fascinated, as inch by inch it was consumed."

YESTERDAY...

BY ROBERT HILLYER

Horse-Drawn, Gas-Lit, Neighborly— Then as now, "Everyone Had Come From Somewhere Else"

moved to the suburbs in order to maintain a little state on a maimed income. No one was a native; everybody had come from somewhere else. There were *expatriates from many seaboard cities, and,* strangely enough, there was a sizable contingent of first families of the South who had been dispossessed by the Civil War. I suppose one came at first, then summoned another, and so on until they formed a colony in this town that had a reputation for respectability and good air. There was a flourishing "Southern Society," which met in their different houses with the purpose, I suppose, of recalling more spacious days.

As the grandson of a Union general, I was warned to guard my tongue in these households, but I need not have worried. The Southerners were arrogant folk who condescended to their Northern neighbors, though they had no success whatever in trying to impress my Boston grandmother, my belligerent aunt, and my humorous mother. In nearly every front hall of these fiery exiles, among the coats of arms and family portraits, there was a framed motto LEST WE FORGET flanked by Confederate flags. The Civil War was no farther in the past than World War I is today; everybody's grandfather had been in it, and my own father, as a small boy, had been at Grant's headquarters in Holly Springs during the siege of Vicksburg. Apparently the officers took their families with them to the front.

Walnut Street's Señoritas

Walking down Walnut Street of nearly sixty years ago, I can see every house and its inhabitants just as they were. Some things puzzle me. How was it that stately old Mrs. Richardson had two funny little monkey-faced Spanish nieces named Miss Emelita and Miss Mercedita Savage? They were lively little creatures who chattered to each other in Spanish and addressed the rest of the world in a torrent of broken English. They were always dressed in black. They wore high combs at the back of their heads and veils that suggested, though they were not, mantillas. Spaniards though they were, they attended Grace Episcopal Church with their aunt.

Half the community went to Grace and half to Christ Church. It was a question of Low and High Church. If you were very High, you went two miles north to St. Mark's; if you were even Higher than that, you went in to New York to St. Mary the Virgin's. Everybody seemed to be an Episcopalian except for my father's sister Mary, who was married to a Scotchman, a Presbyterian of almost unbelievable austerity. My mother would say, "I'm going over to pay a call on poor Mamie Clarke. It's time she had a whiff of brimstone." For a short time, too, we had some Calvinistic neighbors for whose sake we pulled the curtains when we played cards on Sunday.

On the whole, religion was not the impediment to a happy childhood that so many of my contemporaries seemed to have found it. Dr. Mann, the rector of Grace Church, who later became Bishop of Massachusetts, was a frequent visitor to the Holy Land, and every Sunday morning had something to say about its antiquities. "If it weren't for Mrs. Hathaway's hats," *my mother said,* "I *couldn't sit through* the rector's geography of Palestine." When Dr. Mann left Grace Church to become a bishop, the congregation presented a pair of stained glass windows in his honor that were placed in the chancel. One of them had the Greek letter Alpha worked into the design, the other Omega. Since Dr. Mann's first name was Alexander, some of the parishioners complained that the committee had gone too far in introducing his initials into the window.

To return to old Mrs. Richardson. I owe her the memory of some high-sounding rhetoric that so impressed me at the age of nine that I can still recall it verbatim. Only one other phrase from those days rivals it. That was the inscription on an imposing burial vault near our lot in the cemetery. My sister and I used to speak it hollowly into the vault to hear the echo come back to us: "Author, Scholar, Poet, and Friend." (I wonder who he was?) Mrs. Richardson's phrase also had to do with death. In those days people did not write notes of condolence. They simply sent a calling card with "Sympathy and condolence" written on it— a most sensible custom, in my opinion. But when my grandmother died, Mrs. Richardson went further. On her card she inscribed, in her beautiful pointed writing, "She lies in a sublime peace, gracious in life, but triumphant in death." Heavens! The whole excitement of mortality seemed to sound in those glorious words that rumbled through my head along with the organ music at Grace Church, as, making my first appearance as a choirboy, I paced up the aisle at my grandmother's funeral.

The Southwells

Two houses down from Mrs. Richardson's lived the Southwell family, a widowed mother, two maiden daughters, Julia and Ella, and, across the street, a married daughter with her family. The Southwells were terrified by thunderstorms. Sometimes they moved chairs into closets and shut themselves in for the duration, sometimes they sat under the dining room table and held hands. They were even more terrified by the passage of time and refused to acknowledge it. Miss Ella was my mother's dear friend, and often came to Sunday night supper. She dressed like

"Disgusting!" shouted old Mr. Meeker as Miss Amy Brown bicycled down Walnut Street in her bloomers.