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MARKHAM

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STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING

The Biography of Beryl Markham

Mary S. Lovell



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To Clifford
who introduced me to Beryl.
Feet on the ground, heart in the sky!

‘How do you get to Neverland?’ Wendy asked.
‘Second star to the right, and straight on till morning.’

J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

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PREFACE

During the weeks that Mary Lovell has been in Nairobi, she has spent each day but one at my house on the Ngong Racecourse. We have become friends.

She tells me that people are interested in the things I have done in my life which were not written about in my own book *West with the Night*. I cannot think why this should be so, but I accept her assurances, and have made my collection of papers available to her.

Day after day, I have listened while she read these papers to me. I have remembered times long past and people long dead. And when she has asked me I have tried to tell her about them. But some memories I have kept for myself as everyone must. And because she understands this I have tried to help her, as she – in her own way – has helped me.

Beryl Markham
Nairobi, 3 April 1968

INTRODUCTION

In 1985 my ex-husband, Cliff Lovell, flew his De Havilland Gipsy Moth airplane during the making of the movie *Out of Africa*. When he returned home at Christmas after three months of filming in Kenya I asked him to tell me all about it. Instead of stories about Meryl Streep and Robert Redford (which is what I wanted to hear), he began telling me about an elderly woman who had been brought onto the scene to see the Moth. Her name was Beryl Markham, and she had owned and flown similar planes in the 1930s when they were the most popular modern airplanes available.

He told me that she now lived a retired life in Kenya, but that as a pioneer aviatrix she had been a bush pilot, had made many record-breaking flights, and was the first woman to fly the Atlantic ‘the hard way’ – east to west against the prevailing winds. She had also been a friend of Karen Blixen and Denys Finch Hatton, whose relationship was the basis for the *Out of Africa* movie, and she had been a leading racehorse trainer.

To my knowledge I had never heard the name Beryl Markham, but I recall that I was aware of a frisson of recognition – almost amounting to *déjà vu* – and to this day I cannot explain it. As Cliff finished telling me about her he said, ‘Someone ought to write a book about her,’ and there it was again, an inexplicable prickle of the hairs on the back of my neck. Whatever it was, this sixth-sense nudge, drove me next day – in that pre-Google era – to the local library to research Beryl and her history. Because of holiday hours it was three days before I could get a copy of Beryl’s remarkable book *West with the Night* sent from another branch, and by then I had already ransacked the reference library shelves and begun going through the indexes of all the books in the aviation classification.

For years I had collected antiquarian books on horses and fox-hunting, and among this collection was the hunting diary and scrapbook of a woman from Leicestershire. As I was flicking idly through this volume one evening, the name Charles B. Clutterbuck jumped off the page. This was the name of Beryl’s father. Again, I had never heard of him until two days earlier when reading Beryl’s memoir. Surely this was simply a coincidence? But hadn’t Beryl written about her father as a successful steeplechaser in England before he emigrated to Kenya? Sure enough, this was a newspaper clipping about Beryl’s father, romping home in a hunt race.

I was well into work on another book when all this occurred, so my agent was surprised when I told him I was dropping the project to write a biography about Beryl Markham. I received the response to which I was to become accustomed over the next months: ‘Who’s Beryl Markham?’ I was defensive, not ready to share Beryl, or my small trove of information about her, with anyone else. ‘I don’t exactly know yet. But I just know I have to write about her.’

After a few weeks of working in a sort of frenzy to learn more about Beryl’s career, I gathered enough material to draft what I thought was an outline for a book. I then wrote to Beryl care of her English publisher, Virago Press, asking if she would see me, and carried on with the research.

Three weeks later I received a letter from a Jack Couldrey in Nairobi, introducing himself as Beryl’s solicitor. He said that although he had read my letter to Beryl he was not sure that she had entirely understood it. ‘...To all intents and purposes she is now virtually senile,’ he wrote. He went on to say that if I came to Kenya I could certainly see her and would even be able to carry on a

conversation with her, but her mind was apt to wander.

This was a blow, but disappointing as Couldrey’s letter was, I decided that I needed to see Beryl and attempt to speak to her. The same day I went into my local travel agent and booked a return flight to Nairobi. Then I began writing to everyone whose name had cropped up in my research so far. Man

to Nairobi. Then I began writing to everyone whose name had cropped up in my research so far. Many old Kenya ex-pats had retired to England after Independence in December 1963, so I was not short of contacts. A series of interviews followed, and I was astonished not only at the sweep of Beryl's interests but also at the strength of feelings her name could generate. Some respected and admired her, others could not find a good word for her. Elspeth Huxley provided me with a list of names and letters of introduction for my forthcoming visit to Kenya.

