between the medical staff, the hospital administration, and the loyal hospital employees. It seems to me that we in the United States are in a state of transition from the good old days when the doctor simply admitted and took care of his patient in the hospital according to the individual needs. We are now trying to co-ordinate and balance all of these several forces. Paradoxically, the central motivation seems to be to reduce the rising costs of medical care but, in so doing, the establishment of new agencies and regulations has only added to the mounting costs. In essence, the adversaries appear to be the private sector v

government control. At the present time, it is the private sector that run the hospitals in each community by joint co-operative actions between the voluntary board of trustees, the medical staff, and the hospital employees. In my opinion the future is optimistic in that this balance of power will prevail. Certainly, it is the tenor of our country at the present time to encourage private sector, voluntary management, and control of the hospital industry, as well as other industries.

(Accepted 3 November 1981)

Personal Paper

As you like it: 1911-81

CONSTANCE VON KUENSSBERG

Today I am 70, and Jaques's seven ages stretch behind, a penetrable vista. No lean and slippered pantaloons, but rather a fat and well-booted granny enjoying the garden: it is a place for review of the living, the sick, and the dying known in a life born to middle-class good fortune in a northern city.

1915 . . .

Early personal memories dredge up hideous nightmares of nights, and intermittent bouts of fierce earache. The family doctor believed that pain was good for the character, like beating boys, which has induced a permanent fear of it. He put it all down to the condition of the bowels, and vaccinated one with something like a blunt butter fork, the scars of which are carried still.

Babies were often carried by staid elderly nurses dressed in navy blue cylinders, with small velvet bonnets and long streamers. The infants were often veiled, as if under a meat cover. When asked why, Nurse said, "To keep the dust off, dear"! The street standard lamps bore notices saying "Please do not spit on the pavement" and the trams had "MOH Says Spitting Spreads Disease." One would meet men with peg legs, women with the shrivelled, dragging limbs of polio, children with deformities. One met funerals of solid worth—a black hearse with shiny carvings along the ridges and glass sides, with a man resplendent in a top hat sitting aloft. According to one's bank account, two or four horses, a black plume on each head harness, pulled this magnificently, their chests flecked with foam from the bearing rein.

The bowels were the obsession of the early century. Have you? Haven't you? and an inspection. One of the earliest memories is straining on a pot, with a sugar-topped biscuit on one side for a Good Girl, and, on the other, a glass of horrible, steaming liquorice mixture, for a Bad Girl. How one envied friends their Gregory's, or lovely syrup of figs. Stasis for over two days earned castor oil, neat, in a rinsed tumbler: not rinsed in hot water, but tepid, so the oil flowed slow-ow-ly. This appalling draught

continued to be compulsory, immediately antenatally, well into the 1940s.

Apart from ears and throats, nursery diseases stretched from the fevers of measles and chickenpox to the horrors of whooping cough. Children stayed wee and white for months after this, going into spasms with any stimulation and being sent for healthy walks round the gas works—large, wet, and windy beside an icy sea, which was supposed to induce cure. Having measles and jaundice simultaneously, my red face and orange eyeballs were concealed in the nursery behind a carbolic sheet hung in the door, only penetrated by Nannie and a kindly vicar. Everything infected had to be burnt, so I could not even hug my teddy; a dreary time to be 5 years old.

These years were those of the first world war. The memory is still carbon-clear of the centre pages of the national press, black with the names of those lost in the major battles of the Somme and Passchendaele. We lived in a school house of 30 boys, and in the four years 38 lost their lives, many of them straight from the classroom and rugby pitch. The whole air stank of death and darkness. My father reacted as to the death of sons, so one bore one's own troubles.

1918 . . .

School friends often went off sick, mostly with colds, coughs, blains, and sore throats and ears. Tannin throat paint on a tickly brush, salt or Condyl's fluid gargles, warmed oil or onion in the ears, oil of cloves in an aching tooth; one learnt about pain and had to convalesce from it—no quick route through chemotherapy and sedatives. Many of all ages bore neck scars from glands that had swollen and burst, or been lanced, and a tonsillectomy on the drawingroom table left the back of the throat like an aching cavern if you breathed through an open mouth. Several contemporaries had large concavities behind their ears from infected mastoids. Some girls disappeared and died, probably from adolescent tuberculosis, while others developed erythema nodosum or toxæmias leading to bacterial endocarditis and nephritis. Later, in the 'thirties, one saw many of these young things in the wards. Often they were ravishingly beautiful, with flushed skins, sparkling eyes, panting breath, and, so the local lore went, often with burningly brilliant red hair. The symptoms signed their death warrant. Infections went through the whole process then: tumor, rubor, calor, rigor, crisis, and

lysis. Convalescence, a word we have almost forgotten, was a prolonged process of beef tea, calves' foot jelly, and unutterable boredom.

