

# **CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?**

by

**Joyce Holliday**

**A MUSICAL SHOW BASED ON MEMORIES OF HEALTHCARE  
TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

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## **CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?**

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## **CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?**

### SONG - CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?

An apple a day keeps the doctor away  
You've heard the old saying no doubt  
And I'm sure it is true, but between me and you,  
There ain't many apples about.  
Though they grow on a tree  
Money doesn't, you see  
And you've got to have money to buy.  
It's the same with your health  
It depends on your wealth,  
So if you are poor, you must cry -

Can we afford the Doctor,  
The dentist, the midwife, the nurse?  
It doesn't seem fair  
That medical care  
Should depend on the state of your purse.  
I know it's a hard pill to swallow  
But what can we take for a cure,  
And if only the rich can afford to be sick,  
How cheap are the lives of the poor?

- MILKMAN (YODELLING) Ew-oo! Ew-oo! Milko! Milko! Fresh from the cow. Bring out your basins. Get it while it's warm.
- ANNIE When I was a child, people used to come round the streets, selling things. The milkman used to come round two or three times a day cos in hot weather the milk used to go off very quickly.
- ICE CREAM SELLER Hokey-pokey, penny a lump! Ha'penny ice-cream! Hokey-pokey penny! Hokey-pokey!
- SELLER Cresses! Young water-cresses! Fresh picked water-cresses! Cresses!
- ANNIE And in the open market you could buy anything.
- SELLER Hot potatoes, hot potatoes! Ha'penny each. Keep your hands warm while you eat 'em. Hot potatoes!
- SELLER Shrimps and winkles! Cockles and whelks! Ready to eat. Shrimps and winkles!

- SELLER Flypapers, flypapers! Guaranteed arsenic compound. Hang a flypaper in your house and be free from flies. Bluebottles and flies! Catch 'em alive! Flypapers!
- DENTIST Are you in pain? Are you suffering agony? Then, ladies and gentlemen, relief is at hand! I hold the world record for extracting teeth at amazing speed!
- ANNIE Any body could set up as a dentist in those days. You didn't have to have qualifications. And there wasn't much to dentistry then except pulling teeth out. People didn't bother with fillings and things. You waited till a tooth hurt so much you couldn't stand it any more and then you pulled it out.
- DENTIST What is more, you will be astounded at my prices! I don't have to pay rent for an expensive surgery. All my equipment is behind this screen. Can you afford to miss this incredible offer?
- ANNIE If we had any teeth come loose, we'd tie a bit of cotton round the tooth and then tie the other end to a door handle. Then you'd slam the door. But sometimes it wouldn't work and you had to pay to have it done. It could be very expensive at an ordinary dentist.
- DENTIST I can guarantee you won't know that tooth has gone. You will not feel a thing. Who's going to be first? You sir? Then step this way. You'll bless this day.
- ANNIE People didn't expect so much. You put up with what the Lord sent you. When you got old, your teeth fell out. You didn't expect false teeth. My granny never had false teeth. All her teeth came out except two – these two here. But she could eat nearly everything cos her gums hardened. She got by.
- SELLER Glasses! Watches! Mechanical bits and pieces! What you fancy, lady? A watch for your old man or a pair of glasses for your good self? Second-hand spectacles, all as good as new. Try a pair on, madam.
- A WOMAN TRIES ON A PAIR AND SQUINTS THROUGH THEM.
- ANNIE People didn't have their eyes tested in those days. They didn't worry about that. If they thought they couldn't see, they'd just find a pair of glasses off a stall and hope for the best.
- SELLER Genuine tortoiseshell those frames. Came from a very wealthy old lady.

THE WOMAN RETURNS THE GLASSES.

SELLER

Suit yourself.

ANNIE

Of course a lot of people couldn't read, so I suppose there was less call for glasses. My gran never learned to read and she never wore glasses.

CLOTHES  
SELLER

Second-hand bargains! Clothes as new! Just look at this hat, lady. Hardly been worn. Belonged to one of them posh ladies up Kensington, them what don't like to be seen twice in the same hat.

A WOMAN TRIES IT ON.

SELLER

Oh, you look a real picture. Don't she look a picture?

THE FIRST WOMAN TAKES IT OFF. SHE SCRATCHES HER HEAD. A SECOND WOMAN TRIES IT ON.

SELLER

Well, I never did! I thought it couldn't suit nobody better than what it suited you, but, blow me, it suits the other lady just as well. Neither of you could go wrong with a hat like that. Or maybe, with a hat like that, you could go wrong!

THE TWO WOMEN PUT THE HAT DOWN, GIGGLING. THEY ARE BOTH SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS VIGOROUSLY.

SELLER

You don't recognise a bargain when you see one.

QUACK DOCTOR

Ladies and gentlemen! Are you suffering? Have any of you ever experienced lassitude, faintness, brain fag, nervous breakdown? You have! And do you have indigestion, loss of appetite, sleeplessness? You do! And do you break out in pimples, boils, abscesses, ulcers, sores of any kind, eczema, scrofula? Do you persistently suffer from backache, rheumatism, sciatica, gout? Are you, madam, experiencing maternity weakness, palpitations or anaemia? Are you, sir, experiencing mental exhaustion, premature decay, know what I mean.....?

You are, aren't you? You are suffering? Well, put an end to your suffering now! Buy a bottle of my medicine – Doctor Harvey's Patent Blood Mixture! You see, blood is the answer to everything. Get your blood right and you get your whole body right!

WOMEN

(PLANTED IN CROWD & COMING FORWARD) Oh, it's true, it's true what he's telling you. Ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you my story. I was under medical treatment for years, with no result except getting worse. I couldn't sleep, night or day. I dreaded to be

left alone. I started at the least sound No food agreed with me. Whatever I ate caused wind and palpitations. I had violent headaches. The splitting pain in my head was agonising. I cannot describe my suffering. Then, as a last resort, I tried Doctor Harvey's Patent Blood Mixture. After only one bottle, I began to feel brighter, I slept through the night, I grew stronger and better daily. I could hardly believe it was real. I want to tell everybody the wonderful properties of this medicine!

QUACK DOCTOR My dear lady! What a touching tale! And what more can I add, except this is an incredible bargain at only one shilling per bottle! Get your supplies now while stocks last!

SONG - MY NAME IS DOCTOR QUACK.

I am a learned surgeon, and my name is Doctor Quack,  
My draughts and pills to cure your ills I carry on my back.  
My med'cines are the nastiest that ever cured a pain  
If once you've tasted them I know you'd ne'er be ill again.

Then oh, my! Anybody ill, anybody ill, anybody ill,  
Oh my hi! I'm Doctor Quack, quack, quack-ka-quack,  
I'll cure you of any attack.  
I've syrup of squills and I've camomile pills'  
And my name is Doctor Quack.

I've ointment for a mother-in-law, she swallows half a pound  
She'll never trouble you again for she will sleep so sound.  
Who'll have a gross of leeches? Shall I put them on your back?  
You won't – then he must go elsewhere to trade,  
Must Doctor Quack.

Then, oh my! Any body ill, anybody ill, anybody ill,  
Oh my hi! I'm Doctor quack, quack, quack-a-ka-quack,  
I'll cure you of any attack.  
I've syrup of squills and I've camomile pills,  
And my name is Doctor Quack.

A FAMILY GROUP  
MOTHER IS PREGNANT AND HOLDING A BABY.  
FATHER JOINS LATER.  
ANNIE INTRODUCES.

ANNIE Nineteen hundred and eleven. My mother and that's my older brother, Edward. That's my father. I was just a twinkle in his eye then.

FATHER I worked in the docks, when I could get work.

- MOTHER                    We was very poor.
- ANNIE                      Nineteen hundred and twelve. The year I was born. I was a very sickly baby. I wasn't expected to live. I think I only lived because my mother was determined I shouldn't die – very determined young woman, my mother.
- FATHER                    Lloyd George had just brought in his National Insurance – the panel system. That meant a lot of workers started to get sickness benefit.
- MOTHER                    But their wives didn't, nor their children.
- FATHER                    No, just the important ones – the workers. Ninepence for fourpence. That's what they said.
- MOTHER                    Still, I'm glad one of us'll be able to afford the doctor.
- ANNIE                      Nineteen hundred and fourteen. When the war came my dad decided to join up.
- FATHER                    King and Country and all that. You'll get regular money if I'm in the army.
- MOTHER                    Fourteen and sevenpence a week – wasn't much. We couldn't afford to stay on in the place we had in Woolwich. We had to move out. My old mum found us a room in Deptford, just one room. Still, there was only me and the two little ones.
- ANNIE                      Till Dad came home on leave.

FATHER HANDS MOTHER ANOTHER BABY.

SONG - HAVE YOU PAID THE RENT?

