

S for Sunray treatment

The lady in the starched white coat tells me to take off all my clothes. All of them? I shiver with cold or fright.

“Oh, you can keep your knickers on,” she calls.

I’ve had whooping cough followed by the measles.

“You need building up, “says my mother, as though I’m a Meccano Model.

Mum takes my clothes over her arm and ties one of Dad’s big cotton hankies around my neck. She leaves me and goes off to sit in the waiting room. The lady in the white coat takes my hand. She has given me some green goggles to wear. I must look like a deep sea diver or Mr Horobin when he rides his motor-bike. The goggles smell rubbery and they hurt my cheeks and nose in their tight grip. I go through into a dark room without any windows. There are some little chairs arranged in a circle around a big lamp. Some other children are sitting there, also just wearing their knickers and goggles. The lady switches on the lamp. It looks like sunshine and feels warm on my skin. The lady tells us to sit still and try not to look at the light.

On the way home Mum buys some cod liver oil and malt from the chemist’s.

“That’ll put your spark back, “ the chemist says. I like the idea of fizzing like a sparkler on Bonfire Night.