The concurrent horror was menstrual onset, swathed in silence and taboos. It was something rather wicked, often with sharp pain that had to be borne, a necessary adjunct of the female lot, and called "the curse" in schoolgirl circles. We were instructed not to wear flowers at this time, as they would instantly wither, and *everyone would know*, a state definitely worse than death.

A month in Italy, living among peasants, showed some primitive problems—a peasant screaming in labour, held and rubbed by numerous members of the family crowding her little dark airless dwelling, and another displaying proudly what looked like machete scars on the wall of a slashed breast, after a mastitis. A third had all the village leeches applied to her swollen neck. All showed consummate dignity and acceptance, no psychiatry was needed here.

1929 . . .

From school I moved to nursing in an orthopaedic hospital, an initiation from the temporary to the chronic. Patients with polio, osteomyelitis, and tubercular bone foci were residents, many for years. It had none of the gloom to be expected from the circumstances, but ran on an extraordinary yeasty mixture of professional competence in old army huts, on cold courage and eternal joking. The patients were our friends, they carried the place along, teaching the staff who were inexperienced in living outside their own circles lessons that could never be lost. A remarkable surgeon whizzed through the place like a rocket; it was his child, his schoolbook, his delight, and his triumph. The infinite and personal care he exerted on each flaccid limb or spastic joint, taking in the character and job of each patient, was utterly inspiring. It was a happy place, peopled by many who had touched bottom and were coming up again, like bubbles. Laughter rang through the wards, which were in the open air except in downpours and snow. The exception was Sunday nights, after the visitors had left, when family thoughts were darkest. Then the men grew randy, the women lugubrious, with much hymn-singing, and the children strangely silent.

There were few deaths, much physical deformity, but mental wholeness of the healthiest sort. While I was there they removed a knee cartilage that went wrong, so I thumped around in a plastic spica, followed by a caliper made in their own workshop, for some months, infinitely preferable to early days when, with seven septic fingers all separately bandaged, I was left to wrestle in an icy sluice with mounds of chipped enamelware. To go off sick in such an atmosphere was to be shamed.

The other hazard was diphtheria, when six of the staff went down, *seriatim*. We were despatched to a fever hospital of such Dickensian management that it can still give bad dreams. The staff were dropouts, the matron lived in an alcoholic haze, and the medical officer kept his sanity by avoiding the wards altogether. In this den we had to stay for six weeks, waiting for a negative swab.

1932 . . .

An interview with a radiologist with a view to entering radiography is memorable. A ghost of a deeply courteous man, lacking several fingers owing to radiation, I will always remember his warnings on the large quantity of protective lead that would have to be worn. It seemed as if he had already been eviscerated in his calling. As all textbooks were in German, it had to be learnt, and an au-pair job looking after a spastic boy provided a start. It was in a Prussian Junker family outside Berlin, and a lesson in primary genetics. The von Vs had intermarried with the von Rs thirty-seven times in three generations to maintain their blood line. The result was that everyone was everyone else's cousin,

and the seed had deteriorated along the way; there was a saga of blindness, deafness, and undersizing. Their kindness to an inarticulate foreigner was exceptional. The line was extinguished by the Russians, who overran their estate in 1944. After a few months there, being strenuously taught on the hard benches of the foreigners' wing of Berlin University and singing lustily in a city choir took one's mind off the desperate situation at that time. It was the Berlin of Isherwood's *I am a Camera*, of *Cabaret*, of hungry Communism and pink, beer-filled Nazism, and a dozen miniparliamentary parties that muddled the issues of unemployment and starvation. I saw an underclad man in the Christmas snow throw his coat over a pigeon, and eat it raw. Every improbability was there, from the malnourished, the limbless from the first world war, the Jews beginning to shrink visibly, and a cheerful, high-pitched decadence—kindness and cruelty in a poignant sauce of internationalism.

