

Mum and Dad

Their first encounter

One day in the Nunn house at Diamond Place, Joey was driven to despair by Nelly, who one day let the rabbits out of their hutches. He was in such a fury that he chased little eight year old Nelly round and round the garden to reap revenge on her, but she was very fleet of foot, having learned to run from her own brothers at times, so she ran to a tree and climbing a ladder that was there, she was soon high up amongst the branches away from the furious Joey, who promptly took the ladder away, leaving her there. She could have shinned down quite well, but she did not know where Joey might be hiding to catch her unawares. After a while just as she was getting worried, and not knowing what to do in case, Joey was still lying in wait for her, along came six foot, sixteen years old Grimmy who saw her plight.

"Jump down, and I will catch you." he said.

"No, I can't!" said Nelly. "If I do you will see up my clothes!"

"You jump" he said, "and I'll turn my head."

So Nelly jumped happily and Grimmy caught her neatly and gently in his strong arms and lowered her to the ground. She loved him dearly from that day. She even became firm friends with Joey.

My parents engagement

When the troubles of the Nunns was solved they moved away to another part of the town to a house in Military Road, so the paths of Nelly and Grimmy did not meet for some years to come, when Nelly was nearly twenty two and Grimmy thirty years old.

It happened one day when Nelly was at a loose end for somewhere to go or something to do. The happy times she had in her childhood with Ophelia Nunn came back to her so she made her way across Colchester from Alexandra Road to Military Road where she heard the Nunns now lived. Ophelia was delighted to see her and asked her to stay to tea. Ophelia's mother, Harriet, agreed to this so Nelly stayed. One after the other Ophelia's brothers came in after their day's work. After tea Edwin offered to drive Nelly home in his pony and trap. Nelly accepted this and agreed to joining a family picnic at the coming weekend. This invitation included Nelly's two sisters, Mary and Rosie as well as Ophelia.

Six weeks later she and Edwin were engaged to be married. The engagement was for two years before they married in 1903.

We have a photograph of this pony and trap outside a newsagents shop in Crouch Street. This shop was owned by Edwin's brother, Joey. It had been bought for him by Harriet, his mother. We have a photograph of him outside the shop with young Willie Houchen (?) the paper boy by his side boy by his side, and standing in the road way is a spanking, shining pony and trap with Grimmy proudly holding the reins.

At that time, Grimmy owned a stable, two more ponies, another trap and a small van for removables. He had been set up in business by Harriet, which he kept going until the Army commandeered his horses during the Boer war. By this time Grimmy and Nelly were engaged, and were to be married within two years. During this testing time they wrote beautiful love letters one to another all in

rhyming couplets. It was in these stables in a certain drawer containing Grimmy's private bits and pieces and book-keeping ledgers that he put all tied up in blue ribbon the letters that Nelly sent to him. Her also had in with these letters some very valuable stamps which including a rare Queen Victoria "Penny Black" stamp. And it was to these stables that Nelly went one day after they had a quarrel, because she had heard that Grimmy's mother, Harriet, had been reading these letters. Nelly went to this drawer, took the packet containing her letters, and, unbeknown to her, also his other precious objects and burned them there and then. When Grimmy came back to the stables and saw what she had done he was very upset. He wrote her a very unhappy and reproachful letter. She sent to him a letter so full of remorse and anguish. These two letters are the only two still in existence, and we, their children, cherish them. They forgave each other and were married on her twenty-third birthday, the eighth of June, 1903.

My parents, married at last

So, Nelly and Grimmy were married at Holy Trinity Church on her birthday, June 8th 1903. They arranged to honeymoon at Mersey Island, but the weather was so cold that time that they came home after three days.

They had a small furnished house in Military Road, Colchester. This had been bought for them by Harriet. The original owner, a Miss Pretty, was leaving Colchester to live with friends, so Harriet arranged to have it from her, lock, stock and barrel. They were very happy in this house and their first born, a son Bobby, was born in it. But shadows began to loom for them, as this Miss Pretty from whom Harriet had bought the house decided she was not happy where she was and gave Harriet no peace until she was able to move back into it again.

At this time, the Boer war having started started, and the Government having commandeered all three of Grimmy's horses for the Army, Grimmy was left without a job or a trade, and with no means to support a family.

