

YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE A CHANCE!

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*YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE
A CHANCE!*

The story of an adoption

by

JOAN PORTER BUXTON

With much gratitude to Gwen and Francis, Stella and Ken, Olga and Ursula, and a host of others, without whose help this book could not have been written.

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First memories

When I think of my childhood, the sun always seems to be shining. There they are—my London home, a quiet corner house in a quiet Paddington square; my country home set in a Sussex garden, overlooking Ashdown Forest.

I suppose my background would have been described as 'upper middle class'—Edward VII to George V vintage. I was born in January 1905, so I can remember my elders discussing the Armenian atrocities, which ended in 1908. But equally vivid are mind pictures of Gladstone, Disraeli, Palmerston, to say nothing of the snobbish 'Lady Vere de Vere', made familiar from my avid study of old, bound volumes of *Punch*, mostly looked at as I lay on my stomach on the drawing-room rug.

I lived in the era of children's nurseries and nannies—the latter having almost more influence over and certainly more contact with the children. But the nursery was a cosy, safe place, with its crackling fire and tall fire-guard; our baths taken in a round hip bath in front of the fire, and, in our Sussex home, the warm feeling of hearing, as I lay in bed at night, the murmur of voices, as the staff, in the kitchen below, talked over an evening cup of tea.

It is strange the things you remember—some so obviously important at the time, others quite trivial. Yet others were, for me, particularly puzzling. These latter were, many of them, cleared up only at a much later date, but were to have a large influence on my life.

Mother did not often visit the nursery. When she did, it was a joy. The first time I actually remember was when I had a sore

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head, and Nannie was not making it any less sore by the stinging stuff she was rubbing into it. Then came mother with sweets, and all was well! The fire-light flickering on the walls, lighting up the much-loved green mackintosh with hood and brass buttons, which hung on the door and was the pride of my heart! My cot felt secure and the shadows dancing across the room, and the soft sounds of the dying fire only added to the sense of security.

One day, standing in my cot, I threw a cup at Nannie. As I had some childish illness, I was not punished. Yet when, at about the same time, I took sweets from the dining room drawer where I knew they were kept, I was whipped soundly and no one was allowed to speak to me for a week. It was very puzzling; I knew that both things were wrong, so why was one overlooked and the other so painfully punished? The punishment, severe as it was, did not cure my dishonesty; I was just more careful not to be found out. In our Sussex garden, for instance, I took gooseberries rather than strawberries (which I much preferred) because gooseberry bushes were out of sight of the house.

I could not have been more than two and a half when one day Nannie took me down, duly scrubbed and brushed and in my best pinafore, to the drawing-room. There was my mother with a strange lady. Looking back, I know I felt there was something very special about that lady, but it was not for two decades that I learnt why. I just remembered that her name was Mrs Porter. About four years later a small boy, about a year and a half younger than I was, appeared and I was told that he was my brother Denys. I suppose I accepted that babies sometimes did appear dressed in white linen suits and able to walk and talk. But I was baffled that he seemed to remember such odd things—God, for instance, who, he assured me, had a beard and was called by those who knew Him well, as Denys seemed to do, ‘Mr Constable’. The beard

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was all right. Of course God had a beard, sitting up there on His cloud—but 'Mr Constable'? That really was odd; and why did not I, the elder sister, know God at least as intimately as Denys?

Denys was a distinct asset as a companion. He was a dear little chap with blue eyes and pink cheeks; he got on well with everyone and only occasionally had what was known as 'the sulks'—so different from the violent outbursts of temper—hitting, kicking, despair and hating—that seemed so often to possess me. On the other hand, Denys was a threat as a rival for attention. But I do not think that we quarrelled more than most brothers and sisters, and it certainly never dawned on either of us to do other than accept that we *were* brother and sister.

Another early memory is of standing on our drawing-room balcony and looking down Southwick Street towards Oxford and Cambridge Terraces. We were watching the cortège taking the body of King Edward VII to Paddington Station en route for burial at Windsor. Seven kings, including Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, walked behind that coffin—more monarchs than exist in Europe today. As the supremely sorrowful, but richly dignified strains of the Dead March were heard, I felt as though a great wave swept over me, small as I was; I wept and was filled with a great sense of awe. At the same time, I must confess, I was very conscious of, and pleased with, the black ribbon that had been tied in my auburn hair as a mark of respect to the dead monarch!

The following summer, we watched the local Coronation procession, with flags, floats and bands, pass our garden gate at Crowborough. I was given a Coronation mug with the heads of King George V and Queen Mary on one side, and a verse of the National Anthem on the other; when you drained the mug of milk, an angel appeared against the light at the bottom.

I have three other very clear and poignant memories from

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these early days. The first is of being taken to see a 'moving picture' of the Delhi Durbah, held in honour of the recent Coronation of King George V. The magnificence, strangeness and beauty of the turbans and robes of the Rajahs and Maharajahs, the elephants, and, above all, the immense dignity and majesty of the Emperor and Empress, as our King and Queen then were, opened up entirely new worlds to me. Indeed, I started to write a story, set in India, as a result, only abandoning it when mother pointed out, quite rightly, that I knew nothing about India. Of course I did not; that was the point of writing the story—anything could happen there!

