



**RICH DESSERTS AND
CAPTAIN'S THIN
MARGARET FORSTER**

Contents

[Cover](#)

[About the Book](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Margaret Forster](#)

[List of Illustrations](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1 A Quaker Childhood in Kendal](#)

[Chapter 2 'Cheap Bread'](#)

[Chapter 3 A Giant of a Man](#)

[Chapter 4 The Rich Desserts](#)

[Chapter 5 The Sons and the Schism](#)

[Chapter 6 Deaths and Duties](#)

[Chapter 7 '... from darkness into light'](#)

[Chapter 8 Machines, Mills and Missionaries](#)

[Chapter 9 Strikes and War](#)

[Chapter 10 The Finest Hour](#)

[Chapter 11 Changing Times](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Sources and Acknowledgements](#)

[Index](#)

[Copyright](#)

About the Book

In 1831 John Dodgson Carr, son of a Quaker grocer, set off to walk from his home in Kendal to Carlisle, determined to launch a great enterprise. Within 15 years, Carr's of Carlisle had become one of the largest baking businesses in the world - and is a by-word for biscuits to this day. Following his trail to Carlisle (where she herself was born and grew up), Margaret Forster brings 19th-century daily life into vivid focus and charts the rise and rise of a middle-class family like the Carrs, ambitious, innovative yet sternly religious. This is history as it was lived by the men and women both above and below stairs - from the shop floor to the comfortable bourgeois homes of the paternalistic Carrs. We see the conflict between religion and profit, the family feuds and the changing face of a city through this compelling historical narrative, told with Margaret Forster's characteristic blend of scholarship, readability and marvellous attention to the texture of everyday life.

About the Author

Born in Carlisle in 1938, and educated at the Carlisle and County High School for Girls, Margaret Forster read history at Oxford before making her name as a novelist and biographer. She is the author of sixteen novels and five works of non-fiction. Her recent bestselling works include the biography of Daphne du Maurier, a memoir of her own family, *Hidden Lives*, and the novel *Shadow Baby*. She lives in London and the Lake District, and is married to writer and journalist Hunter Davies.

ALSO BY MARGARET FORSTER

Fiction

Dame's Delight
Georgy Girl
The Bogeyman
The Travels of Maudie Tipstaff
The Park
Miss Owen-Owen is At Home
Fenella Phizackerley
Mr Bone's Retreat
The Seduction of Mrs Pendlebury
Mother Can You Hear Me?
The Bride of Lowther Fell
Marital Rites
Private Papers
Have the Men Had Enough?
Lady's Maid
The Battle for Christabel
Mothers' Boys
Shadow Baby

Non-Fiction

The Rash Adventurer: The Rise and Pall of Charles Edward Stuart
William Makepeace Thackeray: Memoirs of a Victorian Gentleman
Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism 1838-1939
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Daphne Du Maurier
Hidden Lives

Poetry

Selected Poems: Elizabeth Barrett Browning (Editor)

List of Illustrations

[Family Tree of the Carr Family](#)

[Map of Carlisle in 1865](#)

[Map of Caldewgate in 1898-9](#)

First plate section

1. [The Carr family in the late 1850s.](#)
2. [J. D. Carr.](#)
3. [Jane Carr.](#)
4. [Carlisle market place, 1835.](#)
5. [Carr's Biscuit Factory and Caldewgate.](#)
6. [Women in the packing room.](#)
7. [Workers in the biscuit machine room.](#)
8. [J.D.'s original biscuit-cutting machine.](#)
9. [A woman at work in her Carr's uniform.](#)
10. [Henry Carr and family.](#)
11. [Thomas William Carr and family.](#)
12. [The brothers Carr, c. 1900.](#)
13. [A 19th-century family picnic.](#)
14. [Carlisle town centre, 1890s.](#)
15. [Workers leaving the factory, early 1900s.](#)

Second plate section

16. [The car which Theodore built, 1890s.](#)
17. [The Carr's train at Silloth.](#)
18. [On the factory floor.](#)
19. [The Rudd women.](#)
20. [Carlisle market.](#)
21. [An advertisement, 1904.](#)
22. [The Rich Desserts.](#)
23. [Bertram Carr as Mayor of Carlisle.](#)

24. A Carr's delivery van.

Margaret Forster

**RICH DESSERTS
& CAPTAIN'S THIN**

A Family and Their Times
1831-1931

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Prologue

MY SCHOOL IN Carlisle, a mixed Infants and Junior state primary, stood on a slight hill above Holy Trinity Church. The biscuit factory was to the left, as you looked towards the city from the school, built below the level of the church, at the junction of the road to the west-coast ports and the road to the empty marshes of the Solway Firth. The playgrounds of the school, two of them, were squares of concrete surrounded by high brick walls, but these grim barriers, dirty with smoke, could not keep out the glorious aroma of chocolate. It floated over us children, invisible but definite, and made us rush even more wildly round the ugly confines of the barren playing area. It seemed to madden us, intoxicate us, we could hardly bear not to storm the factory and seize the chocolate-coated biscuits that we knew were being made in their thousands. Visions of these biscuits floated so enticingly before us that we thought of the factory as a kind of heaven. We never imagined a place of noise and weariness, never contemplated the monotony and the physical labour for little return that went into making the biscuits. Instead we envied those lucky enough to work there.