Everybody seems to be in trouble nowadays  
Trouble comes to all of us in many, many ways.  
Everywhere you go, you'll hear a tale of woe,  
The butcher wants to meet you when the baker wants his dough.  
But there's one thing no-one ever wants to pay  
This is why this is the latest saying of the day:

Have you paid the rent? Have you paid the rent?  
Naught, naughty, naughty, have you paid the rent?  
Here's a wrinkle when the landlord is about,  
Send the kiddies down to say that mother says she's out.  
Have you paid the rent? Have you paid the rent?

Never, never, tell a lie.  
If you haven't paid the rent,  
One day you'll repent,  
Or you won't go to heaven when you die.

1916: ANNIE IS FOUR, EDWARD IS FIVE TO SIX. MUM HAS A BABY PERMANENTLY IN HER ARMS. THEY ARE ALL DIRTY AND RAGGED. MOTHER IS ABOUT THIRTY ONE.

MOTHER In those days there was no refrigerators and the butcher had to get rid of his stock at the weekend. So, if you waited till ten o'clock on a Saturday night, they'd auctioneer the meat off.

BUTCHER Who'll give me four bob for this lovely piece of sirloin?

MOTHER That's never sirloin.

BUTCHER Lovely piece of meat. Three bob. Worth every ha'penny of three bob. Two and sixpence then. Who'll give me two and sixpence?

MOTHER It's all bone.

BUTCHER Nothing wrong with bone. Two bob.

MOTHER One and six.

BUTCHER For you love... one and nine. I wouldn't sell it anybody else at that price.

THE BUTCHER WRAPS MEAT, HANDS IT OVER AND GOES.

MOTHER So that way you got a bit of cheap meat that would last you through the week, or you hoped it would. Look, Edward, Annie, what a nice bit of meat I got.

EDWARD Sunday – roast!

ANNIE Mum, I got a sore eye.

MOTHER Oh dear, so you have. Don't rub it. You'll make it worse.

EDWARD Monday – bubble and squeak.

ANNIE Mum, my eye's ever so sore.

MOTHER Come here, let's have a look. Yes, you've got a sty or something. Let's give it a rub with my wedding ring, that'll make it better.



Eddie, run along to the greengrocers – see if he's got any throw-outs. Ask him for pen'orth of potherbs.

EDWARD

Tuesday – stew.

ANNIE

Mum, my eye still hurts.

MOTHER

No better is it. Let's give it another rub with my wedding ring.

EDWARD

Wednesday – shepherd's pie. We ate a lot of potatoes cos they filled you up.

ANNIE

Mum, my eye..

MOTHER

Oh, gawd. It is getting bad. Let's try some tea leaves on it. That's good for sore eyes. Here, hold that against it.

EDWARD

Thursday – she'd get a pot of bones going, put some pearl barley in, called it a white stew. Didn't like that much. Mostly we ate bread, bread and dripping.

MOTHER

Just run up to the shop with this cup and ask him to put an ha'porth of jam in it.

EDWARD

Sometimes we had bread and jam, but then we didn't have no fat on the bread, no butter or anything.

ANNIE

Mum, my eye's awful.

MOTHER

Tea leaves done no good? Let's try 'em again. I suppose I ought to take you to the doctor really.

MOTHER GETS OUT HER PURSE AND COUNTS THE ODD  
COPPERS LEFT IN IT.  
CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR TUNE.

EDWARD

Friday – you was lucky if you got a dinner at all.

MOTHER

Just run round to the bakers and get two pen'orth of stale bread. And while you're out get three farthings of skimmed milk.

ALL HER MONEY IS GONE.

EDWARD

We never had fresh bread cos stale bread was cheaper. Sometimes it was so hard we couldn't eat it. Then she used to cut it up and soak it in this skimmed milk. No sugar on it. We all sat round. We were so hungry. She used to deal us out a spoon all round.

MOTHER FEEDS THEM FROM THE BOWL.

ANNIE Mum, my eye's all stuck up.

MOTHER I don't know what to do, love. I can't afford to take you to the doctor, not at half-a-crown a time. Not unless I break into Gran's bit of money. But I'd never pay it back. No, I can't do that.

ANNIE It hurts.

MOTHER I know. I'll take you to that McMillan clinic that's opened.

JERUSALEM - MUSIC ONLY.

THE McMILLAN CLINIC.

MARGARET McMILLAN, AN UPRIGHT SCOTS LADY.

MARGARET My sister Rachel and I opened our clinic for poor children in Deptford in 1910. Deptford is a very poor and very crowded district in South East London. Each year we deal with thousands of cases. We put teeth in order, heal up ears and throats, and prescribe glasses. Thousands of cases are seen yearly and are treated. But they come back – again and again. And why do they come back? Because the clinic cannot make any kind of war with the causes that breed these diseases. We have not wiped out any disease at all. We cannot empty our own waiting room. We cure them again and again. We cannot prevent their return.

MOTHER AND ANNIE ENTER TO WAIT THEIR TURN

MARGARET In the waiting room – ranged on seats by the walls, scores of sufferers whose illnesses need not exist at all. Blepharitis, conjunctivitis, scabies, impetigo, skin diseases of many kinds... Chest troubles are the most common among the ill-housed – colds, coughs, bronchitis, suspected tuberculosis. A great many children are more or less deformed before they are twelve years old So many young backs crooked, so many young insteps fallen. How needless is this suffering. It need not exist at all.

MARGARET EXAMINES ANNIE.

MARGARET How old is Anne?

MOTHER She's four now.

MARGARET Have you any other children?

- MOTHER                    My first baby was William – he died of convulsions at two months. Then I had a miscarriage. Then I had Edward – he's six now. Then Annie here. Then another miscarriage. Then I've just had Nellie here.
- MARGARET                Are you planning for any more?
- MOTHER                    My husband's in France.
- MARGARET                Good. Now, Annie has an eye infection. Not too serious, but it must be treated properly, or it will be. You must bathe her eye in a solution of bicarbonate of soda and I'll give you some ointment to put on it. It is contagious, so she should sleep on her own.
- MOTHER                    We only got the one bed. I sleep at the top with the baby and Annie and Edward sleep at the bottom.
- MARGARET                Perhaps she could sleep on a sofa in another room?
- MOTHER                    We only got the one room and there isn't space for a sofa.
- MARGARET                Well ... Proper cleansing is very important. Have you reasonable washing facilities?
- MOTHER                    The standpipe's in the yard so I bring the water up in a bucket. We have got a washing stand.
- MARGARET                Each room in the house is let to a different family?
- MOTHER NODS.
- MARGARET                And where do you play, Annie?
- MOTHER                    Oh, I don't let her out on the street. I couldn't keep a proper eye on her. And she's a sickly child, gets tired quickly. You just play on the bed, don't you, love?
- MARGARET                Poor appetite?
- MOTHER                    She don't eat a lot.
- MARGARET                Stand up straight, Annie. Hold your skirt up. Look at her legs, Mrs Taylor. That's rickets. Not too bad, but it's not going to get better. And she's anaemic. What Annie needs is plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and plenty of good food.
- MOTHER                    I do my best on what the Army sends me.

MARGARET            Would you like to come to my nursery school, Annie, and have a garden to play in?

ANNIE                 Billy Long comes to your school. Billy Long lives in the cellar in our house.

MARGARET            Yes, and poor Billy has a very bad chest from the damp of that cellar. And is he a friend of yours. Annie?

ANNIE NODS.

MOTHER             How much would it cost?

MARGARET            Would a shilling a week be too much?

MOTHER BITES HER LIP

MARGARET            Well... We can come to some arrangement.

MOTHER AND ANNIE GO.  
ANOTHER SNATCH OF JERUSALEM.

MARGARET            Space is what children want at all ages. But from the age of one to seven, space is almost as much wanted as food and air. To move, to run, to find things out by new movement – that is the life of early childhood. In front of our clinic doors there was an acre of waste ground which the London County Council had bought – we asked for leave to use it, cleaned up the ground as well as we could, and opened our nursery. At that time there were no nursery schools proper, certainly no outdoor nurseries.

ANNIE RETURNS WITH BILLY LONG.

MARGARET            Welcome to our nursery, Annie. Billy Long, you must show Annie what we do.

BILLY                 First thing in the morning we go to our teacher for register. Then we go to the bathroom and have a bath.

ANNIE                 I have a bath on Friday night.

BILLY                 We have a bath every day whether we need it or not. And then we have to clean our teeth even if we've already cleaned them.

BILLY AND ANNIE GO.

MARGARET                    We take their clothes off and bathe them first thing every morning. Some of their little bodies...(SHE HESITATES, THEN DECIDES TO MAKE A SPEECH) To be blunt, when we first started, 75% of them were verminous. I know we shouldn't record this. We should forget it. But a heavy duty is laid on us to tell all, to hide nothing, so that it can be remedied, so that it will not be allowed to happen again. You see, the grim streets, the cruel rack-renting, the epidemics and the high death rate have to be the concern of the teacher just as much as bombs and gangrene and broken limbs are the concern of the nurse in the war hospital.