The second memory is very different. It is of sitting in Church and hearing that the Titanic had struck an iceberg and sunk. I think at some point in the service, the organist must have played a solo of some kind. Anyway, I remember sitting in a sort of frozen horror, feeling that I was listening to the grinding and crashing of the iceberg as it battered and squeezed the immense ship to death.

My third memory is also an impression, though a very clear one. I cannot tell now whether I was actually taken to see a 'moving picture' of Scott's ill-fated Antarctic Expedition though I think I must have been. I have the clearest impression on my mind's eye of that unending waste of snow, the tiny, lonely black tent, and Titus Oates, that man of courage, stepping out into the blizzard, to his certain death, because he knew that the state of his health would endanger his comrades' lives.

All three of these are almost clearer to me today than are some of the things that happened ten or fifteen years ago.

My London and Crowborough homes

All these years later, I see that gracious Crowborough house and remember it in early summer, the shape of the roof outlined on the lawn in dewy shadow, soft and damp to small, bare feet; it was a pleasant contrast to the crispness of the dry, sun-warmed turf beyond.

In London, we had four maids plus Nannie and the chaffeur, Cockrill. At Crowborough, we had two maids permanently living there—one, a comfortable woman of ample proportions, called Bertha, who previously had served my dead grandmother. There was also a young girl, known as the 'between maid' or 'tweeny' who, by some means unknown to me, appeared in whichever home we were in. She did the rough work. We had Brooker as well, our greatly loved gardener, who would wheel us around in his barrow, or pretend to tip us into the water butt. This threat seemed to us to be excruciatingly funny, and rather exciting.

I still have such vivid memories of much-loved View Field. I recall, especially, the carved, ivory Chinese junk that stood under a glass dome near the drawing-room piano. I would spend hours looking at the tiny figures, the hanging baskets of flowers and the delicate curlicues and decorations that loving hands had carved. The Broadwood piano itself was a friend too. It had such a soft, mellow voice—quite different from the gold and fire of our London Bechstein. Then, at the turn of the stairs, under a big sunny window, sat another friend; he was a marble fisher boy, patiently, week after week, year after year,

mending his net, the work held taut by his toe pushed through one of the holes. At some time, someone, I suppose my mother, had decorated his head and shoulders with strips of vivid African beadwork. The effect must have been bizarre, but I loved the glowing colours against my little friend's white arms and curly hair. Although we children were not supposed to use the 'front' staircase, I would tiptoe up to where the fisher boy sat, put my arm around his shoulders and whisper secrets into his ear, whilst, over his head, the big square wall clock sonorously ticked away the moments, or sounded out the hours in his golden voice.

Although I was nineteen when View Field was sold, I remember nothing about it. One day it was there, the next it was gone. I do not remember packing up my own belongings, even, though I do recall going round the garden and taking many photographs. Whether father longed for my help, or preferred just to sell up lock, stock and barrel I shall never know, but I am sure that it must have cost him as many pangs as its loss did to me. We never spoke of it, nor did we, on subsequent visits to Crowborough, go near it if we could help it.

My Christian names are Barbara Joan—I was Barbara when I was bad, Joan when I was good. I have never cared for the name Barbara since—especially as one of my Nannies told me that it meant 'stranger', and that was what I was. I did not know what she meant, but it was vaguely frightening.

It was a strange world by modern standards, and an unjust one. The servants were a race apart, appointed to serve us and to do our bidding. They lived in remarkably uncomfortable circumstances, worked for very small wages and were completely taken for granted. They had little time off. Sixty pounds a year and 'all found' was a generous wage for a cook.

We children were never supposed to go into the kitchen, but one of the delights of View Field was the ease with which this

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forbidden territory could be visited and the warm welcome of Charlotte, our cook there. Here were the delights of sugar lumps or crystallised cherries, to say nothing of running a finger around the mixing bowl when a cake went into the oven. 'Why put it into the oven?' I wondered, 'when the uncooked mixture was so delicious?' On Sundays it was taken for granted that we came back from church to find a hot roast dinner, complete with fruit tart, and two maids to serve it. I think the maids took it in turns to have Sunday afternoon off, and they had one other half day off a week. They had a fortnight's holiday a year, and it was thought a very generous innovation when it was decided to pay them 'board wages' during the holiday period. Up till then, holidays had been without pay.

In London, living as we did near Hyde Park, Nannie took us there for daily walks, and for an occasional picnic, complete with wicker picnic basket, spirit lamp and kettle. Sometimes we would go into Kensington Gardens by the Lancaster Gate entrance. There sat an old lady in a black shawl. A basket was at her side, and, in her hand was a stick from the top of which burst an inflorescence of balloons—red, yellow, green and blue, bobbing and shining in the sunlight. If Nannie was in a good mood, she would produce tuppence and buy us each a balloon. Then we would go across Kensington Gardens to the little dell, beloved of the nannies and their charges, where the rabbits came out and sat on the grass behind the railings. I firmly believed that they appeared when you pressed the right spike! As I could never remember which spike I had pressed successfully last time, it was always an exciting chance whether or not I had hit the right one this time. As you crossed Bayswater Road, you might see one of Thos. Tillings' white steam buses. Imagine our excitement when, one day, this rather special bus appeared, belching out steam in all directions! I can just remember seeing a horse bus, I think at Hyde Park Corner.

