Chapter 1
ANTECEDENTS

Hamilton Bailey’s story starts with his father, Dr James Bailey, who was born at Forfar, Scotland in 1864, the son of a mining engineer. He was hard working and able, and to the pride of his parents gained entrance to the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh and qualified as a doctor (MB ChB) in 1887. The indirect accounts we have of young James’ character suggest that he was a somewhat dour individual, conscientious, dutiful and not an easy socialiser. Three years after qualifying and following junior appointments in hospitals in Scotland and the South of England, including short periods in Brighton and in the Naval Hospital at Portsmouth, he married Margaret Bailey (no relation) whom he had met as a nurse at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and, together, as dedicated Christians, they joined the Mission field. In 1890, James was appointed as medical superintendent of the Church Missionary Society hospital in Nablus in Palestine, the main town of what is now the West Bank, but which was then part of the Ottoman Empire, and a place that has for centuries been a centre of religious and political conflict. Formerly known as Scechem, it was the holy city of the Samaritans, and their temple on Mount Gerizim still overlooks the centre. The Samaritans were always a despised minority (hence the Biblical parable of the good one) but in view of their ancient territorial claim that they are the only Jews who have always been around in the homeland, they have now been more or less accepted into Israeli society. We have few details of the Baileys’ life in Nablus, but one can imagine the difficulties of a young Scottish couple, attempting to preach the Christian Gospel and practice medicine in a dusty, hostile environment, with few drugs and instruments, and not much to offer over and above the skills of the local practitioners. They spoke no Arabic or Hebrew, and Margaret’s situation as a Western female must have been even more constricted than that of a nurse in Saudi Arabia today. They could certainly set fractures and open abscesses, and coming from Edinburgh with its long tradition of obstetrics, they probably delivered babies more skillfully and less destructively than did the local village women. They also had the mixed advantages of being unofficial repre-
sentatives of British imperial power, with all of the respect, authority and odium which that carried, though the Baileys would probably have preferred to overlook such a connection. They must have felt physically uncomfortable for much of the time, hot, tired and not too well fed, vulnerable to all the bacteria and parasites of the Middle East, with little understanding of hygiene, nor of the elementary principles of rehydration.

Margaret became pregnant very shortly after their arrival in Nablus, but continued to work. It was not surprising that a baby born in those unpromising conditions died at the age of two days. Later evidence suggests that it was a son. Margaret developed a puerperal illness which seems in the first instance to have been a fever, but was rapidly followed by a full-scale depression, during which she developed the conviction that she had been the direct cause of the baby’s death, an idea which would haunt her for the rest of her life. She became silent and withdrawn, with outbursts of uncontrollable weeping. Later accounts suggest that the loss of their child in these difficult circumstances was borne fairly stoically by James Bailey, in contrast with the devastating effect that it had on his young wife. Life in Nablus became hard to bear. Dr Bailey applied to the Church Missionary Society for release from his contract, and the young couple returned to Scotland in the autumn of 1891.

According to her sister Edith, who was 16 at the time of their return, Margaret arrived from Palestine in a highly fraught and unstable condition, quite unable to make any rational decision. James, on the other hand, was calm and determined. He at first searched for work in and around his native Edinburgh, but soon discovered, as had many of his compatriots, that Scotland already had more than enough doctors, so that he looked towards the more affluent South of England. He had already worked in Brighton and Portsmouth, but found no opening there, and his discovery of a vacant practice in the village of Bishopstoke in Hampshire was exactly what was needed. Lying on a bend of the river Itchen between Winchester and Southampton, Bishopstoke provided the sort of rural peace which James was seeking after his harsh experiences in the mission field, and gave him some hope that the environment would provide a haven for his wife to recover her balance. The fact that he was a keen fisherman may have contributed to its appeal. The family found a house (“Hazelmere”) in the quiet St Mary’s Road, next to the church, settled in and began to establish a practice. But this seemingly tranquil village had been caught up in the wake of the industrial revolution and was in fact the scene of bitter social conflict.