(PAUSE, SPEECH OVER)

Now, few of the children come back dirty. They all thoroughly enjoy the bath. They love it, splashing in the water. Afterwards we dress them again, not in their own worn clothing, but in the nursery's special coloured overalls.

BILLY AND ANNIE RE-APPEAR. THEIR FACES ARE CLEAN AND SHINING. BILLY IS WEARING A BRIGHT BLUE OVERALL. ANNIE IS IN HER PETTICOAT.

MARGARET                    What colour overall would you like, Annie? What about a red one?

ANNIE                            (THRILLED) Red!

MARGARET HELPS ANNIE INTO THE OVERALL. ANNIE DANCES ABOUT IN DELIGHT. MARGARET COMBS BILLY'S HAIR AND THEN INSPECTS HIM.

BILLY                            Then we come back to the big room and the nurse does our hair, combs it all.

MARGARET                    Your hair must shine like silk, your teeth must shine like little pearls, your nails must shine like seashells.

MARGARET                    Come and have your hair combed, Annie and then we'll find you a ribbon.

WHILE MARGARET COMBS HER HAIR, ANNIE PLAYS WITH THE RIBBONS IN THE BOX.

ANNIE                            I never had a ribbon.

MARGARET                    What colour ribbon would you like? I thing a red ribbon would match our red pinafore today.

MARGARET POINTS TO THE RED ONE AND ANNIE  
SELECTS IT IN DELIGHT.

MARGARET In a minute you shall have some breakfast. What do we have for  
breakfast, Billy?

BILLY Porridge and milk.

MARGARET That's right – porridge, made of Highland meal from Inverness. All  
the children eat it and some take four big helpings. And then milk  
to drink. Each child has a pint of milk a day. You must drink as  
much milk as you like, Annie. Off you go.

BILLY AND ANNIE RUN OFF TO PLAY.

MARGARET Nothing can be prettier than the children coming from the  
bathroom on a June morning. They are at last in harmony with  
Nature, gay as the butterflies or the blossoms that greet the sun.  
Their pretty clothes are the symbol of new life.

BILLY We got sand and buckets and spades. I'll show you how to make  
sand pies if you like. And we got rocking horses and a slide.

MARGARET It is a mistake to think that all poor children are underweight and  
underfed. Some are too heavy, because they eat the wrong kind of  
food. Bread, bread and always bread is their portion. They suffer  
from starvation of what Nature supplies in green food and fruits.  
Our lunches of fresh vegetables, meat and milk work marvels.

CHILDREN (SINGING) Thank you for the world so sweet,  
Thank you for the food we eat;  
Thank you for the birds that sing,  
Thank you, Lord, for everything.

MARGARET Within two years of opening the nursery, we have registered over  
seventy cures in rickety children. How easy it would be to make  
rickets disappear altogether.

BILLY Now we have a sleep.

ANNIE In the middle of the day?

BILLY We have a camp bed.

ANNIE A whole bed to our self?

THE CHILDREN GO TO SLEEP.

MARGARET            Soon every bed holds a little occupant all warmly wrapped in blankets. The toddlers will not wake for two hours or more. On every little face a great peace has fallen. Annie looks as peaceful as the others. One has an impression of rallying powers, of roots striking firmer, and of joy. The quiet shelter seems to hold a great secret.

THE CHILDREN WAKE UP.

MARGARET            In the afternoon we go round the gardens and have Nature Study, and we sing nursery rhymes.

THE CHILDREN SIT AT HER FEET, AND SLOWLY JOIN IN.

MARGARET            Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown  
And Jill came tumbling after.  
Then up Jack got and home did trot  
As fast as he could caper.  
He went to bed to mend his head  
With vinegar and brown paper.

BILLY                 Tea is bread and butter and jam! And milk to drink.

ANNIE'S MOTHER, STILL CARRYING THE BABY, COMES TO WATCH.

MARGARET            All day there are groups of mothers near the entrance and eyes watching through the palings.

MOTHER              Just look at those kids. Are they really kids from round here? It's better than a play, watching them, better than the pictures.

ANNIE SEES HER MOTHER AND STARTS TO RUN TO HER BUT RETURNS TO CHANGE OUT OF HER PINAFORE.

MARGARET            There is only one sad moment in our schooldays. It comes when the children lay aside their pretty school clothes and go back to the old clothes, laid aside and forgotten all day.

MARGARET IS ABOUT TO UNDO THE RIBBON BUT ANNIE CRIES AND CLUTCHES IT. MARGARET LETS HER KEEP IT. ANNIE RUNS TO HER MOTHER AND THEY GO OFF.

MARGARET            It is a point of honour with us to make every child so well that it does not need a doctor.

SONG - ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL.

All things bright and beautiful  
All creatures great and small  
All things wise and wonderful  
The Lord God made them all.

EDWARD ENTERS, COUGHING. HE IS FOLLOWED BY MOTHER AND ANNIE. ANNIE IS NOW NOTICEABLY LIVELIER THAN EDWARD AND IS AMUSED AT THE HUMILIATION OF HIS VARIOUS CURES. EDWARD IS NOW SEVEN TO EIGHT.

MOTHER Oh, Eddie, you're not coughing again.

EDWARD Every winter I used to start coughing about October and go on all through the winter

MOTHER I'd better make you something for it.

EDWARD She used to get an onion and slice it, hollow it out and put brown sugar in it, demerara sugar, cover it with a basin and leave it overnight. You had to drink the syrup that seeped out.

MOTHER Now, let's give your chest a rub. We don't want it getting on your chest.

EDWARD HAS TO TAKE HIS SHIRT OFF AND BE RUBBED.

EDWARD She used to rub goose grease on my chest and then put a brown paper jacket over it. You had to leave it on for about a week.

ANNIE Then you could tear off a little bit every day till it was all off.

EDWARD (MISERABLE) You couldn't take it all off at once.

MOTHER GIVES EDWARD SOME ONION JUICE AND THEN AS AN AFTER-THOUGHT GIVES SOME TO ANNIE TOO.

ANNIE If you didn't get better with goose grease, they'd rub you with camphorated oil, which really stank. Nobody would sit next to you at school. If you got very bad, they'd rub you with turpentine.

EDWARD IS GETTING MORE AND MORE TEARFUL AT ANNIE'S THREATS.



ANNIE Or you could be poulticed – a linseed poultice or a mustard plaster - or a kaolin poultice – as hot as you could stand. So hot it would make you scream.

EDWARD COLLAPSES IN TEARS AND HAS A BAD COUGHING FIT.

MOTHER Oh dear. Annie, here's sixpence. You'd best pop round to the chemist for something for his cough. What shall I get? Ipecacuanha wine – that's very good.

ANNIE That makes you sick.

EDWARD Don't want to be sick.

MOTHER That's good for you – fetches it all up. Otherwise it's syrup of squills....No, let's have paregoric. I always swear by paregoric.

SONG - YOU DID THAT BY YOURSELF.

Onions and brown sugar  
That really was the best  
Mustard, linseed, kaolin  
And goose grease on your chest.  
Paregoric, opodeldoc,  
Always on your shelf,  
But as for curing chilblains  
You did that by yourself.

EDWARD Once, when I had a sore throat, she got some oatmeal and mixed it with hot vinegar, wrapped it in a cloth and tied it round my neck while it was hot.

ANNIE But usually it was a sweaty sock.

MOTHER WRAPS A SOCK ROUND EDWARD'S NECK.  
ANNIE VERY AMUSED AT EDWARD IN BROWN PAPER AND SOCK.

MOTHER There, that'll do you the world of good.

ANNIE For boils, she's make a poultice out of bread, or out of carbolic soap and sugar.

EDWARD What I have seen done for boils – a friend of mine – his mum filled a stone bottle with boiling water and then emptied it out and clapped the neck of the bottle over the boil and it stuck fast. You

couldn't loose it till the boil burst. He was screaming and yelling. Eventually he ran outside and smashed the bottle against the wall.

ANNIE She was always sending me to fetch opper...

MOTHER Opodeldoc – that was the best there was in liniments. And Basilicon ointment – that was good for everything.

SONG - YOU DID THAT BY YOURSELF.

Ipecacuanha wine  
And cod liver oil  
Eucalyptus, camphor,  
Bread poultice for a boil.  
Paregoric, opodeldoc,  
Always on the shelf,  
But as for curing chilblains  
You did that by yourself.

MOTHER What you really need is a good clearing out.

THE CHILDREN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE BUT FAIL.

ANNIE Every spring you had to have your blood purified. Sulphur was what you had. You could either have flowers of sulphur mixed in black treacle, or sulphur tablets.

MOTHER GIVES SULPHUR TABLETS

EDWARD And then every Friday night, whether you needed it or not, you'd be lined up.