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Sometimes there would be tan bark laid down on the street outside a house. Nannie would tell us that it meant someone inside was very ill, so I would tiptoe along the pavement hoping that I would not disturb the invalid.

The street cries of London had not quite disappeared. 'Cane chair basket to mend' was a regular cry, also the bell of the muffin man, tray on head. We used to try and persuade mother to buy some for us, but she refused on the score that he probably kept them under his bed! 'Sweet lavender, come, buy my sweet lavender!' was another cry, or in this case, song, I remember.

The opening of Selfridge's grand store in Oxford Street was quite a landmark, though my mother highly disapproved of the disappearance of the little shops she liked to patronise. We were taken to see this wonder shop during its first week and, to our delight, were each given a hydrogen filled balloon. Denys promptly let go of his and away it went up, up, up into the sky. Of course he wanted mine, but I knew my rights and stoutly maintained my hold on it! Just once, Nannie took me to the 'Penny Bazaar' in the Edgeware Road. It was a horseshoe shaped affair, lit by flaring naphtha lights. There was a fabulous collection of 'goodies' at a penny each, but, what mother would have said had she known of the expedition, I shudder to think! Another very nostalgic memory is of the 'clop, clop' of the huge Western Railway van horses, setting out from Paddington Station for their day's work. I always knew it was 6.00 a.m. when I heard them. I imagine they passed quite near, probably down Oxford and Cambridge Terraces to the Edgeware Road.

Christmas and more childhood recollections

On Christmas Day we often went to our cousins who lived in a big house in Lancaster Gate, London. It needed to be big, for there were eleven of them—eight girls and three boys. The house is now a hotel. I was always a little scared of the cousins, as we did not see much of them. The two youngest, who were just a little older than me, were known to us by the portman-teau name of 'Olgaranursula'—Olga and Ursula. But I always felt a little guilty that I found it hard to remember the names of the rest of the family. All these older cousins, by the way, had to be addressed as 'Cousin' So-and-So.

On Christmas Day, we had a proper 'late' dinner, served at 6.30 p.m. for the benefit of the younger members. I would be decked out in a white muslin frock with a blue sash, my feet in white shoes and stockings, my straight auburn hair tied up with white ribbons, one on each side of a centre parting. I would try to disguise the agony I was suffering from my best shoes pressing on my many chilblains. Because of chilblains, my hands often had to be covered with openwork silk mittens to hide the bandages which covered those that had broken. I think Denys mostly sported a white sailor suit, or, when very young, I remember his wearing a ruby velvet suit with a lace collar.

We had a marvellous Christmas dinner. My uncle, a superb carver, always prided himself on getting all the helpings off one side of the huge turkey. After dinner, he would disappear, but this we hardly noticed in the excitement of going up to the

drawing-room and seeing the wonderful Christmas Tree, with the piles of gifts lying around it. Then, in would come Father Christmas himself. I swear that on one occasion, he was in a sledge drawn by reindeer, but I am afraid this *must* be a figment of my imagination. Santa did have a slight look of my uncle, but he also had a uncanny way of giving a small girl the very thing for which her heart longed! My amazed joy and completely tongue-tied gratitude for the large golden haired doll in a white, broderie Anglais frock that he put into my arms one year, is something I shall never forget. She was to be my boon companion for many years and went through many of the vicissitudes that I went through. Her poor fingers cracked under my well meant ministrations for her chilblains.

Of course, early in the morning we had found presents and bulging stockings at the foot of our beds, and had all the excitement of opening them and discovering what new treasures they contained. But I think that the thing that pleased me most, perhaps, was the golden sovereign (£1)—such a pretty, shining coin (for it was always a new one)—that great aunt Agnes gave me. This was impounded at the end of the day by mother so that it could be spent on something useful. Until my late twenties I used a pigskin writing case which was the result of one of these early gifts. Not a bad return for £1!

I think at this point I must mention our various pets. There was 'Blossom', for instance. Blossom was our generic name for any current canary. Then there was 'Pat'. He was an Irish terrier with three legs. We took it for granted that that was the way Irish terriers were, but poor old Pat lost his out hunting. However, his loss did not stop his hunting, he merely went on until he broke the leg at the opposite corner. This one however did not have to be taken off, I am glad to say. A third friend was 'Jerry', a wire-haired terrier. He was an endearing animal who regularly, when given his nightly ration of biscuit while my parents drank their coffee, ate all but three bits, then came

and asked for his lump of sugar. If he did not get it, he would put his nose under the coffee tray, lift it gently and let it down again. His other trick took place at family prayers. Each morning the maids, in their print frocks and white caps, filed into the dining room before breakfast; they sat on one side of the room, we on the other. At a given point we all whirled round, knelt down and buried our faces in our chair seats. Jerry, sitting demurely in his basket, promptly got out, and settled himself on the forbidden fur rug in front of the fire, until something in my father's voice warned him that the prayers were coming to an end. Back into his basket he would get, and would be found sitting there as good as gold. The one thing he did not know was that the basket creaked as he got in and out, so his secret was also out.