Carr's of Carlisle was a name of which we were in awe. Carr's could give us what we craved.

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During the 1950s, once examinations were over for the sixteen-year-olds, the Carlisle and County High School for Girls organised tours of the city's various factories. It was thought salutary to encourage clever and not-so-clever girls

alike to go round at least one factory, so that they could witness what they might come to if they turned out to have disgraced the school and failed to pass their O-Levels. Besides, there were a few weeks of term still to go and the practice of simply turning fifth-formers out of school to please themselves had not yet taken hold. So a tour of a factory it was.

The list of options went up quite early. There was a choice, among others, of the Metal Box, Ferguson's or Carr's. Nobody wanted to go to the Metal Box (I certainly didn't - my father worked there) and though Ferguson's (which made textiles) had a few takers, Carr's was by far the most popular choice. We might be sixteen, but the lure of those chocolate biscuits was as strong as it had been at six. Everyone knew that at the end of a tour of Carr's each girl would be given a packet of biscuits (and there was no need to mention the thieving from the conveyor belts that would go on along the way).

We met outside the factory, accompanied by a teacher, and though I had passed the gates of Carr's every day of my life, once I was through them I was amazed at how little I had been able to envisage the scale of what lay inside. It was like going into another town, which had its own roads, crossings and traffic rules, a town where, without a guide, we would have needed a detailed map to make our way from storehouses to doughing rooms, from the building where empties were kept to the foundries and sawyards, from the icing and decorating departments to the chocolate and toffee rooms. But we did have a guide, a man in a khaki-coloured coat, who was extremely brisk and bossy and called us 'young ladies' in every sentence. He was used to taking parties round the factory - Carr's prided itself on always being open to inspection - and probably did not even listen to himself any longer. We listened, and sniggered (but then, in groups, we sniggered at everything). He gave us white overalls and caps to put on. The caps had hair-nets

inside them, which caused a crisis of vanity – what, tuck *all* our hair inside, every strand? But we would look *awful*. The white overalls, though, were another matter. We liked those. They were pristine and starched, and it was easy to pretend we were doctors. And there were two roomy pockets, which seemed promising ...

Once we were all uniformed, off we went, nudging each other as we followed our strutting guide, mimicking his walk as he led us through the corridors to the wash-basins situated outside the doors that opened into the first factory floor. Lots of splashing, lots of unnecessary shrieking, lots of ‘Now, now, young ladies’ and then, severely reprimanded by our teacher, we quietened down and stood in line. Suddenly there was a curious sense of expectancy, a sense of theatre, of a curtain going up as we waited to go through the big, heavy doors. The moment we were inside, we no longer wanted to make fun of our tour leader, but instead scurried obediently after him, scared that we would really get lost among all the thundering machines churning and grinding around us. He led us at such a rapid pace, pointing and shouting and explaining, that we hardly caught a word, though we clustered anxiously around him whenever he paused.

We were stunned by the power of it all. It was incomprehensible how everything worked, how any kind of order could come out of what seemed to us frightening chaos, in which the machines had a life of their own. Yet everywhere there were people, mostly women, who appeared perfectly at ease. They fed and tended the monstrous machines and conveyor belts, deftly lifting and setting down, apparently oblivious to the constant, appalling noise. But they had more than noise to cope with. The smells and the heat bothered us just as much. No glorious odour of chocolate when we got to the chocolate room: now it was an overwhelmingly rich, sickly smell, more like a stench, and it made us instantly nauseous. So did the sight

of the melted chocolate running into a machine in thick, dark globules, and the vats of disgusting-looking yellow stuff, the cream waiting to be put into the sandwiching machine.

We got our free biscuits. Somehow, we had no appetite for them, not immediately anyway. We were all very quiet on the way back to school, our heads full of nightmare visions of failing O-Levels and having to become cracker-packers at Carr's. It was not a joke any longer.

*

Forty years on and I was eager to go round Carr's again, ready to see it with new, well-informed eyes. I wanted to match its history with present-day reality. But those regular tours, the welcome to all-comers, have stopped. And Carr's is not Carr's any more. Since 1972 the factory has belonged to McVities, part of the United Biscuits empire. A nonsense as far as everyone in Carlisle is concerned, of course – how can Carr's be anything but Carr's, even if the McVities name is writ large, in gaudy blue and yellow, above the old, plain white Carr's name on the front of the factory? *It* persuades nobody. This factory has a soul and its name is always going to be Carr's.