In March 1986, about ten weeks after I first heard Beryl's name, I arrived in Nairobi. Expecting blasting heat and the parched landscape of African movies, I was enchanted by the lush vegetation and the colour of tropical flowers. The avenues were lined with flamboyant royal poinciana trees – the so-called flame trees of Thika – with gaudy scarlet blossoms as big as a man's head and jacarandas with their startling mauve-blue flowers. The air had a fresh sparkle, like Switzerland in the summer.

It being Sunday, I spent the first day on the telephone introducing myself to people I wanted to interview and arranging to rent a car. Next morning I collected the car, adorned with an impressive number of bumps and scratches, and eased myself into Nairobi's undisciplined streams of traffic.

My first call was at Jack Couldrey's law offices. He seemed concerned that I might have wasted my time and money travelling to Kenya, but was happy to answer my questions. He explained how he first became involved with Beryl; indeed, his family had known her all his life. 'Beryl can be difficult at times,' he warned. 'And she doesn't particularly like women. She has few friends now, and is sad, and rather lonely. She has cut herself off. She swears terribly at her two servants. I don't know why they stay with her. She has good times and bad...last night when I called in on her she was brighter than I've seen her for a long time...If you want anything photocopied please bring it here and we'll copy it for you. I think a lot of things [documents and photos] have been taken away over the years, but you wouldn't do that, would you? No, of course not...'

I thanked him and left, stopping off at a flower stall to buy a huge bunch of flowers for what seemed a very small sum; several people had already suggested I'd do better to take a bottle of vodka.

I found the cottage at the racecourse without any difficulty. The door was wide open, and as I got out of my car I could hear voices speaking in Swahili. I knocked on the door and poked my head into the sitting room. 'Oh hello, *do* come in,' said a clipped English voice. As I stepped inside she saw the flowers preceding me. 'How *lovely*, thank you so much.' She was instantly recognizable to me from the photographs I had seen, older, of course, than the stunning young woman whose face had once graced magazine and newspaper articles. On that first day there was little of the celebrated glamour in evidence, but her bone structure identified her. She wore pale blue denim jeans and a loose white shirt; her hair was pure white, combed close to her head, and had not seen a hairdresser in a long time. It was evident that I had stumbled into the middle of a domestic crisis. She was sitting deep in an armchair, her left hand clutching the upper part of her right arm, and her two servants – Odero, an ageing man, and Adiambo, a much younger woman – were hovering and looking anxious.

I asked the obvious question. 'Have I called at an inconvenient time?' Beryl removed her hand and showed me a nasty wound on her arm – a large triangular flap of skin had been torn away and folded back almost surgically, exposing what looked like muscles and nerves. It looked clean, though and there was almost no bleeding. She admitted 'it hurt rather' but she was very stoic, merely expressing annoyance. I asked if there were any dressings as I could see some flies in the room, and Adiambo went away, returning almost immediately with a bottle of cream shampoo, apparently telling Beryl it was all she could find. Beryl translated and looked at me questioningly.

As I turned off the murram track to Beryl's cottage I had noticed a sign pointing to the Jockey Club offices, so, telling Beryl to keep her hand over the wound, I drove off to find them. There I was given the first-aid kit and returned to the cottage to dress the injury. After it was all tidied up, she said 'That's better. What time is it? Let's have a drink, shall we?' I agreed.

There was only vodka and orange – what my mother would have called 'a tart's drink' I expect

There was only vodka and orange – what my mother would have called a tartis drink, I expect. I watched with disquiet as Adiambo half filled two tumblers with what looked like neat alcohol and topped them off with orange squash and ice. But when I took a cautious sip I realised that the vodka had been well watered down. Beryl did not seem to notice; she took tiny sips from time to time while we chatted, and her glass was still half full when I left at six o'clock.

I told her I was there to write a book about her, but she knew this already from Jack Couldrey. I pressed on, 'Do you mind?' 'No-oo, sweetie, of course not. When can I see it?' After a few minutes she suggested I should open a large black tin trunk sitting under one of the windows. 'Everything is in there,' she said with an airy wave of her hand. 'Bring me some of it and I'll show you.' I had already ascertained she could not walk unaided, had not done so in fact since the previous October when she suffered a thrombosis. 'I probably *could* walk if I only had the right people around me,' she told me briskly while shooting a meaningful glare at Adiambo.