**Bishopstoke**

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Bishopstoke had been an entirely agricultural community, most of whose inhabitants worked on the land or in related crafts such as thatching, milling, harness-making or in the smithy. Regular paid employment was hard to come by, and families were forced to earn a little extra
from such work as grave-digging and stone-breaking. Children from the age of seven were expected to earn their keep, and were hired out to local farmers. The community was poor and undernourished, and deaths were frequent from fever, consumption and dysentery. Those who through old age or infirmity were unable to work were housed in the poorhouse, founded in 1793 and maintained at the expense of the parish until 1840. In that year the character of the village underwent a radical change, with the opening of the London to Southampton railway, which made travel easier, and brought into the village not only workers connected with the railway, but also wealthier families who found in Bishopstoke pleasant rural surroundings within easy reach of the nearby towns. Tension arose between the established farmers and county families, the new arrivals from Southampton and Portsmouth (many of them military or naval officers), and the agricultural workers and railway employees, most of whom came from distant parts of the country or from Ireland, and were resented as foreign invaders. This situation became much worse in 1885 when the London and South Western Railway moved its main depot from Nine Elms in London to Eastleigh, just a mile from Bishopstoke. This provoked a rapid rise in population with the acquisition of farming land for the construction of terraced housing for the new working class. The old church, which had stood on the village green overlooking the river Itchen since 1825, became too small, and a wealthy local man, Mr Alfred Barton, offered a new site together with £1000 towards the building costs, on condition that “all the seats should be free”. A bitter dispute flared up between the benefactor and the owners of “faculty pews” in the old church. They had paid for exclusive use of their high-walled box pews, which in the absence of the owners remained empty, so that the ordinary members of the congregation were obliged to stand at the back of the church, once the limited free seating had been taken up. The newcomers were quite unused to these feudal ways, and expressed their resentment loudly and publicly. The argument rumbled on for years, long after the new church was completed in 1891, with the pew owners and established families attempting to preserve the old church, which was rapidly deteriorating. An attempt was made to maintain Divine Service there but the Bishop ruled that this could only be done if the parishioners paid for a curate, and this they were not prepared to do. The local doctors were dragged into the dispute and the District Medical Officer, Dr Harnett, declared the old churchyard unsafe for burials (“considering that the public Elementary Schools are directly opposite...”). We do not know what stand Dr Bailey took on this issue, but it is probable that he sided with the parishioners, in opposition to Dr Harnett. The Winchester Consistory Court was asked to intervene, but the matter was not finally laid to rest until the old church was finally demolished in 1906.

James’ son Hamilton was born at Bishopstoke, in their new house in Scotton Road, on 1 October 1894. The birth was uncomplicated, and Edith, who now had started to train as a nurse, came down to help the family out. Margaret must have been comforted by the safe arrival of a healthy little boy, in circumstances so different from those in Nablus, but James was less secure. He remained in
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Bishopstoke for two more years, but eventually the pressures occasioned by the unsettled nature of the village, and the uncertain future of a single-handed practice in that environment, drove him to look for alternatives. Other doctors were arriving. The panel system had yet to be introduced, and the older established families, who could afford to pay for medical care, were moving out into the countryside, or into Portsmouth and Southampton, whereas the railway families and agricultural workers were economising on fees.

When a practice vacancy became available further down the river, the decision was easy. In 1896 James and Margaret and their two year old son moved from Bishopstoke to 37 Church Street, Southport, where quite soon another child was born, a daughter named May. May inherited many of the features of her mother. From the first she was a disturbed and troublesome child, who behaved badly in public, and was difficult to know. Later, the parents sought professional help and were told that May was mentally ill, the diagnosis being “dementia praecox”, or what would now be called schizophrenia. This illness was a source of shame and embarrassment to the family, and it seems that the little girl was not allowed out of the house. There are no records of her in any of the surviving papers. Hamilton was brought up as if he had been an only son, and in later life he never mentioned his sister. This shadowy aspect of the family life was successfully concealed from the public, because a hint of a scandal of such a nature would have prejudiced the success of Dr Bailey’s medical practice. Much later on, at the age of 18, May was consigned to St Francis’ Mental Hospital at Haywards Heath (Figure 1.1) where she eventually underwent a prefrontal leucotomy, and from which she never emerged.

Figure 1.1: St Francis’ Hospital, Haywards Heath, formerly the Sussex County Lunatic Asylum
There is little information regarding Dr Bailey’s time in Southport, but as no partners are recorded in the Medical Directory, it seems that he must have been in single-handed practice. In any event he spent only two years there, and in 1898 moved to Eastbourne, where he practised from No. 13 Cavendish Place. This again was a temporary stopping place, pending his final move to Brighton, where he had briefly worked as a young doctor and where he was to spend the next 30 years.

