

MOUNT & WARLEGGAN LIFE

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OUR HONEYMOON AT WOODAH FARMHOUSE IN 1899 by MARY BUCKLER

*Mary Buckler and William Nathaniel Heath ("Narth") were married in Warwickshire and honeymooned at Woodah
Extracted from Mary's autobiography*

We spent the first day of our honeymoon in Plymough then to the Bodmin Moors, where Narth had promised years ago to spend his honeymoon. Mrs Runel was a distant cousin of his Mother and had no children of her own. She had always mothered Narth and her constant letters during the years when his character was being formed played a great part in helping him realise that they who commit their way unto the Lord never have cause to regret it.

We arrived at Bodmin Road Station in pouring rain. Mr Runel met us and we drove seven miles across the Moor in an open trap. Hector, the horse, stepped out well, however, and we soon reached Woodah, Warleggan, where the door stood wide open sending a stream of light down the garden path, and a dignified lady stood in the doorway to bid us welcome. Kindly graciousness exuded from her. We were soon seated around the supper table, whilst a glowing peat fire was most welcome after the damp drive.

When we were almost half way through supper, Elizabeth, an elderly woman who had been, for many years, general factotum came in and placed the bedroom candles on the sideboard. Her features were exactly like the pictures of Deborah in Uncle Tom's Cabin and her skin was as dark as a negress. Will 'e be needin' anythin' else, Missis m' Dear?" she asked.

"No, thank you, Elizabeth," replied Mrs Runel.

"Good night, then; don't sit up and get too tired."

Mr Runel's eyes twinkled, with a roguish smile, as he explained that Mrs Runel frequently had heart attacks and was more or less an invalid. Elizabeth was a martinet in looking after her. In a few moments, he had recounted a long list of Elizabeth's peculiarities. "But," he said, "She is worth her weight in gold from a domestic standpoint."

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She was recounting to Narth next morning that, the previous week, she had been to pay a visit to her sister, who had lived for many years with some friends of his. They had recently built a new home and she explained, her black eyes rolling in a weird way the whilst: "You know, Mr Narth, they'm got a beautiful cimitory before the front door."

"Cemetery! It must be a gloomy place to live in."

"No it bain't."

Mr Runel exploded with laughter: "It's a conservatory she means, Narth."

"No, it bain't," she argued. "Eliza said 'cimitory' and it's full o' the most beautiful flowers," she added with a final snap. Turning to Narth, she went on: "Maister must have his bit o' fun. It's contradictin' he always is. I told him that, at Eliza's, there was a beautiful full moon and he said 'Not half as full as the one at Warleggan.' An' I'll bet a new black lead brush that it was," she added with vehement energy.

I have never been in a house where three people had such decided personalities. There was thoughtfulness and dignity in the Mistress, infectious cheerfulness in the Master and devoted cheerfulness in the maid. Elizabeth was always up at 4 am. The washing was done before the family sat down to breakfast; consequently, there was never any mudle.

My honeymoon was not at all conventional. Mornings were usually spent in the kitchen; all the Cornish dishes my husband liked, I learned to make: Cornish pasty, clotted cream, saffron cake and bun loaf or, as it is called in Cornwall, "Currant bread," and leek pie. Afternoons were spent visiting old friends of my husband's Mother, who seemed to have lived in the vicinity for generations.

That was my first visit to the West but I made friends who have remained friends through all the years. Some have gone to their reward, but there are still a few left who delight to talk of old times and recall jolly events when the ones we loved were still here.

One day, there was the yearly round-up of cattle on Rough Tor, which the men seemed to enjoy exceedingly. They came home tired after a long day in the saddle.

One morning, Mr Runel, Narth and myself went over a tin mine. It was great fun, crawling through tunnels with a candle or scrambling over rocks as high as oneself and finally arriving at the spot where the tin, after being put through the stamps, and looking like mud, is shovelled into a huge tub. It is a good thing the tin stamps have to be erected in the quiet places of the Earth, for the monotonous "thump, thump, thump" would be very wearing if it were next door to a bed-ridden invalid.

The Captain of the mine paid me a great compliment: he said to Narth: "The girl you've married will never sit down calmly by the side of difficulties. She'll climb over them just like she climbed this morning. It's

Very few ladies would have scrambled like she has done today." Considering that I had been brought up with five brothers, a scramble more or less seemed nothing to boast about. Personally, I thought I'd been in clover, as Narth or Mr Runel were there to give me a hand over the more difficult bits.