I took a handful of papers from the trunk. The first things to come out were letters and cables that Beryl had received at the time of her epic flight across the Atlantic. I read some to her and she laughed. 'Oh, I say – how funny.' There was no evidence that afternoon of the senility I had been warned to expect, nor of her mind wandering. I had clearly been lucky enough to strike a good day.

'May I come back tomorrow, Beryl?'

'Oh please do. I should love that...'

I was in Kenya for almost six weeks, and during that time I saw Beryl every day but one. At ten a.m. I would turn up at her cottage and we would spend the hours in her modestly furnished sitting room with its walls lined with framed photographs of past glories: her airplanes, her triumphant arrival in New York in 1936 and a civic greeting by the mayor, her horses, and – above her chair – one portrait. It was of the aviator Tom Campbell Black. She was fascinated to hear that before I had flown to Nairobi I had interviewed Florence Desmond (Tom's wife until his sudden death in a freak accident in 1936). After the first day I took snack lunches prepared for me by the hotel which fed us both; once or twice Adiambo cooked us a chicken. 'That girl!' Beryl snorted. 'It takes her two hours to walk to the *duka* [shop] and back; it's only a mile...'

During the first week I dug through the contents of Beryl's trunk, handing the items to her one by one, sometimes reading them out, or, in the case of her aviation maps, talking about them. She never seemed to tire of this, and we spent hours discussing the flights recorded in her pilot's log book. She wanted to hear about everything I'd discovered about her. 'How did you find out about that?' At first she gave little away, and when I asked a direct question she'd hedge. 'So and so said this...' I'd tell her. 'Is it true?' She would turn her china-blue eyes on me and ask, 'What do you think?'

'I think it's true, Beryl.'

'Well then...'

Our conversations were not only about the biography. Within a few days I realised that Beryl was unhappy about her appearance, but as she was confined to her home, indeed, mainly to her chair, she could not do a lot about it. I tentatively suggested that I could shampoo and set her hair for her. After all, if I could wash and dry my son's hair I could manage hers. I arranged to borrow a hairdryer from my hotel over the weekend and planned a hairdressing session. Meanwhile, we talked about horses and vintage airplanes – interests we shared. I told her about my own favourite horse, Flashman, and about hunting in the New Forest. She suddenly remembered foxhunting as a young woman in England and told me about it. It was the first information she had volunteered.

Meanwhile, my interviews with other people were being conducted over breakfasts and dinners. Occasionally I had to leave Beryl to go to a lunchtime meeting, and I was the grateful recipient of regular hospitality from pretty well everyone with whom I came into contact. Some people simply phoned the hotel, told me they had heard I was researching Beryl and could help; would I come and dine with them? I noted everything down and was initially foxed by the huge mountain of gossip

and with them: I noted everything down and was initially toxed by the huge mountain of gossip, rumour and innuendo about Beryl.

‘She drinks like a fish, you know.’ ‘She had an affair with the Prince of Wales.’ ‘Prince Henry fathered her son.’ ‘She was paid an astronomical amount by the Palace and spent the lot.’ ‘Her family won’t have anything to do with her.’ ‘She couldn’t have written that book, she’s totally illiterate.’ The names of Beryl’s supposed lovers were supplied with breathtaking candour. It took me some days to recognise that gossip is the main social amusement in Kenya. When someone gave me a piece of information which I knew from my previous research could not possibly be true, they were not being malicious or mischievous: they were simply repeating part of the legend that had built up about Beryl since the early years of the twentieth century.

Within days of my first visit I noticed that Beryl had started to wear lipstick. My ten a.m. arrival found her carefully dressed and waiting for me, sitting facing the door instead of the fireplace. I told her I’d like to learn some Swahili – I hated it when I knew people were talking about me and I couldn’t understand what was being said. After that, she taught me some new words each day and was amused when she heard me use them to communicate with Adiambo and Odero. Adiambo usually smirked openly, but Odero smiled and duly went off to fetch a shawl for Beryl, let the dog out, or produce a glass of water or two cups of tea. *Jambo; Hodi; Kwaheri; Maji; Hapana...ndio...* Whenever she spoke to someone I would pick out a word or two and later ask the meaning. ‘What does *kidogo* mean, Beryl?’ ‘Small.’

