

LETTERS TO PATTY

ways seemed to be called France, Italy, or Abergavenny, which last we had to look out on the map, and very carefully pronounce Abergenny.

Looking through the dining room window I see two little girls bending over the dingy atlas, the younger with a buffet on her chair to make her high enough. Patty, thin and brown-skinned, with hazel eyes, and enormous hanks of straight dark hair hanging past the limp bow of her sash, and Baby, with cream coloured locks only a little less thick and long, scraped back from a white face by a round black comb.

Why did we do lessons in the dining room, Patty, instead of the little schoolroom at the bottom of the stairs, where slates and books were kept? I don't remember. But I do remember lessons with both big windows very tightly shut, the smell of Father's cigarette mingling with that of bacon, sausage and wood fire, and I do remember the "sicky" feel of breakfast's cold milk and mutton dripping, somewhere under our pinafores!

I don't think we were particularly happy children, do you? Of course, it was a sun-coloured time in a way, but there are great black marks against it, too. In fact, it was rather like going to the Riviera, when one passes those long rows of cypress trees, and the dusty yellow light of