I saw in Abbey St. (not far from Abbey Park) a small Grocers shop, named Gregorys. The shop was full at that early hour and many outside, some waiting, others with a tin or a basin of Soup, those that were eating theirs, were doing so, to be refilled to take home. I later found there were many shops in the Belgrave Gate and St.Margarets District doing a good Soup trade, and later when I called on some of these shops with Grocery, Peas, Lentils, etc. I often saw the meat on a counter in a back scullery, fitted all round with shelves for the basins, and a large copper at the end, and all spotless, clean and tidy. They told me later, they closed the shop on Saturdays at 10 p.m. then opened again on Sunday at 6 a.m. and their best customers were the inmates of the several lodging houses in the district, and the others were mostly of the intemperate class. I do know that many times I have longed for a basin of that soup.

Then as I passed the Church into Sanvy Gate, I saw a tram pass, drawn by one horse from the Clock Tower to the North Bridge. A few nights later I had finished work about 6.30 when I saw three horses harnessed to a large brake, and the driver shouting Clarendon Park, twopence. Thinking this something worth seeing, I mounted, paid my fare, only to find that the only park was Victoria Park which we passed. I felt I had lost fourpence, for although it might once have been a Park, I saw nothing of interest only houses, and some streets being made.

Later on Newfound Pool began to take shape, and the one Horse waggonettes used to do good business, both there and Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate in penny fares.

When the Corporation started to run their transport I remember they had an extra horse to assist the others from the old Midland Station up the hill to the Victoria Park, then the youth would walk back ready for another load.

What was more interesting to me was the Butcher and the Fishmongers boys with their clean striped aprons and basket trotting about, taking orders on lovely Welsh cobs. Then later came the Tradesman's Dog Cart, nicely painted up with either a fat bullock or its head painted on the back, while the Fishmonger named Sibson in High Street, had a couple of iron grey cobs. They looked a picture, in a cart with brown harness on and a lovely painted panel at the back, showing a tray of many kinds of fish.

Here has dull care been banished from our thought,
here has glad comradeship our spirits caught.

I had always been taught "Thou shall not covet another man's goods" but I am not ashamed to say, I covetted those two cobs. There were many queues even at that time, and as I was going to work early on Monday mornings, I could see many women and children, waiting their turn to pledge some of their Sunday clothes. Some of the pawn shops opened their pledge departments at 6 a.m. that they could oblige their customers, before going to work. The same thing happened on Saturday afternoon, so that their husbands might go out respectable at night. I do believe that in many cases, this was a habit for many of them, for later on I noticed their family followed the same practice, but now the Clothing clubs have taken the place of a lot of this, and although many who have no incentive, when a chance occurs to save any money, they will willingly pay a Collector one or two shillings each week to take it out of the house for goods on credit.