The hairdressing session was not a success. I thought her surprisingly thick hair, newly washed and dried, looked much better. Beryl could not wait to see it, but I realised where I had gone wrong the minute she looked in the mirror and said in a doubtful voice, ‘But it’s still white.’ I persuaded a hairdresser at the salon in my hotel to visit Beryl at home, apply a silvery-blond tint, and cut and style her hair properly. Beryl enjoyed that, so the wash and blow-dry sessions became a regular feature during which we chatted away. One morning soon afterwards I noticed that her finger and toenails were painted bright pink – presumably by Adiambo.

When I had been there a few weeks, I left the cottage at lunchtime one day to drive into the Ngong Hills to find and photograph the grave of Denys Finch Hatton and visit Karen Blixen’s house (which had been turned into a museum). On my return I took Beryl a book containing images from the movie *Out of Africa* which I thought she would like. She was rather scathing. ‘Who are these people?’

‘That’s supposed to be Tania [Karen Blixen was known to her friends as Tania] and Blix getting married,’ I explained.

‘*Nothing* like them!’ she declared.

‘Well, these people are just actors...you went to the film set, remember?’

‘What’s he supposed to be doing here?’

‘That’s Denys washing Tania’s hair.’

‘What?’ A tiny shriek of amusement. ‘Oh no, that’s *quite* wrong. He would never have washed her hair...’

That evening I dined at the Couldreys’, who were shocked to hear that I had driven alone round the Ngong Hills, which were supposed to be extremely wild and dangerous.

As the days wore on and I spent so much time with her, there *were* times when Beryl’s mind wandered. I came to know the signs. She would repeat herself or trail off in the middle of a sentence. Sometimes this lasted for minutes, sometimes much longer, and it was impossible to make any sense of what she said. On these occasions I would sit quietly, reading or making notes, until she’d demanded strongly, ‘Why aren’t you saying anything?’ She seemed unaware of her departures, but she told me she had a fear of ‘growing old and losing my mind...and people laughing at me behind my back...’ Sometimes if she could not find the right word she became upset. I do not think she had this problem with Swahili – it was almost as if she was more at home in it than in English

with Swahili. It was almost as if she was more at home in it than in English.

One day when I arrived at the cottage she told me, 'I walked to the door and back this morning.' was taken aback. 'Really, Beryl? That's wonderful news.' Her friend Paddy Migdoll called soon afterwards en route to see her horses in training for a race on the following Sunday. She often interrupted her busy routine to sit with Beryl. I told Paddy what Beryl had said, and she was equally surprised. She called Adiambo out onto the patio and questioned her out of Beryl's hearing. Adiambo denied that the *memsahib* had walked. 'I'm afraid it's just her imagination,' Paddy said to me as I walked her to her car. It wasn't. After lunch Beryl suddenly announced that she was going for a walk and summoned Odero, who held her hands. I stood ready to catch her, but it was not necessary. She pulled herself to her feet and walked slowly with great concentration to the door – maybe ten steps. 'Outside now,' she said. At her request I supported her at the waist as she stepped down onto the patio and then stood away again. Leaning on Odero's hands, she walked twice round the patio and back to the front door. I was surprised by her height, as I had only ever seen her sitting down.

When she was back in her chair with a vodka and orange at her elbow, she was elated. 'I told you I could walk. Call the girl and have your drink topped up. Come on – let's have some fun, shall we?' She then talked happily of what she was going to do now that she was walking again, convinced she would be able to drive her car. 'The first thing I am going to do is drive to the bank and get some money out. I've quite a lot you know, from my book, only I can't get out to the bank without a car.' 'Your book has been a tremendous success, hasn't it?' 'Yes, I *know*,' she said. 'It's astonishing. I'd forgotten all about it.'

'Why did you never write anything else, Beryl?' I asked.

'I did – lots of little things for those other people,' she said airily. The 'other people' turned out to be magazines – she wrote some short stories, in the same autobiographical style as *West with the Night*, and these were published by national magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Collier's*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* in the United States.

It was not an easy thing for me to say but I had to say it. 'You know that some people tell me you did not write the book alone.' She was contemptuously dismissive of this, telling me that of course she wrote it herself. So what had Raoul Schumacher – her second husband and, her detractors suggest, the author of the book – done, I wondered, to deserve the generous dedication and thanks? 'He helped me at the end, he was very good at that sort of thing, very clever, but I wrote the book myself while he was away...he wasn't even there.'