ANNIE Senna pods and liquorice powder was what my mum believed in most. Liquorice powder was horrible.

THEY ARE DOSED.

EDWARD Sometimes for a change, she'd go on to syrup of figs or castor oil, but she always came back to the liquorice powder.

SONG - YOU DID THAT BY YOURSELF.

Figs and prunes and senna  
Would help to clear you out.  
Castor oil and liquorice  
Would make you run about.  
Paregoric, opodeldoc,  
Always on the shelf.

But as for curing chilblains  
You did that by yourself.  
I tiddly I tie  
I tiddly I tie  
I tiddly I tie, pom pom.

MOTHER AND EDWARD GO. ANNIE SITS ON THE FLOOR.  
EARLY 1919. ANNIE IS SEVEN.

ANNIE                    One day I was sitting on the kerb and this soldier came along.

FATHER                 Hello.

ANNIE                    And I just looked up and said, hello.

FATHER                 What you sitting there for all on your own? You haven't forgotten me, have you Annie?

ANNIE                    And then I looked up again and it was Dad. Dad!

ANNIE JUMPS UP FOR A HUG. MOTHER AND EDWARD  
COME RUNNING OUT OF THE HOUSE. EDWARD A BIT  
EMBARRASSED AT BEING HUGGED. MOTHER SHOWS  
TODDLER BUNDLE.

MOTHER                This is Nellie.

FATHER HUGS MOTHER. HE OBVIOUSLY FANCIES HER.

EDWARD                When Dad came home the one room we were living in wasn't big enough for us any more and we moved to live in my uncle's house. We had two rooms there – a bedroom and a kitchen. I slept on a couch in the kitchen. Annie and Nellie pigged in with Mum and Dad.

MOTHER GOES OFF WITH DAD

ANNIE                    Mum and Dad had the big bed and we had a little bed of our own. Dad hung a curtain across the room to give us some privacy. What's privacy?

THE TWO CHILDREN ARE PUZZLED AT THIS CONCEPT.

EDWARD                After the war there were terrible epidemics. First there was the flu epidemic. There was nothing you could take for that except quinine mixture.

ANNIE                    A lot of people died. They said more people died of that flu than died fighting in the war.

EDWARD                Then there was scarlet fever.

ANNIE                    I'd started proper school by then and my best friend was called Patsy. I used to call for her every morning. One morning I called. Is Patsy ready for school?

MRS PITT                Get away, get away. Don't come near.

ANNIE                    Where's Patsy?

MRS PITT                She's been took away in the night with scarlet fever.

                              MRS PITT GOES.

ANNIE                    I thought, if I can catch it, I can miss school and I can go to hospital and be in the next bed to Patsy. I didn't feel too well a few days afterwards but there was no rash come.

                              EDWARD BRINGS A SKIPPING ROPE

ANNIE/EDWARD        Touch your collar  
                              Never swallow  
                              Never catch the fever  
                              Touch your knee  
                              Touch your chin  
                              Never let the burglar in.

EDWARD                The ambulances used to come to fetch them and we'd all go running up the street and stand round the door...

                              THEY HOLD THEIR HANDS OVER THEIR NOSES.

EDWARD                ... and whoever it was would be brought out wrapped in a red blanket and be put in the ambulance.

ANNIE/EDWARD        Touch your collar  
                              Never swallow  
                              Never catch the fever  
                              Touch your nose  
                              Touch your toes  
                              Never go in one of those.

                              MOTHER COMES RUSHING ON.

MOTHER Don't you dare go running up the street after ambulances. You'll catch it.

EDWARD Of course, kids don't listen to grown ups.

ANNIE/EDWARD Mother, mother, I feel sick.  
Send for the doctor, quick, quick, quick.  
Doctor, doctor, shall I die?  
Yes, my dear, and so shall I.  
How many carriages shall I have?  
One, two, three, four...

ANNIE SKIPS OFF. MRS PITT ENTERS.

MRS PITT (WHISPERS TO MOTHER) Dennis Bannister's just been took. Diphtheria, they say. Very bad. Not expected to live. The doctor said he should have been called in sooner.

MOTHER Oh, my gawd. Which is Dennis Bannister?

EDWARD (OVERHEARING THIS LAST) Dennis Bannister's in my class at school.

MOTHER You haven't been talking to him, have you?

EDWARD He sits next to me.

MOTHER Oh my gawd, and you didn't finish your dinner tonight.

MRS PITT Being off their food's a very bad sign.

MOTHER You said you had a sore throat.

MRS PITT Always starts with a sore throat.

MOTHER Have you still got it?

EDWARD It's worse.

MRS PITT It develops very fast.

MOTHER How do you feel in yourself?

EDWARD Not very well.

MRS PITT You ought to get the doctor in.

MOTHER But then, he's always having sore throats, ain't you. Always got a cough and a sore throat.

MRS PITT It's worse if you leave it.

MOTHER But what if he's all right? It's money down the drain.

MRS PITT None of my business, but I know what I'd do.

MOTHER I can't afford the doctor.

MRS PITT That's what Mrs Bannister said, but she had to afford him in the end, and then it was too late.

SONG - CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?

Can we afford the Doctor,  
The dentist, the midwife, the nurse?  
It doesn't seem fair  
That medical care  
Should depend on the state of your purse.  
I know it's a hard pill to swallow  
But what can we take for a cure?  
And if only the rich can afford to be sick,  
How cheap are the lives of the poor?

MOTHER Which doctor should I have?

MRS PITT Well, now... My husband's on the panel with Dr Jones. But he's very quick-tempered. Hasn't got time for nobody. I have been to Dr Smith – he has a nicer manner, but he wears a filthy old hat. I threw it out one day when he come, wouldn't have it in the house. Now Mrs Birkett says that Dr Brown's medicine bottles are just that bit bigger and he still only charges half a crown, same as the others. Dr Black comes out on a Wednesday afternoon where some of the others won't. Dr Green, I do know, lets you have more tick. Mrs Bannister had Dr White cos he's only in the next street.

MOTHER And if he's seen her Dennis, he'll know what to look for...

MRS PITT I'll go and fetch him

MRS PITT GOES.

ANNIE (TO EDWARD)  
Dip, dip, dip.  
You look sick  
Let me hear you cough

(EDWARD COUGHS)

Very bad indeed, sir,  
You should see a doctor.  
O. U. T. spells out.

MOTHER                    I could pawn my wedding ring, I suppose. Or, I could break into Gran's money. Perhaps now Tom's home and earning I might manage to put it back...

THE DOCTOR ARRIVES, VERY BRISK.

DOCTOR                    Where's the patient? How long has he been feeling ill? Off his food is he? Restless at night? Take his temperature. Feel his pulse. Look down his throat. Feel his glands. Afraid it's diphtheria. No doubt about it. Have to get to hospital. I'll make the arrangements. I'll send the ambulance. Need to take swabs from everyone else. Seal up the room, block up the chimney. Burn sulphur candles. Fumigate thoroughly. Send off the blankets, the mattress, the bedding. Have it all stoved. You'll get it back yellow, yellow but sterile. I'll come back tomorrow when I've tested the swabs. Now, I've got some more patients . That'll be half-a-crown.

MOTHER                    Half a crown?

DOCTOR                    I'll take in instalments. Sixpence a week.

MOTHER                    No, that's all right. I'd rather pay on the nail.

DOCTOR                    Always the best. I'll see you again.

SONG - I'M THE DOCTOR.

I'm a most important member of the medical profession  
With a practice that's esteemed for many miles  
And I earn a reputation by the most profound discretion  
And the luring fascination of my smiles.

I am always most seductive to the darling lady patients  
And if they're nervous try to pave the way  
Or perhaps they've only brought the child to get a vaccination  
Well, it's just the same – I always make them pay.

I'm the doctor and always in demand  
I am the doctor. Oh, you need not be alarmed  
For if you've a trembling or a tickling in the toes  
Just take a drop of this and then a few of those  
And you always may depend upon the doctor.

THE NURSE MAKES UP THE BED AND EDWARD GETS INTO IT.

EDWARD I was taken to the Brook Hospital. That was the isolation hospital in those days. Twelve wards for scarlet fever, ten wards for diphtheria. Huge wards they were, Florence Nightingale wards. And the ceiling seemed miles away.

THE NURSE BRINGS SOMETHING IN AND THEN LEAVES.

EDWARD It was the first time I'd been away from home and I was desperately frightened.

EDWARD STARTS CRYING. THE NURSE RE-APPEARS.

NURSE There now. What is it?

EDWARD WHISPERS. NURSE NODS AND GOES.

EDWARD I was frightened of wetting the bed.

THE NURSE RETURNS WITH A BEDPAN.

NURSE Part of our work as a nurse in those days was to talk to the patient, to make them feel at home. You had to care for the patient. There weren't any antibiotics, no miracle cures. Your only hope was to nurse them through.