When the Nunn boys were younger, their mother, Harriet, had wanted them to learn a trade of some kind, but Edwin, (their father), pooh-poohed the very idea, saying that there would never be the need for his sons to work. This might have come about if he had not squandered it on buying a farm that failed, by helping a cousin to lay claim to a law-suit that lasted nearly ten years before it was finally settled, and by taking over the old Theatre Royal in Queens Street with his two brothers Henry and John.

So, without a trade or profession, and no job there was nothing else to be done but to move back temporarily into the family home.

Grimmy went back to his warm, loving family home with Harriet and Ophelia, but Nelly with little one year old Bobby had to move into Tor House which already housed Rosie and Lome, a dying Amy, although no one suspected she was so ill at the time, and Mary, the sister whose care Nelly did not want to accept.

After a while, Grimmy, a Colchester Royal Grammar School educated man, found a job as a driver for a local antique dealer, a Mr Jarman. Edwin learned something of antiques while he was with Mr Jarman. He acquired an old bible that had at the back of it old cures for illnesses, such as "swallow a spider for croup", etc. but somehow this bible disappeared and he always mourned its loss. He also had the complete works of Bunyans "Pilgrim's Progress", which had beautiful plates in red, scarlet and gold. These he kept in a box allowing no one, not even Nelly, to touch them. After his death in 1964 we, his children, found that they had completely disintegrated with time. We would have had so much enjoyment with those beautifully illustrated books had we been allowed to look at

them.

Nelly was not so happy back in Tor House. Amy was ill, and although Eliza was still teaching in her by now dwindling school, she was nearly seventy and needed care and attention as she had "dropsy" in her legs. Moreover, when Grimmy came to see Nelly and his little son, Bobby, Eliza insisted that as he smelled of "the stables", he must use the bottom area steps to come into the house. It was in "Tor House" that another baby was born to Nelly and Grimmy, a little girl whom they named Kate Lavinia. Things began to get a little more difficult now for Nelly. The atmosphere was decidedly chilly. The most beloved sister, Amy, who had always been so understanding and kind to Nelly, died of "galloping consumption", leaving her feeling saddened and very lonely. She was now ensconced in the old top back nursery finding it difficult to climb up and down four flights of stairs with two babies.

At the first Christmas after Amy died, before Bobby was two and little Lavinia, (Venie) six months old, Grimmy had found a house, 73, Mersey road. He was furnishing it, and making it ready for his family to move into in the New Year. He had a shop built on to the side and was getting all set up for a thriving business. Little Bobby was not very well having what the doctor said was a feverish cold. Nelly nursed him, played with him expecting him to be up and about within a day or two. On Boxing Day he slept longer than usual so Nelly thankfully got on with ironing a dress for him to wear when his father came to see him that afternoon, but he never regained consciousness dying of meningitis two days later, poor little fellow. It was strange that during that night when Nelly sat up watching her baby son drifting away when he suddenly sat up in his cot, opened his eyes wide and stretched out to something or some one that Nelly could not see and cried out, "Pretty! Pretty!"

This was the name that Bobby had given to Amy when she was alive. Nelly always said it must have been her dear sister, Amy who came to carry him away HOME in her arms. This was the only thing that could bring any kind of comfort to the wildly grieving Nelly. Her sisters were kind enough to her but she could not forget the days when she had not been as welcome with her two children as her sisters Rosie and Lilian had been with theirs. On the day of his funeral she did not want all the curtains closed as was tradition, but opened them all as wide as she could

Soon after Bobby's funeral, Grimmy came to tell her that number 73, Mersey road was ready to move into at any time and his business which he had called "The Garrison Cycle Dep" had good business with the various Army barracks in and around the Town. He had switched from horses and traps which he used to let out on hire, to bicycles, the up and coming means of transport for both civilian and army life. Nelly was overjoyed! At last she had a home of her own. She told no one at Tor House about it until Grimmy drove up with a pony and trap to collect his family.

She dressed little Venie, packed up her belongings, then went downstairs to the lower school room where Eliza was still teaching, and walking up to her mother, Eliza, she said,

"Well, goodbye, Ma. Grimmy has come to take me home."

Then she walked out of the house to the waiting pony and trap, and Grimmy. After the initial shock of the departure of her youngest daughter, Eliza had much to think about.

Nelly remained very close to her family after this move to Mersey road. It was

here that Nelly and Grimmy had two more little daughters, myself and Little Nelly. It was not until the second of August, 1914 that another son, George, was born to Nelly and Grimmy.

Edwin, the elder, died in the early 1890's. He was a bell-ringer in a local church and after getting rather hot one day he went outside into the cold air and catching pneumonia, he died within three days.