In one way their government made a superb move. Instead of letting the lights die in the art world, no theatres, operas, or concert halls were closed, but were subsidised to keep the artists in employment. As a student, one could pick up a paper ticket, and go to the circus even if one had no bread. In our group several students committed suicide, seeing no hope in their various countries, and the slum that I lived in was full of batterings, and cryings by night. Emaciated street singers filled the courtyard throughout the Christmas season.

1933 . . .

Home recall was suddenly hurried as my mother fell ill and my father had a go of the newspaper horrors. Paramedical observation was cut short, and home seemed very tame until our own general practitioner suggested that flesh-and-blood medicine was preferable to radium. But sciences had to replace German on entry.

1935 . . .

Student training covered the richest of palettes from improbabilities such as botany at 8 am on summer mornings to district medicine in the city's deepest slums, where common lavatories, bed bugs, and four families in one fine room, where infection of every variety was rampant, gave scope for living learning. The wards still held tubercle, toxæmias, gangrene, tetanus, dropsies, cardiac cases, appalling skin diseases, and every form of painful termination. All straightforward tests were done by the houseman or clerking students in the "duckpond," a nasty little den by the sluice. No dipsticks or such luxuries, but blood counts and Benedict's solution. The first breakthrough in chemotherapy was prontosil. It halted streptococcal septicaemia but had the unnerving effect of turning the patients richly blue with methaemoglobin, and they excreted beetroot-coloured urine. The results were startling.

In the surgical wards we were present at some of the first gastrectomies, a daring innovation. Anaesthesia was open ether and open chloroform, preceded by ethyl chloride. One anaesthetist, an elderly gentleman of great calm and experience, used to leave a cigarette end quietly smouldering beside the ether bottle. I can recall only one anaesthetic death. At that time hyperthyroidism was not medically treatable: the patient was sedated daily, and one day without notice was whisked to the theatre, to "steal the thyroid." During this operation, one young woman died in crisis. Our surgeon went to her husband himself, with tears on his cheeks, to break the news. By about 1945 thiouracil dealt with this horrible complaint, described by a patient as being "in charge of a cart where the horse has bolted and you've lost the reins."

All babies were automatically vaccinated, and a friend's landlady bore real small-pocks. We learnt about plague and leptospirosis and rats, and rats still bit babies in some areas. A remarkable teacher of public health had installed a museum of

contraception, a subject totally untouched by our obstetricians and gynaecologists in 1937. We delivered at least 10 babies in hospital, and 10 more on the district, leaning heavily on the midwife. There, one developed relationships of a very special sort with mother, and usually granny. A graduation prize in orthopaedics entered for the purpose of the special residency that went with it was refused, as the surgeon concerned said that lavatory accommodation in the residency was arranged for gentlemen only.

It was 1939, war was beginning and quibbling was pointless, and different opportunities arose. One of the youngest and most innocent of our colleagues was sent to the north of Europe as a brothel inspector. The dice threw me a six and the job as paediatric surgical houseman under a superb and understanding technician broadened one immediately, with every sudden trauma of childhood, with septicaemias from osteomyelitis, often increasing with terrifying speed, to death. Burns were then painted with silver nitrate and nursed in electrically heated cradles, and the nursing was a desperate problem. Intussusceptions, pyloric stenoses, sexual malformations corrected to the nearest guess before the advent of chromosomology, and tiny surgical reconstructions of cystic ducts, hare lips, and cleft palates left one in awe. Parents were allowed only twice a week, so any spare time we had was spent playing with the children and learning to cope with frantic mothers. Psychology was in bud then, and the traumas later laid bare had yet to appear to us. Everyone, in retrospect, seemed better prepared for emergency.

1940 . . .