THE NURSE REMOVES THE BEDPAN AND LEAVES.

EDWARD It was mainly bed rest. We weren't even allowed to sit up. Bed-rest and gargling with permanganate of potash.

THE NURSE RETURNS.

NURSE And of course they were on the spot of their throat closed up altogether and we had to do a tracheotomy.

SHE MIMES SLITTING HER THROAT.

NURSE Go to sleep now. You see that light on the desk? I'll be sitting there. If you need anything, I'll come.

SHE MOVES TO SIT AT THE DESK. SHE HAS A LOT OF PAPER WORK TO DO. TUNE OF NURSIE, NURSIE.

NURSE A Nightingale ward was a long narrow ward with beds either side and a desk at one end where the night nurse sat. The nurse could



see every patient and every patient could look to that light. The time I started, you really had to want to be a nurse. You had to choose it as a vocation. We worked from eight in the morning till eight at night, or eight at night till eight in the morning, though usually it was more like seven thirty till nine. We did our studying when we came off duty. And we had one day off a month. You had to be dedicated.

SHE GETS UP AND DOES A ROUND WITH A LITTLE TORCH.

NURSE (TO EDWARD) Would you like a drink of milk? Then try to get sleep.

SHE MOVES BACK TO THE DESK AND PICKS UP A TORN SHEET.

NURSE We had to darn the sheets. The big sheets were cut down to make draw sheets and then you darned the draw sheets. You even darned the darns. The pay we received was so paltry – even shop assistants earned two or three times as much as we did. I worked at fever hospital. You got a bit more for doing fevers. £45 we got for fevers on account of the risk attached. £45 a year, mind you, not a week.

LIGHTS UP. SHE DOES WHAT SHE DESCRIBES.

NURSE First job in the morning was to pull all the beds out to the middle of the ward, sweep all round, damp dust at the back of the beds, push the beds back again... and get your wheels straight! It was all inspected – there was a sister's round and a matron's round. Make the beds of course – exact envelope corners. If the sister was in a bad mood, oh it was fatal! She would stand at the top of the ward, you'd look at her face, and if those corners weren't envelope corners, oh God, she was vicious. The whole lot would have to be done again. We had to dust the patients' lockers, change the water and do the flowers. But, while you were doing that, you could chat to the person in the bed.

NURSE (TO EDWARD) How many sisters did you say you had?

SHE LEANS OVER AND HE WHISPERS TO HER.

NURSE There was this contact. You got to know the patients. They got to know you. They were in hospital for weeks and weeks, and you were with them all the time until they got better.

EDWARD Visitors weren't allowed into the ward. They could only come and wave to you through the glass.

FATHER APPEARS AT THE FAR SIDE OF THE STAGE.

FATHER Hello, Edward. (PAUSE) Are you all right? We are. The doctor took swabs but nobody else has got it. (PAUSE) It's a long walk up to the Brook hospital. It's taken me a fair old time. Your mother would have come but it's too far for her to walk just now. We couldn't afford the fare. (PAUSE) You can't hear me can you? Well, just wave to show you've seen me.

FATHER WAVES. EDWARD WAVES BACK.

FATHER (TO NURSE) I've brought him an egg. I've put his name on it.

THE NURSE TAKES THE EGG AND TIDIES AWAY THE HOSPITAL.

NURSE If you want to be a lady go to Tommy's  
If you want to be a nurse go to Bart's  
But if you want to marry go to Guy's.

EDWARD IS FETCHED FROM BED BY HIS FATHER.

FATHER While he was in hospital I made him this shop.

EDWARD And it was a beautiful shop.

FATHER (SHOWING) It's got everything in it – meat and fish, and green-grocery and bread and cheese.

EDWARD I thought it was real cheese and I ate a piece. It was white soap.

FATHER I did a bit every night while you were in hospital.

EDWARD I was in the Brook seven weeks and when I went home again I'd grown four inches.

MOTHER COMES TO GREET HIM.

MOTHER Edward! Oh, it's nice to have you home again. But none of your clothes fit you.

EDWARD Well, if I've grown taller, mum, you've got a lot fatter.

MOTHER Oh, yes... well... it's pigeon chested.

EDWARD I'd no idea of course that my mother was pregnant. We were never told things like that. I thought to myself – pigeon-chested? I've seen a lot of them like that. It mustn't 'alf be a common complaint.

SONG - MISSUS MOORE.

Missus Moore, who lives next door,  
She's such a dear old soul.  
Of children she's a score or more,  
Her husband's on the dole.  
I don't know how she manages  
To keep that lot, I'm sure,  
I said to her today  
As she was standing at the door:

Don't have any more, Missus Moore.  
Missus Moore, please don't have any more.  
The more you have the more you want, they say  
But enough is as good as a feast any day  
If you have many more, Missus Moore.  
You'll have to rent the house next door.  
They're all right when they are here  
But take my advice, old dear,  
Don't have any more, Missus Moore.

MOTHER AND MRS PITT ARE HANGING UP CLOTHES.

MRS PITT You're never! Not again.

MOTHER I can't help it. As soon as he puts his trousers over the bed rail, I'm like it.

MRS PITT You can't go on like this. Why don't you get in a hot bath with a pint of gin?

MOTHER Can't afford the gin!

MRS PITT You could throw yourself downstairs.

MOTHER Knowing me, I'd just break a leg and nothing else.

MRS PITT You can make pills out of lead plaster, you know. You have to be careful how many you take. Penny-royal, you could try that ..

MOTHER I know such a lot who've died through abortions.

MRS PITT True. But then how many do you know who've died in childbirth. Remember Rosie.

MOTHER                    Only young, wasn't she.

MRS PITT                    Then there's quinine crystals, parsley oil, slippery elm...

MOTHER            No. I've never tried to get rid of one. I've lost enough without that. I expect the Lord will find a crust for it somewhere.

SONG - MISSUS MOORE.

Don't have any more, Missus Moore.  
Missus Moore, please don't have any more.  
The more you have the more you want, they say,  
But enough is as good as a feast any day.  
If you have many more, Missus Moore,  
You'll have to rent the house next door.  
They're all right when they are here  
But take my advice, old dear,  
Don't have any more, Misses Moore.

MOTHER                    Annie, go and find Mrs Pitt and tell her it's started.

ANNIE                        What's started, Mum?

MOTHER                    Never mind. She'll know.

EDWARD                    You weren't even allowed to ask questions about it. That was all taboo.

ANNIE RUNS ACROSS TO MRS PITT.

ANNIE                        Mrs Pitt? Mum says it's started.

MRS PITT                    I thought it was about time.

MRS PITT COMES ACROSS.

MRS PITT                    Let's get you into bed and have a look at you.

EDWARD                    What's happening? What is it?

ANNIE                        All I know is, it's started, but Dorothy Crouch says she's on the bump.

EDWARD                    What you mean?

ANNIE                        She's got a big bump on her font.

EDWARD                    She's got ever so fat.

ANNIE                     Dorothy Crouch says if your mum's got a bump that means she's going to have a baby.

EDWARD                    A baby?

MRS PITT EMERGES FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

MRS PITT                 I can't deliver this one. You'll have to have the doctor.

MOTHER                 I can't afford a doctor.

MRS PITT                 There isn't any choice, I can't manage. Annie, run round the corner for that Dr White. Say can he come immediately It's urgent. What do you say?

ANNIE                     'Surgent.

MRS PITT                 Run all the way.

MRS PITT GOES BACK BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

EDWARD                    In those days if you sent for a doctor to come out in an emergency, they'd come right away. Wouldn't matter how many patients were in his surgery. He'd stop work. "Won't be long." Leave all the patients just sitting there.

THE DOCTOR ARRIVES WITH HIS BLACK BAG.

DOCTOR                    Where is the patient? Better be urgent. Sent for like this at the drop of a hat. Never called for advice or for check-ups. Emergencies only, and usually too late.

MRS PITT BECKONS HIM TO COME BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

ANNIE                     There was never any ante-natal care or anything and she could never afford a proper midwife and usually she couldn't afford the doctor. In those days you just more or less had it at home. There was always a woman in the street who'd help with deliveries and laying out and things.

MRS PITT AND THE DOCTOR EMERGE.  
MRS PITT SCURRIES ACROSS THE STAGE.  
THE DOCTOR ROLLS UP HIS SLEEVES.

DOCTOR Boil up a kettle. Pour castor oil down her. Give her some chloroform. Knock her right out.

MRS PITT SCURRIES BACK WITH A KETTLE.  
THEY BOTH DISAPPEAR.

EDWARD Where does the baby come from then?

ANNIE Shan't tell.

EDWARD You don't know.

ANNIE Yes I do. Dorothy Crouch told me – everything! (HESITATES)  
The doctor brings it in his bag.

EDWARD We really thought that he'd got the baby in this big black bag. We were told they came like that.