Of course I wanted to believe this. Had the doubt not been placed in my mind by people I had interviewed, it would never have occurred to me to question the fact. Talking to her, being with her each day, she embodied all my expectations as the book's author. I found her highly intelligent and cultured. She had at times an air of detachment which could have been taken for vagueness, but I gained the impression of an immensely strong and complex personality. There are a few stories about her life – more rumours – which I have not been able to verify one way or another to my satisfaction, but my subsequent research resolved any doubts about Beryl's authorship of *West with the Night*.

Sometimes I read to her from one or another of the books on her bookshelves. There were travel books and horse books, some juvenile classics – *Peter Pan* was a lifelong favourite, as was *The Wind in the Willows*. She discussed her books as old friends, although she said she had not been able to read for some time because a cataract in one eye had made reading difficult. Once I suggested that since she could walk a little, I would ask Jack Couldrey to organise a car and driver if she wished to go out somewhere – to the Muthaiga Club perhaps? 'No,' she said firmly. 'I prefer to drive myself about. I am a good driver, you know.'

She was always polite to me. When she did not wish to answer a question she was transparently evasive. 'I'm afraid I can't remember,' she would say casually. 'It's all so long ago now.' I almost expected a wawn for effect. But when she had genuinely forgotten something she was quite different

expected a yawn for check. But when she had genuinely forgotten something she was quite unflinching, almost distressed. 'I really wanted to tell you but now I can't remember – I was thinking about it in the night and wanted to tell you...I'm so sorry.' She was always interested in my research, the people I had talked to and what we had talked about, but I filtered much of the content of my interviews for obvious reasons unless I wanted her to comment on something. She was amused by the extracts I had copied from very early editions of the Kenyan newspaper, the *East African Standard*. I looked these up in Nairobi's McMillan Library and at the Kenya National Archives, where the curators of both collections were accommodating enough to allow me to go in and work before the official opening time so that I would not be late going to the cottage. Beryl said she was happy for me to take away a few documents or photographs each night to photocopy and return the next morning.

On the only day I failed to see Beryl at all, I left Nairobi before seven a.m. to drive 'up country'. Driving up the Kikuyu escarpment, tracking the stupendous Rift Valley and shining lakes of Naivasha and Elmenteita (stopping a number of times to have tyres repaired; it was a *dreadful* car!), I was on my way to visit Pamela Scott at her house, Deloraine, near Beryl's childhood home at Njoro. This was one of the interviews suggested by my friend and mentor Elspeth Huxley. Pamela drove me to the old Clutterbuck farm, which had become a wool-spinners' cooperative. One of the men who worked there, an old African who had lost a leg in Clutterbuck's sawmill as a child, remembered Beryl well. He stressed her devotion for her father, and her amazing rapport with horses. I was shown inside the small one-bedroom 'house' with a shingled roof that Clutterbuck built for Beryl when she refused to live in the same house with her governess. It was now used as a store by the cooperative; it smelled pleasantly of new rugs and was full of dust motes shining in the slanting sunbeams. We walked on the old gallops and Pamela told me she had often ridden on them herself. 'Beryl always kept them beautifully level and perfectly maintained...' she said. I drank it all in: the balmy, cedar-scented air, the views across to a distant mountain range in one direction and down the length of the Rift Valley in the other. Silence, except for birdsong. 'Of course in Beryl's day this was *all* forest...' Pamela was saying. Now there were only clumps of trees in the tamed landscape which had long been divided into *shambas* (small holdings). Still breathtaking.

Beryl was waiting impatiently next morning and wanted to hear about everything I had seen. 'My little house? Oh yes, I remember that so well. It had a proper roof. I loved it though it was tiny...it was lovely up there...we used to ride in the hills...I had the gallops when I was training. No, they weren't my father's; they were mine. I used to land my aeroplane there sometimes...'

One day I asked her if she would write a short introduction for the book. She agreed at once; she would dictate and I would type it. She still had her portable typewriter which lay in its case among the dusty piles of *Horse and Hound* on her dining table. I found some sheets of airmail paper and sat waiting while she gave it some thought. She dictated a few paragraphs.

'What do you think? Is it any good?'

'Mmm, I'm not sure...'

'I don't like it much either.'

This went on for two days, on and off. There were many, many drafts and I began to doubt there would ever be one that she was happy with, but eventually there were three short paragraphs which she approved, and she signed it at my request.