My birthday was at the end of January, and it was a hazardous time for any hoped-for party, since it was quite likely that we would be enveloped in a 'pea-souper'—a horrible, vile-smelling, yellow-green fog, in which, quite literally, you could not see your hand before your face.

In London, mother and father were generally only seen when we were taken, neat and tidy, down to the drawing-room after tea, to be read to, or to sing nursery rhymes. Sometimes they did visit us in the nursery, and, an embarrassing ceremony, 'heard our prayers' after we had gone to bed at night. I do not remember being cuddled, or sitting on a parental lap, though, of course, there was always a good-night kiss. At Crowborough, there was always the chance of finding the parents in the garden, and even having them play with us. But very early in our lives we somehow realised that when we were naughty, and we were very often naughty, we stepped out of our parents' love into a cold world of punishment which was often a whipping, or hours in bed, and disgrace. It took many years of struggle to find a faith before I could think of God as anyone more than a disapproving judge Who put up with me because He was God,

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but Who really had very little use for me, and certainly no plan.

Sunday, however, was a rather special day, with its own kind of security. It began with clean clothes from bottom to top, and, of course, one's best dress. I remember when I was about three being taken to church in a push chair wearing, of all things, a black leghorn hat, trimmed with white water lilies and tied under the chin with white satin ribbons. On Sundays, father always wore a top hat, tail coat and pin-stripe trousers when in London. I felt very proud of him as the four of us made our way to church. Toppers in those days were not the smooth, grey felt affairs of today; they were black and covered with a sort of pan velvet. Every time father's was worn, it received a solicitous polishing from a special grey velvet pad kept in the hall drawer. One day, seeking to be helpful, I tried to do the polishing. Alack, I did it the wrong way of the nap and the hat looked rather like an outraged black chick. I was extremely unpopular!

After Sunday breakfast, and before we set out for church, we children sang hymns with father round the drawing-room piano. I enjoyed this, except when we had been naughty, when we had to sing 'we are but little children weak' with its reference to 'giving gentle answers back again'—an attitude I felt far from adopting on those occasions! After church we would join the Sunday parade along the paths parallel to Park Lane, inside Hyde Park. Ladies and gentlemen and their children would stroll along, greeting each other with grave courtesy, the children walking sedately beside them. No hoops or skipping ropes or balls on Sundays!

School and the First World War

In 1913, when I was eight, I went to my first boarding school. It was an extraordinary little place, quite near our Crowborough home. It consisted of eight girls ranging in age from eight (me) to eighteen. It was my first experience of a frequently recurring pattern—i.e. being sent away to some strange place, knowing that I went because I was in disgrace. Actually, the school was quite fun. In summer we had meals out of doors and went on expeditions. We had competitions to see who knew the name of the most roses, or other garden flowers, or who could arrange a bunch of wild flowers in the prettiest way. I do not remember learning anything useful at all there! Perhaps that was why, a couple of years later, I was sent to a proper boarding school at Moira House, Eastbourne.

Much of my two years at Moira House was bliss. We did lots of music, drawing and handwork—all of which I loved. We learned Dalcroze Eurythmics—expressing musical rhythm by bodily movement. I proved quite good at this and loved both lessons and teacher passionately. It was one of my first tragedies that I was taken away just as I was about to qualify for the 'demonstration class'—the aim of every pupil. It had all the excitement and kudos of travelling round the country with M. Jaques Dalcroze himself to show other schools what this method of teaching music was all about.

Meanwhile Denys was sent first to a preparatory school not far from home in London, then to a boarding school away up in Cumberland. Why he was sent so far away has always been a

mystery.

Denys and I had a friend, Annie Rainy, who for many years came to us for holidays at Crowborough. She greatly added to the joy, and the mischiefs, of life. She was pretty, with red-gold, curly hair, and could draw, paint, sing and roller-skate. She was always full of the most delightful ideas of how to get up to mild badnesses. We had an ancient lady's bicycle (not a free-wheeler) which we took turns to ride, madly careering round the wriggly garden paths or along nearby quiet roads. Our holidays were mostly spent, to our joy, at Crowborough; though I remember two wonderful summers, one spent in the Lake District in a small farm house just under Catbells, called 'Rolling End', and another at Kirbymoorside in Yorkshire. Near here was a cave where we loved to go, for we had been told that bones of pre-historic animals had been found there. The fact that the cave was now empty did not detract from its fascination. Another summer mother took me, all on my own, to Winchelsea. That was an experience I never forgot—to have mother all to myself and a mother who played with me and talked to me. We used to sit in a shady church yard, and she sewed or knitted while I played. We had 'elevenses'—chocolate, bananas and digestive biscuits—and she gave me tiny, green pottery jugs, made locally, which I thought were the most beautiful things I had ever possessed.

