

Note:

The following was written by 'Frank' Hudleston's sister Winifred about her recollections of their father Colonel Josiah Hudleston.

THE COLONEL.
1825 - 1893.

Before the days of school-room control my time was spent very largely in the congenial company of the Colonel, my father, and of Lakeman, the gardener, his faithful friend. I can well remember when I was about five frequently falling headlong down the steep path in the kitchen-garden, and scrambling up with bleeding knees shrieking for Lakeman, my never-failing comforter: he would gather my sobbing and woe-begone little figure with his kindly corduroy-clad arms, and sitting down (generally on the block that was used for chopping meat) would rock slowly to and fro, holding me tightly and singing very solemnly, over and over again –

"Zandy 'ee belong to the Mill
And the Mill belong to Zan-dy."

This ditty never failed to console me: and indeed after many years it still has a soothing sound in its droning tune. More than once I found myself singing it during the air-raids. - After a little my tears would cease, and Lakeman and I would proceed, small hot hand clinging to big earthy one, to the pump to wash off the blood. Then he would slowly produce from his pocket a small twist of paper containing very sticky and half-melted "assy drops" as he (and I) called them, to complete the cure, after which he would return to his cabbages, and I probably to the exciting occupation of gathering small "Dobs" of moss from the garden walk to drop on the heads of people passing below. A game in which my brother Frank excelled, but I being younger and less agile, was never quick enough in drawing back to hide, which lent a terrific excitement to the pastime.

We used to entrust Lakeman with our "shopping" if the weather was too bad for us to go as far as the "town". I well remember a wonderful pair of vases he chose, at Newton Fair, for my mother's birthday. They were of a curious design: two very white hands, both adorned with wedding rings, (this worried me a little), and with long "filbert" nails, holding up a small vase each. My mother received these treasures with acclamation, and they adorned (?) her bedroom mantelpiece for many years. We thought them exquisite.

I can still hear the long and very emphatic arguments that took place daily between "the Colonel" and Lakeman. My father beginning in a rather peppery tone, "Lakeman, I won't have these magenta petunias put near the scarlet geraniums."

When Lakeman would break in with , "But Zurr, what I mane to zay, Zurr, they petunias" etc. etc., and after ten minutes of this hurled at his head in broadest Devon my father would retire. And the petunias would remain!

After many years of happy strife between the friends, in two different gardens, we were obliged to leave Devonshire. Lakeman could not be up-rooted from his native soil, and he took a place with a near neighbour, Mr. H., who reported this incident of their first business interview:

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Mr. H.: "You know, Lakeman, I'm not sweet-tempered like the Colonel. I sometimes swear -"

Lakeman, interrupting happily: "Oh, Lor bless you Zurr, I ain't particular to a Damn or two."

And I suppose he was not, as he stayed there till he was well over eighty and past work. I had the happiness of showing him my elder daughter, on her second birthday when we happened to be staying near Newton. The baby gave him a smacking kiss and he was delighted with her, commenting, "Well, Miss Winnie, she'm a praaper lil' currlly-ade!" (curly-head).

We bade him farewell, and we never saw him again.

To return to the Colonel ... Almost my first recollection of him was of his taking me very solemnly by the hand one autumn evening after tea, and leading me to the back-yard, where stooping down, he showed me - oh horror! a little live mouse in a terrible trap; quite unhurt and watching us with bright beady eyes. Daddy whispered to me to be very quiet, and he opened the trap and let the poor little prisoner free, much to my delight and relief. As it whisked away and we turned back into the house he said casually, "Perhaps we won't tell Mummy." This I thought very sensible!

It was delightful to think that Daddy and I shared a guilty secret. I never met anyone more tender of animals of any sort than he. To a rather later date belongs the story which shows how Quiz, his little Irish terrier, loved and trusted him. Quiz had come across a half-starved black and white terrier, wandering, homeless and afraid, and he took him straight to my father who happened to be at church. Right up the middle aisle marched Quiz to the third pew, triumphant and quite sure of his welcome, the stranger following, a little anxious and flustered. My father took in the situation at a glance, and gathered the two dogs into his pew, where they lay at his feet, quite quiet and good, till the service ended.

Seeing that the stray dog seemed to be a rather well-bred one, my father advertised for the owner and a few days later a red-faced man appeared on the drive, at sight of whom the new dog fled trembling to the box-room. This was quite enough for my father. We at once bought him from his owner, no doubt at an exorbitant price, and the two dogs Quiz and Pink'un lived in happiness and friendship for many years.