On the following day some unexpected visitors arrived – a Danish couple who had never met Beryl were brought by a man who had known Beryl many years earlier. Beryl moved into another gear in the company of an admiring male who flirted with her; she was gracious and funny, signing their copies of *West with the Night* with aplomb. I had a sudden thought and asked her if she would sign another copy of her introduction. 'What, again?' she asked. I told her I had found a typing error in the first and wanted it to be perfect for the book. She agreed, so I typed it again and read it out to her and the visitors who agreed with her that it was good. Actually there was no typing error: I merely

the visitors, who agreed with her that it was good. Actually, there was no typing error, I merely wanted witnesses to the fact that the work was Beryl's own.

Not every day was a good day. Sometimes she was tired and querulous with Adiambo and Odero. Her physical frailty irritated her, and she took this out on Adiambo especially. Her biggest problem, though, was loneliness and boredom. She had no television or radio, and she was not able to read. She could not even play her records, for the record player had been stolen in a burglary. I flicked through her collection of disks: some classical, some popular dance music, a large number of Burl Ives LPs and a sound recording of the Derby being won by her famous racehorse, Niagara. She had fairly regular callers. Most days while I was there someone or other popped in to chat, and she always welcomed them. But I could see that these visits took up only a short time in what were otherwise long days of inactivity for her. The worst of it must have been the lack of mental stimulation, and that, I am sure, was why she looked forward to my visits. I used to buy the newspapers on my way in, the *Standard* and the *Nation*, and read to her from them.

When my original three weeks ran out, I extended my stay, reluctant to leave this extraordinary world I'd found, and Beryl. I took advantage of her permission to have all her photographs copied, ensuring that she repeated the offer to me while Jack Couldrey was visiting. By this time, my collection of photocopies, notes, newspaper cuttings and photographs weighed nearly twenty kilos. I did not dare check them into the hold in case they went astray, so I had to pay an excess charge to allow them to travel with me in the cabin.

On the final day of my time with Beryl – my flight was due to depart at nine p.m. – I was joined at Beryl's cottage by another overseas visitor. It was George Gutekunst, the American who had read Beryl's book *West with the Night*, which was written in 1941, and had been so captivated by it that he had organised for its republication. He had flown in two days earlier to secure film rights to the book and we had dined together the previous evening. At Beryl's request I went to the neighbouring cottage and invited 'VJ,' the racecourse vet, to join us in drinking the champagne I had brought. I had noticed that Beryl was never quite as bright when there were too many people around – she seemed to lack the concentration to deal with lots of people all talking to her. However, it was a pleasant occasion and Beryl sparkled. The conversation inevitably turned to the Derby, which was to be run that afternoon, and Beryl's racing triumphs, and suddenly she announced, 'I'd like to go to the Derby.' We were silent for a moment, taken by surprise, but it was soon agreed that I would drive Beryl and George in my car. I telephoned the Jockey Club and special provisions were made for Beryl to be carried upstairs there, to the Owners, Breeders and Trainers Stand above the clubhouse, to watch the big race. I went back to the hotel to change and finish packing to be ready to leave for the airport about six o'clock.

When I returned to the cottage Beryl was waiting for me, standing on the terrace, leaning against the doorpost. Here at last was the famous, indefinable glamour everyone had told me about. She was wearing a modern, pale blue denim trouser suit and a scarf she had borrowed from me (I still wear it with affection); her hair – now ash blonde and expertly styled – had been patted into shape; her fingers and toenails were newly painted. Her china-blue eyes sparkled with triumph, and she acknowledged my compliment on her appearance, knowing full well that she looked sensational.

That is the way I like to recall her. At the races she was constantly surrounded by people coming over to say hello. She enjoyed the Derby, sitting next to an old friend (Elizabeth Erskine), but she tired quickly, and afterwards a young man was sent for to carry her to my car (he often carried a disabled relative so was quite experienced). Unfortunately, he slipped halfway down the flight of stairs and the two of them tumbled to the bottom. Beryl was not injured, so George and I took her home, but she was very shocked. I rang her doctor but there was no answer, so I told Adiambo to give her some hot sweet tea and rushed back to the racecourse to find the course doctor (this was before the advent of mobile phones). I immediately found Charles Markham, who grasped the situation without the need for long explanations and he arranged everything. I did not see Beryl after that because I was already running

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