It was during one of my expulsions from home—to some cousins in Lossiemouth, Scotland—that the first World War broke out. That visit was a time of new and fascinating experiences; joys I had never before encountered. I stayed with my Spicer cousins in a large house with a crenellated roof, which gave it a castle-like appearance. I think in the second World War it was used as a 'Wrennery'. To my utter amazement, the sea came right up to the land, so to speak. So far I had only known the sea bounded by an esplanade. This combination of sand and sea, grass, trees and gorse was a much better idea.

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There was a children's golf course, and each morning we younger ones (I was nine) had a round of golf, then went down to the sea for a bathe. Of course you changed in a bathing hut, even in such a remote spot, and I remember entering the ocean clad in a red and white striped cotton garment reaching up to my neck and below my knees and elbows with frills at all the edges. After our bathe, naturally we were hungry, so buns on the beach were the next delight. Breakfast had already brought the entirely desirable experience of cornflakes and cream, or porridge and cream, and baps, hot from the baker's oven. Never had I had such breakfasts. My aunt was a delightful person; gentle and kind. She at once made me one of her large brood, and she had the most interesting ideas of entertaining the young. Each night one was given a small paper back book (I remember the covers were pink) containing fairy stories—a different one each night—and a few puzzles and riddles. These we were allowed to read in bed—a thing unknown at home.

It was one morning (a Sunday, I think) when we were sitting in the sun on the terrace that the news-boy appeared with the papers, and the news that we were at war with Germany. In no time at all, I was packed and sitting on my suitcase on the floor of a crowded train-compartment, in the charge of some strange man, I suppose a friend of my aunt and uncle. All night we slowly made our way to London, finally arriving four hours late. Woolley, my uncle's elderly and kindly coachman, was patiently waiting for 'Miss Joan', to take me home. There the maids did their best to deal with the situation. Mother was at Crowborough, father at his office. However, I was fed and put down to sleep, and then, in the evening, father appeared and took me to Crowborough.

The first two years of the war were spent at my Eastbourne school, and I cannot say that I remember much in the way of hardship. We pupils decided that, as our contribution to the war effort, we would only eat sweets as part of a meal, not as a

separate item. I really do not remember any other shortages—and sweets seemed in fairly good supply. I remember lots of bread spread with dripping—a real treat—which would have been quite impossible in the second world war, especially in a school.

The war brought a large camp to Crowborough, and I can vividly recall lying in bed in the summer gloaming and hearing the sound of 'The Last Post' floating across the fields and gardens, or being roused in the morning by the sound of 'Reveille' or 'Come to the Cookhouse door boys, come to the Cookhouse door'. I remember, too, the delights of a bluebell wood and a field of cowslips. Each Spring we went primrosing and the primroses *had* to be tied in bunches with red wool. We went blackberrying, too, in the autumn with crooked sticks cut by the gardener; Denys and I each had our own personal bushes and never trespassed on each other's preserves—except when we did, and a fight resulted!

In London we went to the big Presbyterian church in Marylebone. My mother, who was the daughter of a well known Scottish miniaturist, and the sister of Archibald Thorburn, the bird artist, was Presbyterian by upbringing. My father became one. He was first a Deacon, then an Elder, and finally Senior Session Clerk—the post next to the Minister in authority. Our Minister was R. C. Gillie—a tall, good-looking man with a charming wife and a family of four. One of the joys of church was the sermon he preached to us children, always beginning 'Dear boys and girls', in a sonorous voice, and then going on to ask some interesting question, which made one sit up straighter and think 'this is for *me*'.

At Crowborough there was no Presbyterian church, so we went to the Congregational church (my father's own denomination by upbringing). We children found this church entirely delightful; we called it the 'green seated church', from the unusual colouring with which the seats were stained. During the

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war I enjoyed going to the evening service, packed with khaki clad figures, and listening to the lusty singing. I would cheerfully trot the three miles there and back, all by myself, revelling in the summer evening sounds and smells.

I remember that my father volunteered as a special Constable and guarded the Paddington power station. My mother would take him his supper each evening. I often wished I could go with her and see my father on duty.

Queen's College

In 1917, much to my sorrow, I was taken away from Moira House, my Eastbourne school, and sent to Queen's College in Harley Street, where I spent the rest of my school days. At least my friend, Annie, was already there. I was sad when I found I was not to be in her form. We were both surprised that, in fact, I was in a form higher, for we had both been assured that, though I was a month older than her, I was not nearly as clever. We thought nothing of the two mile walk to school and back each day. A party of five of us, under the guardianship of Mr Black, the father of one of the girls, would set out and walk briskly from Paddington to Harley Street. It never occurred to us to go by bus—still less that we might be taken by car. We were, I am afraid, a source of apprehension and trouble to poor Mr Black! I cannot remember how we got home again—certainly he did not take us, and we were not allowed to go out alone. Incidentally, this rule applied until I was sixteen except in very unusual circumstances.