But the place seems like a fortress now. Across the wide road leading into the main forecourt there is a barrier where all cars must stop and drivers and passengers report to reception. It is only the first of the obstacles to entering, whether by car or on foot. Once in reception, a plastic card has to be issued, which operates a turnstile (what are they making here, guns or biscuits?). Then we were through: myself, a member of the Carr family and our guide.

We went first along a wood-panelled corridor and up some wide stairs, relic of a more gracious era indeed (and not glimpsed by us as schoolgirls), into the boardroom. There they all were, the past bosses and owners, the Carrs, with

not a McVitie in sight. Jonathan Dodgson, the founder, his sons Henry, James and Thomas, his grandsons, Theodore, Bertram and Harold, with only Ronald missing. None of the great-grandsons, though they too played their part. Paintings of the factory as it used to be adorn the walls (inaccurate in some details, but attractive). It could be the boardroom of any family business: there is no sense of frenzied manufacturing activity here. The adjoining offices are busy but equally removed from the product they manage. In one of them we are given the white coats and hats that I remembered so well, with the addition of special shoes, black for feet under size six, white for those over. I wished I had bigger feet - white shoes look so much more in keeping with the coats. We were also given cute little earplugs this time, dangling on a string, whereas before our young ears were left unprotected (or was the noise less deafening then?).

Certainly it is ferocious now, even worse than I recalled. So is the feeling of claustrophobia. The rooms - sheds? caverns? halls? - are vast and high-ceilinged, but the atmosphere is still one of being trapped and crushed. The machines and conveyor belts seem so tightly packed together, so dominant and huge, that it is an effort to look upwards and beyond them to see that in fact there is plenty of space, plenty of light and air. When we walk up the narrow iron staircases and on to the narrow galleries there is a different perspective.

Peering down at the biscuits going past, quite slowly for the most part, armies of biscuits, all perfectly regimented, it is easier to adjust. This is much less intimidating than actually standing beside the belts, where the feeling is one of being hemmed in by some motorway, the traffic heavily congested but curiously obedient, and absolutely relentless - on and on it flows, enough to cause dizziness or to hypnotise. The spell is broken when the biscuits suddenly flip, turn over on their tummies ready for coating with cream

or chocolate. The jumps are synchronised, immensely satisfying to watch in their precision. Otherwise, it is like watching a river full of tiny logs sweeping towards the sea. There are so many intricate patterns to note, not only those made by the arrangement of the biscuits themselves but by the belts carrying them. These twist and wind throughout the factory like tangled string but without the knots, heading miraculously to some smoothly planned but unseen destination. As choreography it is remarkable.

Back on the factory floor, we have the new technology pointed out to us. There are computer screens alongside the conveyor belts, with all kinds of data to do with baking times flashing away upon them. Nobody seems to pay any attention to them, however important they may be. There are shelves in front of them with sample biscuits laid out in rows, like offerings to a god. But the computers do not seem like gods, even if they are – it is the belts that are revered. They are watched all the time, at every stage. Eyes are ever upon them, hands moving in time with their motion. We watch assorted biscuits being packed. One woman picks up a box, snaps a red Cellophane lining into it and passes it on. Reach, snap, pass. On and on, swift and smooth. The next woman has a chute in front of her delivering two kinds of biscuit, a small round one with a smile on its iced face and an oblong pink wafer. These have to be put into the correctly shaped holes. In they go. The box, now with two biscuits in place, travels to the third woman in the line. She adds a square biscuit to the vacant square hole and three chocolate fingers to the narrow gap left for them in the centre. All done by hand. So much still done by hand, that is the surprise. So much work that is entirely mechanical and yet it needs the human hand to do it. Easy? Only on one level.

But the measuring and mixing of ingredients are now fully automated. Vague memories of watching women stirring things vanish. Now, the flour is not even seen. It comes

directly from the silos, by chute, into the mixers, where it joins all the other ingredients. A giant set of blades rotates the resulting mass, pummelling it violently, before it drops into a bin from which, in another operation, the dough will be sent on its way. A man stands by the machine setting a timer on the computer: 180 seconds and then thud, thud, and the beating begins, the mixture hurled about like clods of pale mud. 'That is my job,' he says, deadpan, 'in all its splendour.' Later, we see the dough that this machine has made travelling along a conveyor belt in one broad, flat mass, ready to be cut into shapes. It looks like a blanket in need of a wash, a dirty yellow, and when there are two layers, and currants are slipped between, these look like bits of grit caught in fibres of wool. Beside the belts stand enormous bins, some with currants, like stones now, waiting to be spread on tarmac, others with nuts, which look more like bullets. There is nothing enticing about these foodstuffs, not even about the chocolate, an ocean of slime oozing its way along.