**Brighton and Hove**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the former small Sussex fishing village of Brightlemstone had been transformed by the Prince Regent into a fashionable marine resort. Since then, Brighton had expanded and grown rich, and at the time of the Baileys’ arrival it was at its heyday as a prosperous residential and semi-industrial town, with a Royal Pavilion, fine theatres, hotels and restaurants, magnificent Georgian architecture, an aquarium, two piers and flourishing tourism. There were in fact three distinct communities in the Brighton complex. The richest of these centred around the imposing seafront hotels, The Metropole and The Grand (Figure 1.2), where multinational deals were sealed over brandy and cigars, the Old Ship which attracted the local gentry and merchants, and The

![Figure 1.2: The Brighton Seafront 1904, showing The Metropole Hotel in the background (Courtesy of the Brighton Museum).](image)
Norfolk which was much patronised by the Jewish community. Brighton was a major commuter town for senior managers in the City of London, exactly one hour from Victoria Station (time for a hand of whist on the Brighton Belle with its silverware and fringed lampshades), whose homes lay mainly in the Regency squares and the cliffs of Kemp Town and the Marine Drive.

At the opposite end of the social range, Brighton competed with Southend in Essex in providing a day at the seaside for the working people of London with cockles and whelks, a free shingle beach, Volk’s model railway, saucy postcards, a racecourse, Louis Tussaud’s waxworks, the Albion football club and hundreds of cheap eateries. The communities collided in a somewhat farcical way through the divorce industry, as the easiest way to end a painful marriage was to produce proof of adultery (“two pairs of shoes outside the bedroom door, your Honour”) and Brighton with its large number of prostitutes and small hotels was ideally placed to provide the necessary facilities. Parallel with and partly as a result of these social contrasts, there was the large and flourishing criminal underclass, as described by Graham Greene in *Brighton Rock*, centred around the greyhound track and racecourse. But all this mixture of history, vulgarity, crime, money and fun depended on the third Brighton, the people who lived there and ran the place, the building contractors, bank managers, shopkeepers and assistants, small firms of solicitors, secretaries and innumerable servants, who were Dr Bailey’s patients, and whose lives young Hamilton saw at close range as he accompanied his father on his rounds. The family home at No. 100 Rugby Road lay in a quiet residential area of the town, inhabited for the most part by this sort of people. A few patients came to the house, but Margaret did not welcome this, and the main practice premises were at No. 88 Lewes Road, a busy commercial street, easily accessible both to shoppers and visitors. The occasional “carriage trade” was important to the success of the enterprise.

This was the town in which young Hamilton grew up, to which he returned from his school holidays, and in which he observed his father’s increasingly busy and successful practice. The practice was on the approved list of both Brighton and Hove, so that Dr Bailey could work in either place, and although Hove is continuous with Brighton it was and still is a very different sort of town. On the sea front, the boundary is marked by an inconspicuous mark on the pavement and a winged statue, while the terrace of renaissance mansions overlooking the Channel continues imperturbably across the dividing line (Brusswick Square and Adelaide Crescent are as good as anything Brighton or Kemp Town have to offer). However, inland Hove is quite distinct. Whereas Brighton was a County Borough in its own right, which meant that it had its own local government, Hove lay in the county of West Sussex and was subject to the restraining influences of the rural background. The excitement, the raffish and glamorous criminal elements, the music, the drama and the colour of Brighton were matched in Hove by a degree of respectability which in its sheer stuffiness becomes almost exotic. Hove was a town whose prosperity depended on the elderly, the wealthy and the retired. Every day, scores of Bath chairs could be
seen moving slowly along the sea front, the occupants, their knees securely tucked into tartan rugs, propelled by attendants often almost as decrepit as themselves. Crime in Brighton meant muggings and knifings in the street, with motorbikes screaming away into the darkness. Crime in Hove, if ever detected, implied terrible things done behind lace curtains and hidden in the cellar.

To a local doctor, the divide was quite simple. Brighton people by and large were supported by charity or were on the panel. Hove people paid directly. Dr Bailey’s dual appointment gave him access to the Brighton, Hove and Preston Dispensary, founded in 1846 where patients without means could receive treatment. The stipend was small, but the professional satisfaction was high. and there were indirect benefits. As the dispensary lay in Hove, it received charitable support from middle-class families, a connection which gave Dr Bailey entry into the more affluent society which supported the private side of his practice.