It was when I was twelve that some of the things that had puzzled me as a small child began to be cleared up. Out of the

blue, mother told me that Denys was not my brother. She and father were not my parents. I had been adopted when I was two, and, now I knew the facts, no more needed to be said. Denys had been fostered, rather than adopted, as I realised later. His father had died leaving a large family, and his mother was hard put to it to provide for them all, so she was grateful that he should be given a good home. Incidentally, 'Mr Constable' turned out to have been Denys' uncle! I had been, I think, more than usually difficult. Mother said, 'Maybe if you know what we have done for you, you will behave better and be grateful'. I think that she was completely baffled as to how to deal with the turbulent, self-willed girl I had become. There were no psychologists in those days to help her and I suppose no one to whom she could turn. The fact of our adoption had been kept a secret, even from the family, as far as possible. I was never allowed to refer to it again nor to ask questions. But that traumatic experience was unforgettable. I can remember the way the whole garden seemed to sway, and the awful burden of having to be grateful for anything so huge—the desolation of not knowing who I was or where I came from.

Meanwhile my world of course had disintegrated and I became more insecure and difficult than ever. I quote the words of a teenager, recently speaking of his own broken home: 'when things break up around you, something breaks down inside you, and you can no longer tell right from wrong'. I think, to some extent, this was true for me. Although we went to church each Sunday, and had nightly prayers and morning bible readings, God was never spoken about in our home. This sudden tumbling to pieces of all that I had taken for granted made me even harder to handle and added to my feelings of rebellion and frustration. I still had wild outbursts of rage. But I remember standing by the old nursery table one day and saying to myself 'this must stop'. Though I often lost my

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temper afterwards I never again experienced one of those almost demented rages.

Mother's death

It was a few months after this that mother became ill. I had no suspicion what the trouble was, though subconsciously I think I did have an idea that it might be serious.

One day, I was taken by an uncle to see the Tower of London. It was a pleasant and interesting day and an unusual one for me. When I got home I realised why I had been taken out. During my absence, father had collected Denys from his prep. school at Mill Hill, taken him home, and told him he was going back to his own mother. He was put on a train at Victoria Station and sent down to Hove, where his mother lived. She had remarried and wanted to have him back. My adopted mother was indeed seriously ill, and I suppose that she and my father felt that it was the answer to the problem that would arise if she died and he were left with two difficult young people to cope with. Denys' mother was more than happy to have him home with her, but, none the less, it was an extremely traumatic experience for him. Why my parents parted with him in this unkind way I have never been able to understand. What Denys went through I never knew till many, many years later, but I worried myself sick thinking of him and wondering what would happen to him. I was told that he was now called Dick Denys—that Denys had really been his surname—and that we were to have no further communication.

Actually he had my school address, and as I was often sent there to board, he wrote to me there, and there was no diffi-

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culty once I had his address to keeping in touch. It was many years before we met again, when, aged nineteen, he came to London to do a job in a grocer's shop and walked into church and sat in the pew in front of us. I recognised him by the scar on his eyebrow left by an argument he had had as a small boy with a lamp post. We met outside the church and planned further meetings. Dick, as I now had to call him, was invited to meals from time to time—a horrible experience, with him on his best behaviour, calling father 'Mr Buxton' and father treating him with distant courtesy as though he were some strange young man who happened to be visiting our home.

Before this—indeed less than a year after Dick's departure—mother died. She was ill for more than a year with cancer of the throat. I was by now a more or less permanent boarder at school and so only saw her in the holidays. One day at school, it swept over me that I had been a rotten and thoroughly selfish daughter. I poured my heart out in a letter to her telling her something of what I felt, that I wanted to be different, and to be a real daughter to her. That night I dreamt that she had died. I remember I awoke crying bitterly, it was so real. The next morning in the middle of a music lesson, I was sent for by the headmistress. She told me that my father had just telephoned to say that, indeed, mother had died during the night.

'Camp'

The year before, I had gone to a school girls' camp run by University women. 'The University Women's Camps for Schoolgirls' were mainly conducted by fairly newly graduated young women, though with a couple of older women in final

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charge. They were held in schools situated in pleasant country or seaside spots and gave plenty of opportunity for sport, expeditions and a chance to meet girls from varying types of schools. We all wore our gym slips and in an age when, even for school girls, dress was more formal and skirts longer, this in itself gave a sense of physical freedom and contributed to the mental freedom which I found attractive and exciting.