We use our earplugs in some areas but not in others. When the noise is so awful that we are obliged to pop them in, we see that, incredibly, the workers' mouths are moving – they are somehow managing to communicate with each other. It is hard not to stare. Nobody seems to mind being stared at. There are bland smiles and nods, or complete blankness, but no visible resentment or hostility. This is the factory, after all, saved from closure, because of its excellent labour relations, when United Biscuits closed so many other factories down. This is Carr's, the family firm, where that family, true or false, believed its workers to be well looked after and happy. Some working families clocked up hundreds of years between them, down the generations – the Reids, the Pattinsons, the Stubbs, the MacGregors, the Taylors, the Robsons, the McBrides – hundreds of years, father to son, father to daughter, granddaughter and great-

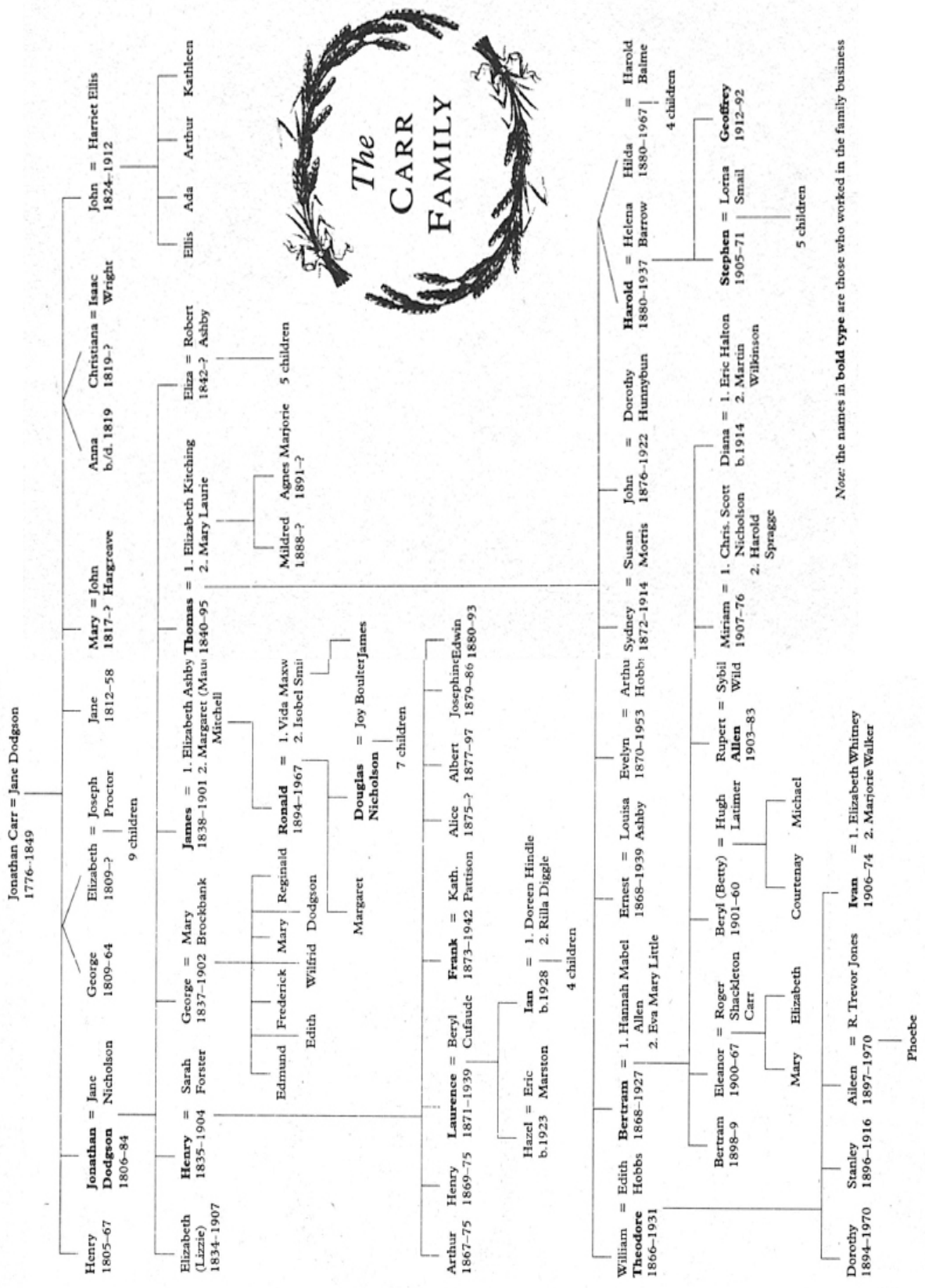
granddaughter, before it all came to an end and Carr's was no more. It is all hard to credit.