A year in general practice in rural Anglia as a raw recruit produced another face of medicine. Chemotherapy was nearly all channelled to the army, and the dispensary was in a chilly larder. Complaints were simplified. Two kinds of cough were complained of, a "tissic" and a "bronichal," and they each had their own variant bottle that was accepted, and none other. Many suffered from what they called "narves": usually a spell of listening and a mild pill from our small selection helped this, but rustic diet must have played a part. They were not healthy, wealthy, or wise, and despite hens and cabbages seemed to consume a lot of bread dipped in Oxo, and endlessly boiled greens. Everything else was for sale. It was inbred country, rooted in old ways, and the aged still fried field mice to treat the whooping cough of their unfortunate grandchildren. The Battle of Britain roared all over the sky while we delivered babies in cottages with earth floors and water from a green pond at the door, yet, when the evacuees arrived they all boiled the water for them, and there was very little D and V. A visit to the farm would often start with the inspection of the cowpats of an ailing animal with garget before being shown the wife, and payment (no NHS then) was in cabbages on the back seat. Hedgers were in terror of gangrene or tetanus if they were spiked by blackthorn, and the loaded rook rifles in many kitchens produced some wicked wounds from mishandling. Many adults had horrendous piles from the inadequacies of the loo at the bottom of the garden—ice-bound in winter, blue-bottle buzzing in summer. They were patient, forgiving, and grateful people, like the animals so many of them tended, and are held in memory in deep respect.

1941-51 . . .

Back again to the north: marriage, children, and the pressures of a fiercely demanding wartime practice for a husband. The surgeries seemed to go on all day, the telephone seemed to ring all and every night, but the miracle of antibiotics began to lighten the scene, and the awful toxæmias were reduced. The most memorable was when the marital bed suddenly shook with a phenomenal rigor: a scrubbing up for a midder case had agitated a felon in the finger, and the owner had to be rushed to

hospital with alarming red lines along all the lymphatics. The petrol ration had not come through, and a lucky locum who turned up couldn't get about. The bureaucrats refused any help, but there was an unanswerable shot in the uterine locker. Sitting firmly on two chairs in a rather plush office, I announced that the baby within was overdue by two weeks, and either the petrol or the child would be forthcoming. Five minutes saw me free of the office, with a handful of coupons.

Wartime brought frightening haemorrhages from improper abortions and other bizarre problems, but the population stayed astonishingly healthy, and a victory, such as Tobruk, emptied the surgeries. Sunshine, or good news, is the most potent treatment. Children used to fetch their own vitamin supplies with their own coupons and were occasionally seen swigging orange juice or cod liver oil from the bottle. Triple protective injections came in: diphtheria, whooping cough, and typhoid, later changed to tetanus, safeguarded the cradle population, and Mantoux tests for tuberculosis isolated the school cases. They still flared up through change of job or infectivity, but the number of adolescent deaths was reduced. We boiled our own children's milk for their first year up till 1948 as the herds were not reliable.

1951-61 . . .

Poliomyelitis still stalked Europe as a biennial epidemic until Jonas Salk's superb contribution prevented a vast amount of crippling. Returning from journeys abroad, the sight of British babies was heartening. Round and rosy, they sat up and led an exciting life compared to the trans-Channel infants, overclothed, and lying under vast duvets against the foreign fresh air. The NHS's protective measures for all were paying off, and much less crippling was seen. The war-deprived had artificial limbs as a matter of course, instead of cash. During a very dreary convalescent spell of the national spirit, this showed.

1961-71 . . .

Our children grew up and married, and their children were born, a generation free from the pestilential fears one remembered. Now if they sicken the answer is "a virus, there's a lot of it about," and antibiotic measures usually answer quickly. The initial collapse over, the child finds life immediately exciting again. We have moved from the capital city to country town, the pace has changed from rush and scramble to thoughtful progress and courteous exchanges. Faces no longer show their tensions, and the background changes too. There are still a handful of crutched and one-legged people from early accidents, when the reapers had long knives. They managed for years and can't be bothered with limbs you have to put on like trousers: their faces are calm and smiling.

The patients of our mental hospital are kindly dealt with by our shopkeepers, who know them, and probably their parents too. The local hospital is excellent. Can the city dweller believe that one may be asked by telephone, "When would it be convenient to come for your x-ray examination?" Within five minutes of arrival one is shown an excellent photograph of an early arthritic joint. We all know where we are, and can work on it. We know the undertaker too; he does an excellent job, and we work at the rosebed where we hope our ashes will help perpetuate Iceberg, Mermaid, The Doctor, Peace, and other sweetsmelling breaths. We have come home.

As you like it—as Silvius tells Phoebe, living is loving—
It is to be made of fantasy
All made of passion, and all made of wishes
All adoration, duty and observance
All humbleness, with patience and impatience
All purity, all trial, all obeisance.

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