ANNIE I didn't know any better till I was about 14 and yet we never went anywhere else. We were all in the next room. We sat there, quiet, never moved, until we heard the baby cry.

THE BABY CRIES.

ANNIE It's here! It's here! The baby's come! We've got a baby!. We've got a baby!

MRS PITT PULLS ASIDE THE CURTAIN. THE DOCTOR IS HOLDING THE BABY. MOTHER IS IN THE BED.

MOTHER What have I got?

DOCTOR Little boy. Another soldier for the King.

MOTHER Never if I can help it! I'm not going through all this just to have him shot down in a trench somewhere.

DOCTOR, INSULTED, GIVES THE BABY TO MOTHER.

DOCTOR Stay in bed for a fortnight. I'll send you my bill.

THE DOCTOR MARCHES OUT.  
TUNE OF DOCTOR SONG.  
MRS PITT MAKES MOTHER COMFORTABLE.

MRS PITT You've got a little brother. You can go and look.

MRS PITT LEAVES.

EDWARD AND ANNIE GO TO THE BED.

MOTHER (SINGS)   Bye oh my baby  
                          If I was a lady  
                          Oh then my babe would not cry  
                          But my baby is weeping  
                          For want of good keeping  
                          I fear my poor baby will die.

EDWARD             What's the baby sucking that for?

MOTHER            He's got a bad tongue and I've put a little piece of sulphur in this handkerchief and he's sucking the sulphur to clear his tongue.

ANNIE              It was what they called thrush. Some babies were born with it then.

EDWARD            Mum, Dad says he's going to make us a suet pudding, and if he does we're not going to eat it, not with his hands.

MOTHER            Go on then. Bring the suet up to me, and the flour and some water. And don't forget the basin to mix it in.

ANNIE              And she sat up in bed and she made it .

MOTHER            Do you want to hold the baby?

ANNIE NODS. MOTHER PASSES BABY OVER.

ANNIE              From that time onwards that baby was more or less my responsibility as much as my mother's because she was ill so often. I never seemed to have a baby out of my arms from the time I was eight years old.

EDWARD            Course the neighbours used to come in and help. They always rallied round in births, deaths, weddings, funerals, all that. They used to come in and prepare all the food. We usually had ham salads.

SONG - ALL THE FAMILY.

Here we are again, all the family  
And we haven't been together for years,  
Someone's getting christened, so we meet once more  
And out come the smiles and tears.

Oh, we've scores of relations down our street  
But there's something wrong with their poor feet

For the only time they ever seem to meet  
Is at a wedding or a christ'ning or a fun'ral.

There is a happy land, far, far away  
One man's meat is another man's poison – that's what they say  
Oh, we hear some real good-natured chaff,  
Everybody's clean, they've had a bath,  
And the only time Mother ever has a laugh  
Is at a wedding or a christ'ning or a fun'ral.

MOTHER                   Come on, we'll take the new baby to see your Gran.

ANNIE                     I don't like going to the Workhouse, Mum.

MOTHER                 Neither do I, but we've got to go. Gran's got nobody else left now.

ANNIE                    The workhouse was more like a prison than anything. We had to go through these big iron gates. Inside it was bare brick walls, painted a kind of grey/green. Wooden furniture – just benches to sit on – very bare. They didn't try to make it comfortable. All these old ladies wore black dresses with white aprons and mob caps. All dressed identical. They were all sitting there, all dressed the same. They could have been effigies sitting there, doing nothing. Then we went up this old iron staircase to the wards and all up the sides were these cradles to keep the old people in, all crammed together.

GRAN IS IN BED.

MOTHER                 Hello, mother.

GRAN                    (PEERING) Who's that?

MOTHER                 It's me, mother.

GRAN                    Is it Lizzie?

MOTHER                 I've brought the new baby to see you.

GRAN                    You've never gone and had another.

MOTHER                 It's a little boy. We thought we'd call him Harry after his granddad.

GRAN                    Harry? I never see Harry now. They never let me see him.

ANNIE                    In the workhouse they used to separate males from females, so the husbands were separated from their wives.

BACKGROUND SNATCH OF “MY OLD DUTCH.”



GRAN                    You still got that money I gave you? You haven't gone and spent it?

MOTHER                (HESITATES, THEN LIES BRAVELY) I still got it.

GRAN                    I saved up for a good funeral. You'll see I get a good funeral, Lizzie? Promise me when I die you'll put me next to Harry.

MOTHER                Oh, mother, of course, don't talk about it.

GRAN                    Promise me though.

MOTHER                I promise.

GRAN                    I don't want a pauper's grave. I want a proper funeral.

MOTHER                You're not going to die yet. Hasn't anybody combed your hair today?

MOTHER COMBS GRAN'S HAIR.

ANNIE                    They wasn't looked after. They had shelter and they had food, but they wasn't looked after. They were just lying there and calling out.

ANNIE AND MOTHER LEAVE.

GRAN                    Harry? Where are you, Harry?

ANNIE                    Why is Gran in the workhouse, Mum?

MOTHER                She got too old to look after herself. She wasn't eating properly.

ANNIE                    You won't ever go there will you, Mum? I don't want you to go there when you're old.

MOTHER                Oh, I should never have let her go. I should have had her with us. But here wasn't the room.

MOTHER CRIES. BY NOW IT IS PROBABLY 1921. MOTHER IS AROUND THIRTY-SIX, ANNIE IS NINE, EDWARD ELEVEN.

ANNIE                    When Gran died they brought her body home to us.

FATHER ENTERS WITH EDWARD.

FATHER                    Don't upset yourself, love. It's all for the best.

- MOTHER I should never have let her go in the workhouse
- FATHER PUTS HIS ARM ROUND MOTHER AND LEADS HER OFF.
- ANNIE They made us go and say goodbye to her.
- EDWARD The coffin was there on a couple of trestles, but the lid wasn't screwed down.
- ANNIE There was a lot of flowers. The neighbours had all been in to see her and brought wreaths and things.
- EDWARD The flowers smelt very strong and there was a smell of varnish off the coffin.
- ANNIE They lifted me up to see and told me to stroke her forehead. It was stone cold. They wanted me to kiss her goodbye, but I wriggled free and ran out of the room.
- EDWARD Nobody played outside our house all week, cos it was a death house.
- MOTHER RETURNS IN MOURNING, BRINGING A HAT FOR ANNIE. FATHER IS WEARING A BLACK ARMBAND.
- FATHER We've put ourselves in debt up to here for all this.
- MOTHER Thank God for the Provident Clothing Society.
- FATHER I don't know how we're going to pay it back, even at two bob a week.
- MOTHER But she had to have a proper funeral. I promised her a proper funeral.
- ANNIE I was bought a black hat for the funeral. That was the first time I ever had anything new.
- EDWARD I had a new pair of black trousers – all on the Provident Clothing.
- ANNIE The funeral was beautiful. Beautiful horses with the plumes on their heads. And the coffin was draped in purple.
- EDWARD All the neighbours had their front room curtains drawn till after the funeral had left the street.

MOTHER                    You got to have a proper funeral. You're looked down on if you have cheap funeral.

EDWARD                    After Gran's funeral, we had another ham salad.

SONG - ALL THE FAMILY.

Here we are again, all the family,  
And we haven't been together for years,  
Someone's getting buried, so we meet once more,  
and out come the smiles and tears.

There are lots of them without a doubt  
Whose clothes are always up the spout  
And the only time they ever get them out  
Is at a wedding or a christening or a funeral.

The all discard their overalls  
They all flip up and pay their calls  
And there's always an awful smell of camphor balls  
At a wedding or a christening or a funeral

There is a happy land, far, far away,  
One man's meat is another man's poison – that's what they say  
Oh, we have some real good-natured chaff,  
Everybody's clean, they've had a bath,  
And the only time Mother ever has a laugh  
Is at a wedding or a christening or a funeral.

MOTHER                    Time to go to school!

ANNIE                      School

EDWARD                    School.

THE TEACHER BLOWS A WHISTLE. THE CHILDREN LINE UP. A FILTHY BOY RUNS IN AND TAGS ON THE END. WHISTLE AGAIN. THEY MARCH INTO SCHOOL. THE FILTHY BOY PINCHES EDWARD'S CAP AND PUTS IT ON. EDWARD GRABS IT BACK. THEY MARCH INTO CLASS.

TEACHER                    Good morning, Class Four.

CHILDREN                    Good morning, Miss Sharpe.

TEACHER                    Times tables.

CHILDREN                    (CHANTING) Once two is two, two twos are four, etc

THE CHANTING GOES ON UNDER THE TEACHER'S NEXT SPEECH.

TEACHER Local education authorities are now required to provide school meals for the very poor and under-nourished children. As well as the mid-day meal, they have milk and cod-liver oil at eleven o'clock.

THE TEACHER BLOWS HER WHISTLE. THE CHANTING STOPS.

ANNIE Play-time!