The daily programme began with small groups meeting with one of the officers. In these we had informal discussions on some book or scheme which enlarged our understanding of the person and power of Christ. We were free to ask questions and the groups were times of lively and honest discussion of doubts, queries, problems and beliefs. In the evening there was a simple act of worship. This included a brief talk by one of the officers which I personally almost always found stimulating and helpful. There was no sense of barrier or division between 'officers' and 'campers' and there was ample opportunity to talk more privately and intimately if we wished to do so. The element which meant most to me was the atmosphere of friendship and acceptance which was different from anything I had met elsewhere, and the realisation that I was free to express my ideas and questions and also had a contribution to make. The result of that first experience of camp in 1920 was to give me my first glimpse of religion as being a real and living part of everyday life. A tiny flicker of faith began to burn in my heart. It was the flicker that led me, I think, to write that letter to my adopted mother. When I heard that she was dead, and realised that my letter would not have reached her, the flicker nearly expired. However, at the camp I had met a woman who was a missionary in China. Month by month she wrote letters to me that fed my faith. It was she who helped me to find an unbreakable belief in the hereafter and to realise that my mother not only knew what I had written in that letter, but understood it now far better than she would ever have done

while on earth. What I owe to Marjory's faithful friendship and to her letters I can never say. God gave me a life line through her which kept that little flame alight.

The sins of the fathers

I find it difficult to write about my adopted mother, for she has never been more than a two-dimensional figure to me, since her death. I knew so little of her while she lived; we never talked of things that mattered and she found it so difficult to express affection, even to those nearest and dearest. Yet I do have memories that I treasure—of sitting on the drawing-room sofa as a small girl, during my after-tea visit, with her arm round me while she read 'The Forsaken Merman' to me. I did not understand much of it, but I felt safe and loved. She was able, too, to distinguish between the times when I was just in a horrible temper, and the near hysteria which came from a sense of insecurity and frustration. For the first I was severely punished, by a whipping or banishment to bed, where I lay hating all the world. In the second case, she never punished me. She would take me to her room and let me lie on her bed while she moved about doing this or that, or sat near me, quietly sewing. Gradually I would calm down and feel once more secure. Only once do I remember her letting me see what she was feeling. I found her in the garden in tears. But she quickly sent me away as though ashamed of her weakness. I wonder whether our subsequent relationship might not have been different had she been able to let me stay, and just sit with her, even if I could not have been told of her problem, or understood it. Not long ago I read a letter from her written

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shortly before she died which expressed her longing for my love and understanding, and for a daughter who would care for her in what she must have known were her last days. If only she or my father had been able to tell me the real state of things—I am sure it would have made all the difference, both then and subsequently. But, also, I refused to face the fact that mother was seriously ill, though in my heart of hearts I suspected it. I think I was too frightened to do so. The result was I became cold and callous.

When you shut your heart to that small voice inside—as I so often did—you close it to everyone and everything. Missing that chance to care for my mother and to realise her need for me meant that my response to any need around me was deadened. At the same time, I became filled with a longing to be accepted—a passionate compulsion to prove that I was right and my position secure. The more assured and dictatorial I appeared, the greater was my inner self-loathing, insecurity and hopelessness.

Meanwhile, there was the nightmare of mother's death and funeral—the new black or grey dresses, the service in church, then the cremation service. As the coffin slid out of sight I imagined it going straight into an enormous bonfire. I still find it difficult to watch that part of the service to this day. When we took the journey by car to Crowborough, I tried to realise that the tiny box on the seat between father and myself was all that remained of mother. There was my father's grief and his obvious longing for my understanding, love and sympathy; but I was too immature and too self-centred to cope with the situation. At the same time, whilst travelling through the early June countryside, I was aware as never before of the beauty of the flowers in the hedgerows, of the blue sky and shifting white clouds, of the singing larks and the springing green in the fields.

I often think of the Bible text that the sins of the fathers are

visited on the children. My adopted father's mother had died giving birth to him. For that, his father had never forgiven him. Although, later, he had a doting step-mother, the atmosphere of blame and dislike turned the little Travie, as my father was called, into a withdrawn, remote person. This exterior hid an inner nature which had a fund of dry humour, a great capacity to love, and to appreciate music, painting, architecture, and people. Many interesting and, indeed, famous people counted my father among their friends and visited our home—I well remember meeting H. W. Nevinson, the family of Stephen Spender, Sir Donald Maclean, father of the infamous Donald Maclean, and going to tea one day with Lord Lytton at Knebworth with my father. Dr Carnegie Simpson, Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, was a fairly regular visitor. Mr McAdam Eccles, father of the present Lord Eccles, was a well-known Harley Street surgeon, and one of my father's fellow Elders at church. Mrs Eccles, gentle and shy, used to play for my Sunday school and I greatly admired her daughter, who was some years older than me. Miss Hilda Matheson, Secretary to Lady Astor, was also a friend, as were her parents. I little thought that, years later, I would be a member of the Putney Presbyterian Church whose pulpit Donald Matheson then occupied.

During the holidays my father took me travelling. Our first visit was to Brussels and Bruges, and it was a great delight to see for myself people, habits, customs, food and buildings all so different from those to which I was used. Of course I pretended, as the young are apt to do, that I knew it all anyway. I well remember our first trip to Switzerland when even I could not contain my rapture as the Alps came into view. As we travelled in the train along the side of Lac Lemman I stood entranced by the window. Behind me I heard my father murmur, in heartfelt accents, 'Thank God there is *something* she can wonder at.'