But there was a problem. Margaret’s mental illness, which had started following the death of her first child in Nablus, and had survived two others, reappeared in active and veneful form. She was beautiful, manipulative, very sociable, and unwilling (and probably unable) to take on the responsibilities demanded of a general practitioner’s wife. It has been rumoured that she found it hard to resist the approaches of her husband’s more influential patients, which would have been in character, but if she was unfaithful to her husband, no proof remains. What is certain is that she was so preoccupied with her personal problems that she could not relate to her growing son and mentally deranged daughter, whom she treated with alternating bouts of affection and abuse. Soon after the family arrived in Brighton, she started to drink heavily. Quite often, Dr Bailey would be summoned from the surgery back to Rugby Road by the Police because his wife had been found insensate in the middle of the town and brought home in a cab. He bore these episodes with a certain stoicism, but the impression develops that, in order to continue his professional life, he felt the need to isolate himself from emotional incursions, which meant that he was unable to express love and affection (always assuming that he felt them) not only to his increasingly alienated wife, but also towards young Hamilton.

Margaret was treated intermittently at a private mental hospital at Ticehurst near Tunbridge Wells in Kent, but Dr Bailey’s practice could not support this for long, and, as expenses mounted, she was transferred during her periods of instability to an institution at Haywards Heath which had started life as the Sussex County Lunatic Asylum, then became the Brighton Borough Mental Hospital, and was eventually given the decorous name of St Francis Hospital. The buildings still stand as a huge, empty mausoleum in the grounds of new Princess Alexandra Hospital, which now serves the local Sussex community (Figure 1.1). This type of institution typified the enlightened Victorian attitude to mental illness. Instead of the barbarities of Bedlam where madmen were chained in cages for the amusement of the populace, the nineteenth-century philanthropists built palatial asylums for the reception of lunatics, surrounded usually by large gardens
tended by the inmates. Gardening was not only therapeutic but also made economic sense, in that any of the produce not consumed on the premises could be sold to help support the asylum. Each county had one or more of these institutions, and the county of London necessarily had a great number, situated outside the centre, where land was cheaper. To the north were Napsbury and Friern, and to the south, Netherne and Banstead. There were similar large asylums to the East and West of the capital, in an area referred to by cynical civil servants as “the loony belt”. St Francis in Sussex was absolutely representative of this type of institution. Almost certainly, the rejected daughter May would have been in the hospital at the same as her mother, but the records have disappeared.

Hamilton grew up in a family overshadowed by mental illness, which they tried, not always successfully, to conceal. There were bouts of angry alienation, where the faults of an adolescent were harshly criticised, and his small successes disregarded. A few years later on, when he timidly informed his mother that he had failed a medical school entry examination, her reply was “you fool!” This small incident is an example of what must have been typical of his family life.

Perhaps luckily for all parties concerned, there was a safety valve for family tensions, which was the uniquely British institution of the boarding Preparatory School (preparatory, that is, for the Common Entrance examination to one of the major Public Schools). Originally created for the needs of temporary orphans of army officers or parents serving in India and other unhealthy parts of the Empire, they soon became the accepted norm for the education of boys of eight to twelve years of age from middle-income families: accepted at least by the fathers but often to the great distress of the small victims and their mothers, who saw no reason to break up the family in this way. In Hamilton’s case, however, there were compelling motives for getting him out of the house. There were a large number of these prep schools distributed along the South Coast at that time. The small town of Seaford, alone, had over a hundred of them. Some were very good, but many had been set up by a business-minded headmaster with no particular educational qualifications, more of a proprietor than an educator, often supported by a hard-working wife who acted as combined matron, secretary and teacher of the junior classes, and by a collection of assistant masters and mistresses, some of them dedicated teachers but usually including various sorts of social misfits and, as is clear from later accounts of the inmates, a fair quota of paedophiles. The recruitment process was totally controlled by the small London firm of Messrs Gabbitas and Thring, a partnership whose smooth working was somewhat impaired through the long-standing mutual detestation that existed between its two members.

Although there were many prep schools in Brighton, it was decided to send young Hamilton back to Southport to board, presumably because of Dr Bailey’s previous connections with the town. The school chosen was “Durley” (Principal Mr D. Herridge), and Hamilton seems to have been happy there,
according to the fragmentary recollections of a fellow pupil. It seems that Mr Herridge was a likeable and conscientious man, but we have no accurate record of the school’s standard nor of its staffing, and it has long since disappeared.

**Ramsgate**

Suitably prepared by Durley, Hamilton was sent on to St Lawrence College, Ramsgate (Figure 1.3), where he arrived in 1904. We have ample records of this school, which still flourishes. St Lawrence’s was a religious foundation that had started in 1879, some twenty years before Bailey arrived. An address given by the first headmaster, the Reverend E. C. d’Auquier, recorded the early years of the school and gives a flavour of the institution.

