

THE ROAD TO NAB END – Chapter Eighteen

Soon after we moved to Livingstone Road, Jenny married Gordon Weal. That was when I got my first pair of long trousers. Father took me to a shop called Weaver to Wearer where I was measured for a suit of dark brown worsted wool. Weaver to Wearer was the cheapest tailor in town. Their cloth was thought to be better than that sold by the workers' Cooperative Store. Also, Weaver to Wearer gave me two fittings, at the Co-op I'd have got only one.

When I took the suit home in a big cardboard box, I felt like a millionaire. At last, I had stopped being a boy and had become a man. I explored all the pockets and found the sixpence, which the tailor always hid in a boy's first suit. That night I put the suit on and paraded before the family. There were many 'ooohs' and 'aaaahs.' It was the first time in my life that I had ever worn anything over my knees. It made them itch.

The wedding itself was the most elaborate affair in the family's history. Mother was not prepared to settle for second best, not in Livingstone Road. It was one of the high points of her life. That's how she thought life should be.

At great expense, we went the whole way. Everybody had new clothes. Mother was in her seventh heaven deciding what everyone should wear. Jenny wore white. Her dress had a low neck with a tight waist and sleeves all puffed up. She had a veil and carried lilies of the valley. Beautiful she looked. She also had two little girls as trainbearers.

Gordon wore a hired frock coat, pin striped trousers and a special grey waistcoat with a watch chain. He looked like the Lord Mayor. Like the rest of us, he got a new suit and new shoes for the wedding but kept them for going away on his honeymoon.

As it was a June wedding and the weather was kind, family and friends stood outside the church for a moment to say hello and wave greetings before going in. It's amazing what clothes will do to people when they are wearing their best. Everybody held themselves stiffly and spoke in funny voices. I never saw such a change; they weren't the same folk at all.

It must have taken father a long time to pay for that wedding. He must have spent the family's savings on it, and gone into debt. It will always remain a mystery to me how a man who resented paying a penny on the tram and who was not known for giving his children anything, could suddenly spend like that. Of course, mother was the driving force. In any event, money was never better spent. We had a wonderful time, we all got stuffed with food and drink and everybody finished up with new clothes. Father's suit lasted him the rest of his life.