THEY RUSH TO GO OUT AND ARE HALTED

TEACHER The cod-liver oil children will come to my desk.

SHE PRODUCES AN ENORMOUS BOTTLE OF OIL AND A SPOON.

EDWARD You had to queue up at the teacher's desk and get your cod-liver oil and malt out of this big jar which she ladled from one to the other regardless.

THE TEACHER DOSES THE FILTHY BOY FIRST AND THEN WITHOUT WIPING THE SPOON, DOSES EDWARD AND ANNIE. THEY EXPRESS DISGUST AT THE DIRTY SPOON.

ANNIE But only if you came from certain homes you had to go up. I really resented having to go out and stand there and get this stuff given to me. I knew I was poor and so did everybody else, but I didn't want my nose rubbed in it.

EDWARD It tasted of fish and it was like very dark, runny toffee. It was a peculiar taste. Most of us didn't like it.

CHILDREN Yeerrrgghh!

TEACHER Weights and measures!

CHILDREN (CHANTING) Twelve inches one foot, three feet one yard, twenty two yards one chain, ten chains one furlong, eight furlongs one mile.

EDWARD There were school dinners but, my god, you had to be poor. Even I didn't come into that category. The kids that went to school dinners – they were looked down on as social outcasts. And the school

dinner place was in a kind of little mission hall – a kind of soup kitchen. We'd rather go without a dinner than go there.

CHILDREN

What's for dinner? What's for dinner?  
Irish stew. Irish stew.  
Sloppy semolina. Sloppy semolina.  
No thank you. No thank you.

TEACHER

Weights and measures!

CHILDREN

Four gills one pint, two pints one quart, four quarts one gallon.

TEACHER

Many of the children in our schools need soap and water much more urgently than they need pen, ink and paper.

CHILDREN

Sixteen ounces one pound, fourteen pounds one stone, two stones one quarter, four quarters one hundredweight, twenty hundredweights one ton.

TEACHER

Luckily the education authorities are now required to provide a schools medical service.

ENTER THE SCHOOL NURSE.

CHILDREN

(WHISPERING) It's Nitty Nora, Nitty Nora.

ANNIE

Nitty Nora, the bug explorer.

NURSE

The reason for these medical inspections is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. It's a good preventive service because it can pick up conditions early on and treat them.

TEACHER

Line up, children.

ANNIE

She'd come round to look in your head to see if you had any marks of where the fleas had bit you.

THE NURSE EXAMINES ANNIE – NAPE OF THE NECK AND BEHIND THE EARS. SHE DISMISSES HER. SHE NEXT EXAMINES THE FILTHY BOY.

NURSE

As usual, Jimmy Jones, you'll have to be sent to the cleansing station.

ANNIE

They had to go down to this place and be bathed and have their hair combed with kerosene.

THE NURSE EXAMINES EDWARD.

NURSE Edward Taylor, your hair is usually clean.

THE NURSE GOES.

EDWARD I was found to have a lousy head. Everybody was horrified.

ANNIE AND TEACHER EXPRESS HORROR.

TEACHER Edward Taylor, I shall write your mother a note. I know she usually keeps you clean but you've obviously been in contact with another child who is not so clean. And we all know which child that is.

THEY ALL STARE AT JIMMY JONES. TEACHER BLOWS WHISTLE AND GOES. JIMMY JONES SKULKS OFF.

CHILDREN Red, white and blue  
The cat's got the flu  
The dog's got fleas and  
So have you!

ANNIE After that, Mum used to rub our heads with some ghastly smelling ointment every Thursday night.

EDWARD Greasy muck it was.

ANNIE ...and we had to go to school with it on every Friday and then have it washed out Friday night.

EDWARD We had a scullery with a flat-looking sink and a cold water tap.

ANNIE That's where Mother used to do all her washing. There was a copper in the corner to boil the washing and she used that to get the water hot for our baths.

EDWARD There was a whacking great tin bath out in the back yard and she'd bring that in on Friday night and we'd all have a bath in the scullery.

MOTHER STRUGGLES IN WITH THE BATH.

SONG - YOUR BABY HAS GONE DOWN THE PLUGHOLE.

A mother was bathing her baby one night  
The oldest of ten and a tiny wee mite  
The mother was poor and the baby was thin  
Only a skeleton covered in skin.

The mother turned round for the soap off the rack  
She was gone but a minute and when she turned back  
Her baby was gone and in anguish she cried  
Oh where is my baby? – the angels replied:

Your baby has gone down the plug hole  
Your baby has gone down the plug  
The poor little thing was so skinny and thin  
It should have been bathed in a jug.

Your baby is perfectly happy  
It won't need a bath any more  
Your baby has gone down the plug hole  
Not lost but gone before.

MOTHER We can't afford any coal for the copper.

EDWARD We used to walk round the streets scavenging for fire wood,  
searching about, walking round the streets, looking for boxes and  
broken stuff to burn on the stove.

ANNIE Everything went up the copper – old wood and cardboard, old  
boots, anything.

MOTHER Shove 'em up the copper. Get the water hot.

ANNIE Then she'd fill this great tin bath with hot water and we'd all of us  
get in that same water.

MOTHER Little Harry first, then Nellie.

ANNIE STARTS TO UNDRRESS. EDWARD IS SLOUCHING  
ABOUT.

MOTHER Then you , Annie. Are you getting ready, Edward?

EDWARD MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO GET READY.  
HE IS EMBARRASSED.

MOTHER Eddie, I don't want the water to be all cold when I get in it. Not to  
mention what it'll be like for your Dad.

EDWARD As I got older, I left the tin bath to the girls and I went down the  
public baths on a Saturday morning.

MOTHER (GRUDGINGLY) Here's a penny then.

MOTHER AND ANNIE TAKE BATH OFF.

SONG - YOUR BABY HAS GONE DOWN THE PLUGHOLE.

Your baby has gone down the plug hole  
Your baby has gone down the plug  
The poor little thing was so skinny and thin  
It should have been bathed in a jug...

EDWARD                    You sat in the waiting room till your turn to go in and then you went in this stinking bath place. A hefty-looking bloke used to be in charge.

THE BATHS SUPERINTENDENT COMES IN TO TAKE EDWARD'S PENNY AND TO GIVE HIM A TOWEL.

SUPER                    I hate you kids.

EDWARD                    You paid a penny and you got this blessed thing they called a towel. It was as stiff as a board. It was very painful drying yourself on it. If you were rich you paid twopence and you got another towel which was slightly better, but I wouldn't say it was comfortable.

SUPER                    Right. You're next. Get in that one. No mucking about. Otherwise, out you go.

EDWARD GOES INTO THE BATHROOM.

EDWARD                    So you'd get in there. Then he'd turn the water on from outside. He'd lock the door and turn the water on and you had so long. If it wasn't right, you had a number and you shouted out. Bit more hot in number six!

SUPER                    More hot in number six, is it? I'll give you more hot.

HE GIVES THE TAP A HUGE SWIRL.

EDWARD                    Sometimes you was almost scalded. More cold, more cold!

SUPER                    Thought you wanted more hot?

EDWARD                    He didn't like doing it More cold, more cold in number six.

SUPER                    If you don't stop mucking about in there, I'll come in and yank you out.



- EDWARD                   He had a key – he'd come in and turf you out. You couldn't be in there too long.
- THE SUPERINTENDENT YANKS HIM OUT. EDWARD IS ONLY HALF-DRESSED. HE STARTS SHIVERING.
- MOTHER                   Eddie, you're shivering. You haven't gone and caught a chill have you? You know better than to catch a chill with your chest.
- EDWARD                   Every winter I had these terrible chest coughs. I couldn't breathe with it.
- MOTHER                   You know you have to wrap up well coming out of a hot bath and then walking home through a pea-souper.
- EDWARD                   We used to have these thick yellow fogs – you couldn't see your hand in front of you, literally.
- MOTHER                   They're just killing to anybody with chest trouble.
- EDWARD                   These fogs were killers. Old people used to just pack up under it, used to die left, right and centre.
- MOTHER                   This time I'm going to take you to the doctor before it gets any worse.
- EDWARD                   To the doctor's? But, Mum... half a crown...
- MOTHER                   No. Mrs Pitt's told me about a doctor what's set up just by the Woolwich Ferry. Only charges sixpence and that's including medicine. That's no worse than going to the chemist for a sixpenny bottle.
- EDWARD                   Woolwich Ferry's a long way.
- MOTHER                   We'll come back on the bus. Come on. I'll tie a hankie over your face.
- EDWARD                   You used to wear a handkerchief over your face and when you got home it was black. You could scrape the soot off.
- MOTHER                   She says it's down by the ferry, down the bottom of Hare Street somewhere, opposite where Bellwater Lane runs out – a little wooden hut or something.
- EDWARD                   It was nothing like the big posh houses doctors usually had.
- MOTHER                   It doesn't look very...I hope it'll be all right.