![Figure 1.3: St Lawrence College, Ramsgate](image)

*The instruction given in the school continues on a satisfactory footing. Every pupil is expected to read his Bible morning and evening, and to kneel by his bedside for a few moments before beginning the day’s work or retiring to rest. In addition to this, we have the ordinary morning family prayers, at which all the masters and servants are present. The first half-hour of every day is devoted to the study of the Bible. The boys learn a few verses by heart, repeat them, and a short explanation or exhortation arising from the text is then given.*

*The Greek Testament class for the older boys, held by myself, meets three times a week. A new feature this term, which I feel sure will be appreciated, is the intro-
Perhaps a word about our Staff of Masters may not be uninteresting. Including myself, we now have five Masters of Arts of Cambridge or Oxford, two London Graduates, two English masters, who are about to proceed to their degree, two French and German masters, one of whom is a BA-es L1., and two music and drawing masters.

In addition to the secular education, great attention continues to be given to physical training. Cricket, football, tennis, tricycling, swimming, have been in full activity; and a look at our boys will convince anyone that the healthiness of the body is considered no less than that of the mind. (Cheers)

We have also lately introduced a Debating Society, which gives promise of good speakers in the future. The library has been enriched by the addition of many volumes for Sunday and week-day reading.

A high moral and spiritual standard is observable among the boys, and the senior boys' influence in the school is all that I could desire. (Cheers)

St Lawrence's was typical of the semi-private institutions that were springing up all round England at that time. These represented a middle ground of education, created by the demands of the upwardly mobile semi-professional classes, who while dissatisfied with the facilities offered by the Board and parochial schools were at the same time unable to afford the fees demanded by the more prestigious places such as Eton, Winchester, Rugby and Marlborough. As with the prep schools, the South Coast, which was recognised to be bracing and healthy, abounded in this type of school, which offered boarding facilities for pupils from the cities and more "relaxing" parts of the country, but at the same time depended heavily on the local population to provide them with day pupils.

Hamilton Bailey was a pupil at St Lawrence's from Michælmas Term 1908 to Summer Term 1910. He was in the Dark Red House of which the Housemaster was Mr W. Longbourne-Smith ("Dark Red" referred not to the brickwork but rather to the colour coding of the group of pupils under Mr Longbourne Smith's benevolent guidance. They all wore dark red caps and blazers). His intellectual development is not recorded, but he does not seem to have distinguished himself academically. In fact, when Dr Bailey told the headmaster that Hamilton wished to become a doctor, the response was that the boy did not have the brains for it. It also seems unlikely that he was much affected by the efforts of the school to direct him into the correct spiritual pathways, as in later life he seldom went to church and while not taking up a stance with free-thinkers and atheists, he seemed quite devoid of any religious beliefs. Rather surprisingly, however, he retained in later life the capacity to quote long passages from the Bible, giving accurate chapter and verse numbers, and only St Lawrence, with its strong exegetic tradition, could have given him this fund of knowledge.
Hamilton was large for his age and an excellent swimmer. The school record of 1905 recorded him as first in the one length competition and in July 1910 he won the three lengths race in the school swimming sports and was junior deep sea swimming champion of the South Coast. This is an impressive title, but there is no record of the rules of the competition or how many entered it in that year. He certainly did not swim the Channel. Around this time, he developed a keen interest in photography, which was rather unusual in the early years of the century, and found a fellow enthusiast in the school, with whom he exchanged cameras. This hobby was very useful to him in later life.

In many respects, it seems that Bailey led a fairly undistinguished career at St Lawrence, and at times was argumentative and difficult. At the end of one term he had accumulated so much detention that one of the masters had to remain at the school for the first few days of the holidays to supervise his work. Given the circumstances of his father’s practice in Brighton, it is quite possible that Hamilton did not feel this prolongation of the term as much of a penance. Margaret Bailey was a tempestuous and unpredictable wife and mother, and 100 Rugby Road, with the unspoken presence of his mentally injured sister, and James Bailey’s preoccupation with his busy practice, was no a haven of peace for an adolescent. Holidays were quite often spent with Aunt Edith, Margaret’s sister, a calm and secure person with no children of her own, who was very fond of him. His departure from the school is recorded in the St Lawrence valet notes for 1910, with no qualifying comment.