When I was quite tiny my father used to tell me a marvellous story, continued every evening, about a "sick monkey" named Pib (Pip?), whose many strange adventures, mostly I think in hot-houses, held me enthralled for many weeks. I used to cuddle up on his knee with my face pressed against his soft silky white beard, and dreading any mention of a bridge, for the story came to an abrupt close every evening with: "Then he (she, or they) came to a bridge,

And the bridge bended
And my story's ended."

I used to hate this, and was haunted every time by the fear that perhaps this time "Pib" was "drowned". But he never was!

I fancy it must have been very soon after his return home from India that I asked him,
"Daddy, how many men have you killed?"
"I'm thankful to say I've never killed any."
"What, not even a black man?"

To which he replied, as he often did, "Oh Win, you are a little rummy." Which seemed to me to be beside the point.

My father had the rare faculty, (inherited to a great extent by his son, another child-lover) of being able to see right into a childish mind and understand the feelings it could hardly express. I still remember vividly the comfort of confessing things to him, and always feeling sure he would understand, and see my point of view. Once my elder sister Nora and I were on a visit to a Cornish rectory, and I was most desperately homesick, feeling lost in a large and rowdy family of boys and girls all older than I, and hating it all from the bottom of my heart. One day, running in from the garden, I heard a familiar voice; I peeped in at the French window of the big drawing-room, and there sat Mr. C., a curate, though not a very well-known one, from my own home. I dashed in, and flinging myself bodily upon the astonished young man I embraced him wildly: then fled scarlet from the room.

My sister, who had witnessed the dreadful act, gave me a tremendous lecture upon my scandalous behaviour - she harped upon it every evening when we were undressing, and all the way home in the train, till I felt ready to lick the dust. I was convinced that I had done something appalling. The moment I got hold of my Daddy alone I poured out the awful tale, rather unhappy as to how he would take it, but longing terribly for comfort. When I got to the climax: "And Daddy, I kissed him!" Daddy said comfortably, "Why, of course you did: he was like a little bit of home to you, I expect."

Still doubting, I ventured, "But Daddy, do you think he minded much?"
"No, my darling: I'm sure he loved it."

What an uplifting of the soul was mine! I instantly sought out my sister and broke out: "Daddy says it's all right about Mr. C., and you ought to have kissed him too!" (A slight exaggeration, but pardonable under the circumstances.) Nora appeared rather surprised, but quite unshaken: her "head was bloody but unbowed."

She only replied, "Oh, Daddy will say anything; he spoils you."

I had a violent temper as a small girl, and my mother's scoldings and (sometimes) slappings only made me feel more of a little devil than before! But my father had his own way of dealing with me.

"Why," he would say, peering short-sightedly into my furious face, "What's all this about? What a Waxetty Tibby! Where's my good little Win?" - and there was something about his gentle voice, and I think now, his method of not taking me too seriously, that always calmed me, and I would sob into his waistcoat, "I'll say I'm sorry to you - but I won't to anyone else, I won't - I'll kick 'em downstairs."

As a rule this half-hearted apology was conveyed (I cannot think quite in this form!) to my mother, who would very graciously forgive me, and all would be well for a while.

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I well remember how in much later years, Daddy would sometimes think it his duty to lecture me mildly on the error of my ways, but it always ended in gusts of laughter from us both. We "took the same size in humour" and always saw the funny side at the same moment.

When I was about seventeen I met him on the hill and he said to me very solemnly, "Win, I've just been promising at a meeting faithfully to perform all the duties of a sidesman!"

And I, "Well, what are the duties?"

Daddy, with a twinkle in his eye, "I've not the slightest idea."

(I think, now, that they must have been to carry round the offertory plate, with square-toed boots creaking loudly, not upsetting it more than once in transit; and to buzz the hymn being sung at the time very loudly into the ears of contributors.)

I wish that he had not been called to his rest just three months before the birth, eagerly anticipated by him, of his first grandchild - he so adored small babies, and she would have been a great joy to him, being a very quaint and original child. I am very thankful that he was spared a long illness, and that his Win was the one of his three beloved girls to be with him at the end.

I have written down these very incomplete recollections of him for my girls, who would have loved him as much as their mother did.

(Written on Oct. 10th, 1922, the 57th anniversary of his wedding with my mother at Tunworth, Hants) Winifred Pease.