Leaving the factory floor, it is the silence that blesses us first. No quiet anywhere inside. In the areas where the noise of production does not deafen, music plays over the Tannoy. Silence is impossible. Literally. So, on exiting, the silence is a huge relief, but so is the escape from the heat. This is oppressive almost everywhere, not because the temperature is actually high, but because of the nature of the heat. It is cloying, stifling, the sweet, rich smell of baking, lovely in a domestic kitchen, but suffocating on this grand scale. I often felt near to fainting on the tour. I know I could not stand this, hour after hour, poor tender thing that I am. It was such a pleasure in the cooling room – oh, the bliss of those cold draughts setting the chocolate or the icing on the biscuits. There was less noise there too, more of a rhythmic clanging than a shattering grinding, and fewer workers about. There was an altogether more scientific atmosphere – an illusion, but there it was.

Of the actual laboratories we see nothing. They are not part of the tour, nor are the many offices and administrative departments. Two hours, and we have seen only a fraction of the works. But what we have seen is the real work of production, the actual manufacturing of the goods. All over the country, all over the world, there are factories like this. Most of us are so familiar with the shops where the goods end up, but ignorant of the factories where they are made. The origins of these factories are buried in the history of the industrial revolution, and their humble, but hugely significant, beginnings have long since been forgotten. What went into the creation of these strange and powerful places is a little-known story. The history of Carr's of Carlisle is only one small strand in a complex web – a tale of one man, with a good idea and great entrepreneurial flair and energy, from whom a successful, worldwide business sprang, based on one factory in a small northern city. J. D. Carr, manufacturer

of biscuits, had his battles, his campaigns, his victories, just as the soldiers and politicians of his day did, and, being a Quaker, he had his moral dilemmas too.

When the entrepreneurial spirit clashed with religious conviction in Victorian England, something very interesting happened, with repercussions right down to our own times.



Chapter One

A QUAKER CHILDHOOD IN KENDAL

NOISE WAS SOMETHING to which Jonathan Dodgson Carr was accustomed long before he ever experienced factory noise. It was ironic, really, since silence was so essential to the well-being of his people, the Quakers. They needed complete silence so that they could sense the spirit, which they believed to be in every one of them, and hear it speak. But it was only in the meeting-house that the young Jonathan Dodgson found peace. At home, above his father's wholesale grocery business in Highgate, Kendal, every minute of every day was noisy, and so were most hours of the night.

Highgate was the principal street in this small Westmorland town at the turn of the nineteenth century and it was always busy. It was paved with particularly large, rough cobbles of local stone, so that the wagons and carts making their way up the long, narrow, hilly stretch of road from south to north had the grinding of their metal-rimmed wheels magnified many times over. The hooves of the dray horses pulling the wagons, four to each vehicle, slipped and slithered on these same wickedly uneven cobbles and the drivers, dressed in blue linen, had to stand, legs wide apart, feet braced, to keep their balance. They yelled at the horses and pulled at the reins and were forever looking down anxiously at the three broad iron bands, twelve to fifteen inches in width, round each wheel, always apprehensive that small stones might spring from between the cobbles, stick into the joins and split the iron tyre.

The building in which Jonathan Dodgson was born on 9 December 1806 was impossible to insulate from this constant racket. It stood squeezed between the premises of a milliner, which had a doctor's surgery behind it, and a larger house owned by another Quaker family, the influential Braithwaites. The street was lined with shops mixed with inns and the occasional private house, all straggling up the hill in untidy architectural lines. There were butchers' stalls, known as shambles, on both sides and cattle were still sold in the street itself. The actual shops - every variety of them, from clothes shops to pawnbrokers and confectioners - were often sited partly below ground level. They had no windows but were protected by heavy wooden shutters which, when let down in a horizontal position, acted as tables from which goods could be sold. It was enough to make shoppers feel quite disorientated when they found that to reach articles on the top shelf they had to bend down to do so. Altogether, main street or not, Highgate was very odd-looking, not at all grand or imposing, but then no street or area of Kendal was thought any smarter than another.

At night, too, the Carr family house was unfortunately placed. There were a great many public houses in Highgate and all night long drunkards swarmed out of them, making their unsteady way over the lethal cobbles, difficult enough to negotiate when sober, but impossible when intoxicated. There were no policemen to caution them against rowdy behaviour. There was only the solitary night watchman, standing in his sentry box in the middle of the street, calling out the time and the state of the weather. At least during the night the noise of the town bells stopped, ceasing at 6 p.m. in the winter and 7 p.m. in the summer, and there were no clocks striking. The most constant sound, when it could be heard above all the other louder ones, was that of the heavy rain on the roof. It was no myth that it seemed to rain all the time in Kendal. Records show that, on average, the

rain during this period was steady and unremitting on half the days of every year. It could douse the oil lamps, by which the town was lit, if the wicks were not most carefully protected. The town clerk, putting the maintenance of the 140 lamps out to contract, was stern about the quality of thread used in the wicks. If the lamps were to burn from sunset to daybreak through the habitual, torrential rain and lighten the thick gloom, then the thread had to be strong.