EDWARD                    We went into this very dusty sort of waiting room....

MOTHER                   Nothing on the floor and just a little gas fire!

EDWARD                   ... and sat and waited our turn.

SUMMERSKILL           My father was a doctor and when I was a girl, I often visited patients with him. These visits were undoubtedly the strongest single influence in my life. They made me wish to take up medicine, to give immediate help to the sick. And they made me wish to help in the long-term – removing by political action some of the causes of malnutrition and consequent ill-health. In other words, they made me a socialist as well as a doctor. I was rather looked down on by the other local doctors because I created a threat. I was undercharging and therefore, as they saw it, taking their patients away from them. I wasn't. I was treating patients who couldn't afford to go to the other doctors.

SHE BECKONS EDWARD OVER AND LISTENS TO HIS CHEST TAPPING IT WITH TWO FINGERS.

EDWARD                   I had been to doctors before when my chest got very bad, but none of them seemed to be able to do a great deal. They prescribed cough mixture and steam kettles, but mainly they just sort of sat back, more or less waiting to see whether it would develop into TB, which is what they expected and what usually happened.

SUMMERSKILL           With a child like this, you really ought not to live in London.

MOTHER                   His father works in the docks.

SUMMERSKILL           Then the child ought not to stay in London, not through another winter. I'll see what I can arrange.

DR SUMMERSKILL LEAVES. MOTHER TIDIES EDWARD AND GETS HIM READY FOR HIS JOURNEY.

EDWARD                   They sent me to Brighton, to a nursing home there. It was a home for poor children. We were all poor. We went by train – taken down and looked after by the guard in the train.

HE ARRIVES AND IS MET BY A NURSE

NURSE                    Some of the children were very badly clothed. Some of the boys had no coats and we used to wrap them up before they went out in anything we could lay our hands on.

SHE WRAPS SOMETHING ROUND HIM

EDWARD                    They had great big chests full of garments, scarves, blankets.  
They'd wrap them round and then pin them on us.

NURSE                     They looked a motley crew.

EDWARD                    We went for walks twice a day whatever the weather was like.  
Sometimes it was so windy and we were all thin little things. We  
were blown over cos we couldn't stand up. We didn't have any  
other sort of treatment – just fresh air and good healthy food – a lot  
of milk, hot milk, cocoa, hot dinners.

NURSE                     Parents were not allowed to visit. Nobody had parents to visit. But  
they had to write home every week.

EDWARD                    The matron would check what we'd written and then write on the  
bottom how much we weighed . . .

SHE WEIGHS HIM AND MAKES A NOTE

EDWARD                    ... and what we'd gained, so that they would know.

NURSE GIVES THE LETTER TO MOTHER

MOTHER                    He's gained another pound this week. We shan't know him when he  
comes home.

EDWARD                    I stayed there for six months and come home in the following  
March.

MOTHER                    Is it our Eddie?

EDWARD                    My family were astonished at the difference in me. The next winter  
I wasn't quite so bad and shortly after that we moved up the hill out  
of the worst of the smoke. We were given a council house at  
Charlton. And then of course I started work. I got an open-air job –  
delivery boy.

ANNIE                      When I started work as well, we could both give Mum a bit of  
money and things got a bit easier.

EDWARD                    My father did his bit too, but after he came back from the war he  
had no muscle. He'd been wounded and was a bit handicapped.

MOTHER                    He got a bit of war pension, but it wasn't much.

- EDWARD                    He got some work at first, but then his firm closed down and he couldn't get another job.
- MOTHER                    He tried, my god, he tried. He used to walk miles. Six in the morning he used to get up and set out. He used to queue up outside the gates of the docks and they'd open the gates and say "Ten men" and the rest had to go away again. During the winter he once swept snow cos he hadn't worked. He'd do anything.
- ANNIE                      But he couldn't get a permanent job. It was the depression, you see.
- MOTHER                    He never complained. He wasn't that sort of a man. But it got him down.
- ANNIE                      My mum went out to work, cleaning – that brought in a few shillings – and Dad used to see to the little ones, see they went to school all right.
- EDWARD                    Then he was in and out of hospital... he didn't live to much of an age.
- REPRISE OF WEDDINGS, CHRISTENINGS AND FUNERALS,  
VERY SADLY AS THEY ALL STAND WITH HEADS BOWED.
- ANNIE                      At least he didn't live to see the Second World War.
- WARTIME MUSIC.  
EDWARD AND ANNIE PUT ON ARMY HATS.  
EDWARD AND ANNIE KISS MOTHER AND LEAVE.
- MOTHER                    When you think what we've been through in our lifetime: the depression and two wars.
- WAR MUSIC OR PATHE PICTORIAL NEWS MUSIC.
- PICTURE POST  
EDITOR                      At the end of the last war we got no new Britain. This time we can be better prepared. Our plan for a new Britain is not something outside the war; it is our most positive war aim. The new Britain is the country we are fighting for. We believe that after this war, certain things will be common ground that every Briton – man, woman or child – shall be assured of enough food of the right kind to maintain him in full bodily health and fitness. It will be common ground that our state medical service must be reorganised and developed so as to foster health, not merely battle with disease.
- BARBARA  
CASTLE                      The National Health Service was a living piece of socialism because what it said was never mind whether you are poor, penniless, OAP or the richest in the land, you shall have an equal

right to fight pain and death and you won't pay at the point of use. Nobody's going to stand over you ask for your cheque book before they'll operate.

ANNIE AND EDWARD RETURN, REMOVE THEIR TIN HELMETS AND HUG MUM  
END OF WAR MUSIC STARTS.

DR GORMAN'S SURGERY, 1948. DR GORMAN IN BRIGHT WHITE DOCTOR'S COAT. MOTHER IS NOW AROUND SIXTY THREE.

DR GORMAN           The fifth of July, 1948, the start of the National Health Service. Every body had to register with a doctor and they had a big buff form which they had to fill in in duplicate...

ANNIE'S MOTHER ENTERS..

GORMAN             Hello Mrs Taylor. Here we are. Fill this in first.

MOTHER HAS DIFFICULTY SEEING IT. SHE HOLDS IT AT ARM'S LENGTH.

GORMAN             Most people in those days couldn't fill in a form, so the doctor was sitting there scribbling away... Let me do it for you.

GORMAN TAKES FORM BACK AND FILLS IT IN WHILE TALKING.

GORMAN             And what have you come about, besides registering?

MOTHER             My headaches. I'm getting terrible headaches. All round here.

GORMAN             Do you get them all the time?

MOTHER             They come on when I do things like darning, or reading the paper. The news can get depressing.

GORMAN             Do you wear glasses for close work?

MOTHER SHAKES HEAD.

GORMAN             Do you possess any glasses?

MOTHER             No... I've never....

GORMAN I think it might be sensible to have an eye-test at your age. I'll give you a prescription for something to ease the pain for now and write you a note to take to the optician.

MOTHER I couldn't afford an eye-test just now, but thank you anyway. Where do I pay?

GORMAN You don't pay. Not any more. It's free. Take this to the chemist.

MOTHER I have to pay the chemist instead, do I, for the prescription?

GORMAN No, the prescription is free too. And when you go for your eye test, that'll be free. And the glasses he'll provide for you, they'll be free.

MOTHER Free? You don't have to pay for anything?

GORMAN Yes, free. Everything's free now. And, incidentally, while you're at it, I should go to the dentist and get yourself some free dentures. They were heady days!

MOTHER And I went for those spectacles and dentures. And I got them. And they were free! Oh it was nice to be able to go to the chemist with your prescription and get the thing for nothing. And to think you could have a doctor at any time, and you didn't have to worry whether you could afford it. You didn't have to borrow from the neighbours. It was a marvellous thing!

GOMRAN I thought it was super. I thought no more starving children coming for treatment – no more people at their last gasp. I thought I shall just be seeing people simply because they're ill. Because not only did the new Health Service mean free medical care – it meant the dole, it meant supplementary pensions, it meant that no one need starve. It felt like a millennium, like Utopia.

MOTHER I thought what a wonderful thing it was to narrow the gap between rich and poor. I'd had experience of managing as a poor person and thinking how much better off other people's children would be where there was money in the family I can't tell you what a wonderful thing it was.

SONG - CAN WE AFFORD THE DOCTOR?

Here's good health to each one  
Every daughter and son  
Now the National Health it is free  
No hospital bed costs an arm or a leg  
No physician will ask for a fee  
It's a tonic to know

When you're ill you can go  
And get treatment you don't have to buy  
We put up a fight  
And demanded our right  
Now the future looks bright, we can cry:

We can afford the Doctor  
The Dentist, the midwife, the nurse.  
We're all fair and square  
Now medical care  
Won't depend on the state of your purse  
Let's hope the old times are behind us  
And the bad good old days come no more  
When only the rich could afford to be sick  
And cheap were the lives of the poor.