Returning from the mine, we met John Trewithin, Mr Runel's hind, carting home a wagon load of faggots to Woodah, to be stacked and used as required on the open hearth fire in the kitchen. It seemed John had been, the previous evening, to a special service at the little Chapel nearby. Mr Runel asked him what kind of a meeting it had been. "Well," replied John, "The Reverend Tregowan spoke about Elijah an' do 'e know, Maister, 'e might ha' 'ad tea with un, 'e seemed to know un zo well."

Never had I spent a holiday in such a charmingly mysterious County, with a quaint, unmistakable "foreign" atmosphere. It is the land of the imaginative Celts, and the land made the Celt-s. Visitors staying at the fashionable Hotels and Boarding Houses along the Coast do not come into contact with the alluring charm which may be found on the Moors. Simply because many parts of the County are being commercialised by outsiders, who fleeces the visitors in a way a genuine Cornish person would scorn to do.

Paying a call at a farm in the Parish of Cardynham gave me another insight as to how Cornish housewives obtain such delectable food. We were admitted into what I once heard a Minister call "the inner Circle", meaning the kitchen. A long table was simply loaded with fruit tarts, huge loaves of bread, about two dozen hefty pasties and, just being fetched out of the clone oven was a large joint of beef, surrounded by baked potatoes. Another member of the family was dishing up kidney beans, into which she ladled several tablespoons of thick clotted cream, which was chopped in with a knife until it had all melted.



Elizabeth took me to see where she stored the butter. It was along the lane, in the bank, with bramble bushes growing thickly all around. A wooden lid was lifted, which brought into view a well of cool, sparkling water. Shelves of Delabole slate were arranged around three sides and Maidenhair and Harts tongue ferns were growing between the cracks, with water like dewdrops trickling down, made it a charming refrigerator. The butter, in round pats, was awaiting the Regrader to pick it up to take to Plymouth Market. "Now, m'Dear, what do 'e think o' that? Wouldn't they folk up along o' Lunnon like a butter shelf like that?"

"They certainly would and I, for one, will always keep its cool atmosphere in mind when the affairs of life incline to flurry me. I'll think of those illuminating dewdrops."

The time to return came all too quickly. When we reached Plymouth, it seemed very strange to see so many men in uniform and, at Bristol, where we had to change, it was even worse; we had difficulty in getting our train. We had not seen a newspaper since coming to Cornwall and knew nothing about disturbing events in South Africa, which had evidently moved rapidly, and troops were embarking as quickly as possible to the Boer War.

Thanks to Tristan Farnworth for locating this fascinating piece of social history. At that time William & Catherine Runnalls were living at Woodah. Mary got the spelling of the surname slightly wrong.

CYRIL THE PONY

Has taken pen to paper once more & decided to update the parish on his life to date

Older readers will know that some 10 years ago I was orphaned on the Moor ago and subsequently rescued by the estimable Keast family, hence my honoured name - Cyril. Now though for reasons that have escaped me I live in a multi-species commune at Castle Dewey (all very 'new age', it will never work). The humans are odd but generally harmless but I spend a lot of time with the pigs who are the only ones here on my intellectual level. There are two Kune-Kunes, they eat, graze a bit and then sleep for most of the time, the perfect life. Crucially the pigs and I have the same approach to sanitation i.e. do it discretely in a corner of the field then don't go near it again until you have to. Basic common sense you would say but not so - take the cattle, food in one end and straight out the other, willy-nilly. Before you know it they are gawping with a surprised look at the field saying "Urr, I'm not eating that" and demanding to go in the next field, where they do it all over again! The Man is no better, comes round us in the morning, "Morning Old Boy" he says ('He calls me 'Old Boy', are there no mirrors in his house?!'), then it's "Whoops, shouldn't have had that third cup of tea!" and he nips off behind a tree. Shocking example, the pigs are scandalised.

The sheep and the Llama are just as bad and really don't get me on the subject of sheep. Imagine you've got a field the size of Wales, in the middle of the field there is one single bramble and into this field you put one sheep. Sure as eggs next day sheep stuck in bramble. Release her, take her to the other end of 'Wales', next morning stuck in the brambles again. What can you do?

Apparently the Llama was hired to protect the lambs from the fox and to be fair if you were a fox and saw this six foot shaggy article stalking about with his big ears and buck teeth, well you'd think twice. The Man says he's a cross between Cardew Robinson and a rabbit. I've no idea what he's talking about.