But in spite of the noise and the rain, Kendal was not a bad place in which to be born and brought up in the first part of the nineteenth century. According to a Dr Ainslie, writing to a local newspaper a few years before Jonathan Dodgson's birth, it was a sociable and cheerful place. The countryside around it might previously have been described by Daniel Defoe in his *Tour of the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1726) as 'barren and frightful', but the town itself was stable and peaceful. The very isolation of Kendal, cut off as it was by the surrounding mountains and a river that regularly flooded, sweeping away the bridges, had kept it safe from disturbances. The last time Kendal had suffered from a marauding army was in 1745, when Bonnie Prince Charlie's retreating troops had swept through it. Since then there had been nothing to fear and people had grown quite complacent and self-satisfied. There was not even a local militia ready in case of any threat to the peace, though, three years before Jonathan Dodgson's birth, a volunteer force had been hastily formed in response to the belief that Napoleon would invade. The panic over, it was disbanded.

So, to be born in 1806 in Kendal was thought, by the inhabitants at least, to be fortunate, though it was not the healthiest of towns. Typhoid was prevalent and the weavers – Kendal was first and foremost a weaving town, producing cloth too coarse for export but highly popular at home – were prone to suffer most in the regular epidemics. Their sedentary, indoor occupation in overcrowded conditions gave them little resistance, though they did not suffer

anything like the mortality rate of weaving communities in the larger manufacturing towns. Jonathan Dodgson's grandfather, Henry Carr, had been a weaver, but neither he nor any of his family died of typhoid. In his day the Carrs had lived on the outskirts of Kendal, at Far Cross Bank, which offered some protection from infection; and Jonathan Carr, even when his family moved to Highgate, also escaped the disease. According to Dr Ainslie, 'the natives' preserved themselves from illness 'by a plaster taken inwardly called thick poddish'. The Quakers had something else, though. They placed great faith in a concoction called Black Drop. It was sold by various Quakeresses in Kendal and consisted of a four-ounce phial, priced at ten shillings, of opium mixed with the juice of quinces. This mixture had been gently heated before having added to it saffron, cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon. Left to stand for a week, the 'Black Drop' was strained and the resulting liquid evaporated to a syrup. It was hardly surprising that the women who did the work wore masks. The claims made for this medicine were extravagant - it was said 'to stimulate energy' and yet 'to reduce excessive activity'.

Jonathan Dodgson, if ever his Quaker mother Jane dosed him with Black Drop, was more in need of the latter benefit. He was a big, strong boy, taller and heavier than his older brother Henry, and from the first was noted as being full of energy. But it was an energy at odds with the child's remarkable gentleness - strong, energetic little boys are more likely to be wild, even destructive, than gentle, hardly capable when young of knowing their own power. Jonathan Dodgson - his middle name was his mother's maiden name - seemed able to control his strength. He was mentally as well as physically strong, very determined, intent on doing his best. It was an odd combination in a child, his size concealing an unexpected thoughtfulness and calm.

He was the leader of the children - Henry (a year older), the twins George and Elizabeth (three years younger), Jane

(six years younger), Mary (ten years younger), Christiana (thirteen years younger, the survivor of twin girls), and finally John, who was born when Jonathan Dodgson was eighteen, bringing to an end his mother's twenty years of childbearing. It was a big family, though average-sized for the times. The grocery business supported them all comfortably, but then Quakers lived plainly. The wealth of this Quaker family was certainly not great, and caused no clash, as yet, between their ideals and the temptations of affluence. Jonathan Dodgson was brought up to believe that his duty was to see that his own needs were modest, and to help others less fortunate than himself.

But the Carrs were not well known in Kendal for doing good works. No outstanding acts of benevolence are recorded under their name. The leading Quaker families of the day were the Wakefields, the Crewdsons, the Braithwaites and the Wilsons. These were the ranks from whom came the founders of the local banks, the Schools of Industry. These were the Quakers who had connections with the famous Gurneys and Barclays. The Carrs took no lead in charity work, nor does their name appear in any list of rank-and-file workers. They are not noted as having attended public meetings or as contributing money to good causes. If they did these things they did them anonymously, unlike the prominent Quakers in Kendal. And yet they were devout and earnest, diligently attending Quaker meetings, and pleased to perform the various duties asked of them.

