Mabel Cooper: First Impressions of the Outside World

When I first came out of St Lawrence’s I thought the children were midgets. People have laughed at me because they said to me ‘was that the difficultest part of coming out of there and finding the children are midgets?’. I never saw children, only children in wheelchairs, and what-have-you, not children running about and doing all the things they are doing. So really the children fascinated me, seeing them it really did fascinate me.

I’d never been on a bus or a train. Because you never went. These are all the things you didn’t do. It’s not ordinary like people going out and doing what they want to do. In them places you didn’t. So going on a train or going on the underground they are all new to me. I’m used to the bus now because I go so much. I have a pass now so I don’t need to buy a ticket.

*Extract from* Mabel Cooper (1997) ‘Mabel Cooper’s Life Story’ in Atkinson, D., Jackson, M. and Walmsley, J. (Eds) *Forgotten Lives: Exploring the History of Learning Disability*, Kidderminster, BILD p. 30.

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