

APPENDIX 1

'CONNIE'S REVENGE' BY 'BASSA'

IN *Patchwork* for October 1885 there is a story entitled 'Connie's Revenge' (pp. 302–3). It seems to describe an earlier stage of Laura/HHR's later intense relationship with Evelyn/Constance Cochran, and therefore may indicate a level of awareness of the relationship within the school community *before* HHR and Connie Cochran were to share a room for six months in the first half of 1886. In a letter to MK (28 June 1932: *Letters* II. 396), HHR recalled that 'in 1885, I was in the throes of my passion for C. R. C. (so lightly and discreetly touched in in *Laura*) & much too occupied with this & exams to trouble abt Magpies' (the Magpie Club); and many years later HHR recalled that although 'it must have been clear to the blindest where I was heading, the two of us continued to share a room' (*MWY* 71). See also n. 11 for p. 158. The emotional intensity of that experience is here replaced by a comic tale of transgression and punishment, of vanity and burlesque. Nevertheless, the paralleling of names (Constance Carman for Constance Cochran, Edith Rowe for Ethel Richardson), and of their relative ages, physical appearance and social background, is striking. In *TSI*, HHR also names PLC 'The Ladies' High School'. The writer 'BASSA' cannot be identified and the text is reproduced here unemended.

CONNIE'S REVENGE.

I AM afraid you will think my story rather tame; you are welcome to think that, but you must *not* laugh at it. It is an incident which happened at the school, which I attended when about ten years of age. The name of the school was The Ladies' High School, a tall brick building, with splendid grounds, about two miles and a-half from Peterborough. The name of the lady principal was Miss Green, a tall, dark old maid, who wore bone spectacles and green linsey gowns, without any trimming; but she was a very good teacher, and the majority of her pupils got on with her very well indeed. My room was on the top storey, and shared by a girl to whom I took an immediate dislike, Constance Carman, who in appearance was tall and fair, with rather a pretty face, at least she thought it was, because she was always before the looking-glass admiring it; and you may be sure I did not approve of that, because I did not get my full share of the glass, and was in consequence often sent from the breakfast table to make my hair neat or put my collar straight. Connie was also inclined to be rather too fond of sweets, and as her parents were very wealthy she always had a good supply. Now, Connie had not many friends among the girls, but there was one whom she disliked particularly, a young, delicate girl, about thirteen years of age, named Edith Rowe. Her mother was a widow and very poor, so it was very difficult for her to keep Edith at such an expensive school, and in order to do so she denied herself many luxuries. Edith ought to have been all the better because of this, but instead she was a wicked little girl, who often used to steal her companion's cakes and sweets. One day, Connie, having just received a hamper from home, missed a large cake of gingerbread; she at once accused Edith of it, and went to her room to ask her if she had taken it. She never knocked, but went straight in, to discover Edith sitting behind the door with a large piece of gingerbread in one hand and a rosy apple in the other. Then ensued such a scene. Connie threatened to report her, but Edith cried so, that Connie said she would not report her to Miss Green, but would punish her herself. The following morning, when we were all assembled for prayers, and the roll was called, Edith Rowe was absent. Miss Green thinking she must be ill, sent me up to inquire.

I knocked twice, but receiving no answer, opened the door and walked in. I could see no signs of the girl, and after calling her by name several times and receiving no answer, I went and told Miss Green that she was not in her room, her clothes were gone, and that she must have run away. I was snapped at for being so silly, and told to go to my seat. Miss Green herself went to find the culprit, but she was as unsuccessful as I. All the girls were questioned, and all professed to be ignorant of Edith's disappearance. Her mother was communicated with, but she knew nothing. The day wore on, and still no Edith. "Where had she gone to?" was the question that filled everybody's mind. Towards the close of the day, when the bell rang for tea, and all the girls came flying down the stairs, one of them ran into a clothes basket on the landing and upset it. Two other girls kicked it down the stairs. Miss Green, hearing this unusual noise, came out to inquire what it was about, and seeing the clothes basket in such an unusual place, asked how it came there, and being told, she ordered the girls who were so good as to kick it down, to carry it up again, and then return to their respective rooms. They tried to carry the basket, but finding it heavy opened the lid to see what was in it. In it they discovered Edith Rowe, who, through the malice of one of her companions, had been tied securely in blankets, and her mouth gagged so as not to attract attention, and apples, bon-bons, and pieces of cake hung all around the basket by means of pieces of string, and on the blanket was pinned this inscription, "Do have a piece of gingerbread." Of course, now that Edith was discovered, Connie confessed her fault, and was punished as she deserved. I don't remember ever hearing that Edith stole any more cakes. She at least had learnt a lesson after spending a day and a night in a clothes basket.

"BASSA."

APPENDIX 2

‘RECEP.’

APART from her diary of 1887–88 (MS 133/8/7), HHR destroyed what she called her ‘childish effusions’ in verse and prose (written between the ages of 8 and 20) after the death of her husband (28 May 1933), and before leaving her London home of thirty years. Only one piece of her juvenilia was spared. As she was preparing papers for the fire, she found a poem probably written in 1886. On 14 March 1934 she enclosed the following verses in a letter to MK (the ‘Mary’ of the poem) with the comment: ‘I send you on . . . [a] copy of those ribald rhymes of which I spoke. I’m sure you have the humour to appreciate them’ (*Letters* III. 18–20). The poem names seven members of the PLC Matriculation class of 1886 and refers to one by a nickname. In order of appearance they are: Mary Ann ‘May’ Pownall (1872–1941), Agnes Isabella Bell (b. 1868, of Dunnolly, Victoria), Janey Barrow (b. 1868), Margaret Maude Howitt (b. 1870: from Gippsland), Constance Rosetta Cochran (possibly the ‘Venus’ figure), Mary Amelia Robertson (Kernot) and HHR. (For Zerbini, see note 3 for p. 222.) As for the title, MK wrote: ‘In those days school life was bare & comfortless but the matriculation class was granted the use of the Reception room in the evenings as a study. As it had a carpet on the floor & chairs instead of forms & no teacher sat with us this was indeed a boon’ (ML MSS 356).

Recep.

They sat at their various studies,
 Eight maidens of high degree,
 And gaily they talked & they chatted,
 A pleasant sight to see.
 The wind came in at the window,
 And stirred May's sunny curls;
 While Agnes joked to amuse them,
 A merry set of girls.
 And Ettie & Annie bickered,
 A harmless bit of fun;
 While Maudie & Janie argued
 Over a difficult sum.
 Our Venus sat calm & quiet
 Revolving within her brain,
 The factors of tough equations,
 Again & again & again.
 But they all are so young & so happy,
 That nothing comes much amiss,
 Their fights are made up in amor,
 Their quarrels end in a kiss.

* * * *

Swiftly flow twenty summers,
 Ah! what a change is here:
 Wrinkles on aged faces,
 Silver in golden hair.
 May is a blooming matron,
 Agnes an ancient maid;
 Janie & Maude are married,
 Ettie has long been dead.
 But Venus! We gaze with horror!
 Can *this* be the maid we knew?
This, & we sigh, & we shudder,
 Can it, alas, be true?
 Stout with a dreadful roundness,
 Nose of an awful tint,

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Followed by fifteen children,
All of their mother's print.

Zerbini comes lurching in,
With a horrible drunken shout,
Mary seizes the bottle:
There ensues a general rout.