Jane, in spite of her large family, served regularly on committees, given the unenviable job of visiting members who were reported to have transgressed. Alcohol was regarded by Quakers as utterly evil, so if one of the Friends had been seen drunk, a deputation was sent to point out the error of his ways and to help him, through prayer, redeem himself. Even more gravely in breach of the society's code was immoral conduct, especially in a woman. Jane Carr was often called upon to visit such women, which indicates a

certain feeling for the task, but she was also active in serving as a representative to the monthly meetings and to the much bigger and more important quarterly meetings. Her local worshipping group in Kendal, known as a 'particular meeting', clearly trusted her to go on their behalf to those monthly meetings, where representatives from several particular meetings met together. And those meetings in turn thought Jane well able to go on to the quarterly meetings for the whole county. Jane's name does not appear on surviving minutes for the big yearly meeting, when Quakers from the whole country met in London, but then it was the men who were chosen to represent their group in the capital (though the women eventually had their own representatives). Even if, in the town itself, the Carr parents had no connection with the other eminent Quaker families, within the walls of the meeting-house they were on a par with them and contributed as much.

As a child, the meeting-house was Jonathan Dodgson's second home. It lay just round the corner from the family house, in Stramongate, the street that led off Highgate down to the River Kent. In 1816, when Jonathan Dodgson was ten, a new meeting-house was built at a cost of £3,637 (the highest cost being for the limestone and the timber). It was a very attractive building, though simple and modest, in keeping with Quaker principles, with a large, oblong main hall, which had a minister's stand on one side and a stepped loft round the other. There was a screen across the middle, with four arched openings, and most unusually the hall was heated (the 'warming apparatus' cost £3518s). The place held 850 people - the Quakers were strong in Kendal - but, in spite of its size, it was not intimidating for a child. The Quaker religion was friendly towards children, who were encouraged to consider themselves important members. They were welcomed and there was nothing to overawe them, as there was in 'steeple-houses' (the Quaker name for traditional churches) - no darkness, no stained glass, no

tombs, no music, no pomp and ceremony. Of all the seventy-four meeting-houses in the north-west of England, the Kendal house was one of the most substantial and yet most appealing. It even had a garden front and back, and its situation near the river made it especially pleasant.

Jonathan Dodgson was an intelligent, thoughtful boy who took in everything happening around him, using his eyes and ears to good effect. The sober clothes of his people told him that the Quakers disliked show of any kind. They were all dressed in dark-coloured garments made of serviceable materials and without any adornment, whereas outside the meeting-house what did he see? Women at that time were wearing romantically inspired dresses, with even the less well-off trying to ape the high waistline of the fashionable dresses, which emphasised the bust, and managing to find from somewhere woven gauze and handmade lace to lavish on trimmings. Colour was everywhere, especially luscious pinks and blues, and hairstyles and hats were very elaborate. Even some of the men had a certain dash, with the woollen dress-coat being in vogue, thickly padded on the front to accentuate the chest and shoulders, while the more daring young men sported 'Cossack' trousers. Kendal was not London, but it had its share of dandies and any child could see the vanity involved. It was strange to go from the streets into the meeting-house with its stone floor and whitewashed walls. Once inside, the shouts, oaths and jeers of the streets faded. Nobody ever shouted, nobody swore, nobody traded insults. All was silence and calm, the loudest noise a cough, or a heavy footstep on the floor. All was courtesy, making the loud dealings between traders outside seem rough and unpleasant.

To some children, this withdrawal from what was so vibrant and active became boring - it was dull in the meeting-house, with everything so quiet and all the procedures agonisingly slow. Yawns could set in very quickly. But Jonathan Dodgson was, from the first, temperamentally

suited to belonging to the Society of Friends. The few remarks surviving in family memoirs all speak of his exemplary devotion and his quick grasp of what being a Quaker meant. He appeared to like the idea, central to his religion, of having to listen for God within himself. This scared some children – it was frightening to strain to listen, then hear nothing – but he responded to it. He liked the notion of being responsible for himself and all his actions: it fitted in with his sense of independence. Nor did he have any problem with the instruction to be truthful at all costs: it seemed to him obvious that if a person said yes, they should mean it. Lies, fibs and half-truths only led to confusion. Children lied because they were afraid, but in the meeting-house fear was not the spur. No one threatened or coerced young Jonathan Dodgson. He learned by example, and that example was of lives lived in a dignified and peaceful way.

A little harder to cope with, for a child, were the rules governing pleasure. Pleasure was a problem for the Quakers. They were not Puritans, but on the other hand they were against pleasures that produced an over-excitement likely to deflect the faithful from listening for, and to, God. Jonathan Dodgson and his siblings could play, but in playing they could not dance or sing, not even nursery rhymes. At home there were no pianos or violins and on the walls there were no pictures. The natural ebullience of most children could find no outlet in organised games, either – kicking or knocking balls about in contests was a waste of time. But, remarkable though it may be, these rules seem to have appealed to Jonathan Dodgson. He hated to waste time, always liked to see some result for any effort he made. He willingly ran errands for his father, and there were plenty to run, and he enjoyed using his precocious strength to lift and carry for his mother. Since he liked to be so physically active and was not of a bookish disposition, it did not grieve him

that there were few books in the house – no poetry, no novels, no plays.

School might have come as something of a shock, given that he disliked being confined, but Jonathan Dodgson took to it well. He and Henry went to Stramongate, the school their parents had attended, next to the Kendal meeting-house. Jonathan and Jane Carr had enjoyed their schooldays and saw no reason to send their eldest two children elsewhere (though they later sent two others to Ackworth in Yorkshire, founded in 1779, which became one of the most famous Quaker boarding schools). In their day, most classical texts had been banned and so had foreign languages. They had had a very plain education indeed, with a heavy emphasis on the useful – reading, writing and arithmetic. They therefore knew no Latin, Greek or French and their knowledge of literature was extremely limited, though their familiarity with the Bible was hardly to be rivalled. Jonathan Carr was a grocer, a merchant, and what he had learned at Stramongate he considered perfectly adequate for his sons. The teaching there had in fact changed since his own day, as indeed it had been forced to do throughout all Quaker schools. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century the facts had been faced and those facts were that a Quaker education was often of a low standard. Good teachers were hard to attract. The best teachers came from the universities, and Quakers could not attend university (they were banned, by the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678, which demanded an oath of loyalty to the established Church). In order to procure better-educated teachers, Latin, Greek and French had all been allowed into the curriculum, in the hope that in future some of the pupils would become teachers themselves and so raise the general standard. It had also been decided that not all poetry and dramatic texts should be prohibited, and a very carefully chosen selection had become available. So Henry and Jonathan Dodgson Carr received a wider education than their parents, but in many

other ways their experience of school was the same. They, too, dug the school garden – easy for both of them – enjoying the manual labour as an alternative to sport, and, just as their parents had done, they studied nature, highly important in a Quaker education.

But Stramongate was a tougher place by 1813. The classes were larger, and more unruly as a result; the tranquillity of the meeting-house did not quite extend to the school. During the years that the Carr brothers attended there were several vicious schoolmasters who were expert at the use of the tawse (a whip with short leather thongs). Sometimes the tawse was used so enthusiastically that the services of a surgeon were required to staunch the blood. No protest was registered, but then it is a mistake to think that because Quakers were peaceful people, their schools were run on peaceful lines. It was alarming for Jonathan Dodgson to discover this, although because he towered over his contemporaries and was heavily built, he was less likely to be the victim of any brutality. At least at Stramongate there were no punishment cells, eight feet square with heavy shutters, as there were at Ackworth, where offenders, for sins as trivial as stealing an onion from the garden, were shut in for anything up to three days. But the discipline was equally strict. Rigid silence was enforced during lessons and absolute obedience demanded. In this atmosphere learning was hardly pleasurable, but Jonathan Dodgson recorded no complaints. He could look after himself, in the playground as well as the schoolroom. If a fight broke out, and even in Quaker schools fights did of course occur, he acquitted himself well. He was reputed to be a sensible, pleasant boy, not at all aggressive in spite of his muscular appearance, but, if called upon to defend himself, he could not resist the temptation. He could box, though he had never been taught, and sometimes did so, even if he knew he should turn the other cheek.

When Jonathan Dodgson was not at school or in the meeting-house, he was helping his father in the Highgate premises of his wholesale grocery business. He and Henry, since they were both strong boys, were well able from a young age to help with carrying goods from carts to shop, with stacking boxes as they arrived, with splitting open the big wooden crates in which so many goods were packed and with helping to keep the place clean at all times, which involved punishing daily rituals of sweeping up dust and straw, and spilled substances that had leaked out of sacks. Jonathan Carr dealt mainly in dry goods - tea, coffee, sugar, flour - all arriving and departing in large quantities. Every day deliveries were made and the unloading of goods was a perilous business, with so little room in the narrow streets, back and front, for the drivers to negotiate. Everything had to be inspected, counted and paid for, and then checked again, with no room for mistakes in the accounting. Nothing was bought on credit, nor was credit given. The despatch of goods was handled with the same scrupulous attention to fairness - no short measures, no slipping in of anything even slightly damaged. All day long suppliers and customers were pouring through the shop, which was more like a warehouse, making it a permanently busy place in which two boys were hardly noticed. But from their point of view, they were ideally placed to absorb effortlessly whatever business was about and to see how it was organised. They were involved in the proceedings and nothing about their father's trade was strange to them. Family life revolved round it.

There was little time in this regime - school, meeting-house, helping in the business - for the boys to enjoy any of the pleasures that Kendal had to offer, but then for Quakers most of these were banned. They were not allowed to go to the theatre, nor to frequent the new racecourse, nor to watch cock-fighting. In that respect they were not part of the community, though since their own particular