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On this trip we went to Geneva so that father could introduce me to the League of Nations, in which he had a touching and implicit belief. We attended some of the sessions of the Conference and I remember thinking to myself 'But what is there to stop any nation, if they really wanted to do so, breaking all these paper agreements and going to war? Surely something more is needed to make peace and understanding a reality?' Concern for the problems of the world was beginning to grow in me. I helped with an Invalid Children's Aid Centre, ran the Sunday school at church and did various other good works, but none of it had much effect on the way I lived at home, or on my inner sense of pointlessness and insecurity. I was painfully shy, and it was at a dinner party in Geneva that I first began to smoke. It was French-speaking and I was extremely ill at ease. I accepted a cigarette, and hoped I looked sophisticated! Fortunately it had no bad effect, but the habit grew—and so did the length of my cigarette holder—but it did not cure my shyness.

Father found his difficult, rebellious teenage daughter almost impossible to understand. He was quite unable to enter into my life or understand my longings, any more than I could understand or enter into his. We lived a life of constant friction. It is one of the sorrows in my heart today to realise how much I could have done for him to bring out his true nature, had I been less wrapped up in myself and my own problems. My father's nature caused some of the mistakes made in his handling of my adopted brother. The Bible text that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children is a fact of life, not the act of an avenging God. The entail can only be cut as, at some point, God is allowed to enter and change human nature.

My one academic enthusiasm

Soon after my mother's death two things occurred. The first was when, a month or so later, father told me the bare fact that my own mother was still alive. He would say no more, but I think he told me in an effort to bring me some kind of comfort. Actually, it added to my insecurity, for I found myself constantly wondering about her, and whether we would ever meet—what she would be like—whether any of the women I passed in the street, even, might be her.

It was about the same time that my headmistress called me into her room one day to discuss my future. She pointed out that I was not bright enough to pass Matric., but that I just might get through the Oxford Senior examination and that the best thing for me to do would be to train to teach young children. I did get on well with small children, and always enjoyed being with them, so it was no hardship to be told to go down to the kindergarten two or three days a week and help there and see how I got on.

It was decided also that I should take botany as an examination subject since I was hopeless at maths. This was a real piece of good fortune, as the botany teacher, with the appropriate name of Miss Green, not only knew her subject (when she was not teaching us, she worked in the Herbarium at Kew), but she also had the ability to pass on to her pupils her own enthusiasm for her subject. She had little use for any who would not work, but if you did, she was a marvellous teacher and friend. In common with others, I spent hours doing meticulous drawings of plants and flowers, and writing pages of essays. When I came to sit my examination it was a joy to

know that there really was no question they could pose, within the syllabus, that would floor me. With every other subject I crammed wildly at the last minute and hoped that I could pick out a sufficient number of questions I felt able to answer at all. We had wonderful botanical walks through the Surrey countryside and my love of nature and appreciation of her beauty grew.

College and teaching

After my second try, I managed to scrape through Oxford Senior and found myself a student at Grove House Froebel Institute in Roehampton. The first year was really an extension of school work—though taken from the angle of imparting knowledge to others. To my satisfaction, the course included Eurythmics, thus giving me the chance to continue the subject I had so much enjoyed at my Eastbourne school. We also did handwork—weaving, pottery, needlework and painting. At the last, I was quite hopeless, but all the other crafts delighted me and I found that these were things I could do and do well. We were fortunate in having a marvellous woman as our zoology and nature study lecturer. Miss Lulham, like Miss Green, was able to pass on her own enthusiasm to her students. With her we went bird-watching in Richmond Park. I was entranced to discover that there were two hundred species of birds right on my doorstep if I could only learn to spot them.

I loved College—all, that is, except the teaching, which was, after all, the object of the exercise! I liked the children, but was hopeless at discipline—specially in someone else's classroom, with a supervisor listening to my efforts. But how could

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I keep discipline when there was no sense of order or aim in my own life? I did, however, very greatly enjoy the new freedom, new friends, new interests. Our routine would not seem very free these days, but at least it was more free than school. In summer some of us slept out on the lawn beside the lake, near an age-old cedar tree, and in sight of the gracious, historic house which is the heart of College. Sometimes, a badger, inevitably known as 'Brock' came to visit us. Miss Lawrence, our much-loved Principal, would come and bid us 'good-night', amused at our preference for an uncomfortable camp bed to the comfort of our own rooms!

I had three happy and interesting years at Grove House and emerged at the end a fully qualified Froebel teacher. I took a job in Poplar under the Board of Guardians, headed at that time by George Lansbury. He was a doughty fighter, but an endearing and gentle old man, I found, when I met him over a ham sandwich at some Council 'do'.

In Poplar I was in charge of the nursery class in the Poor Law Institute. This was the Council-run institution where the poverty-stricken, the homeless, the old, and children whose parents could not cope, were taken. The children now would be 'in Care'. Until my predecessor started this class, these little mites sat all day long in their day-room, not allowed to play or run about in case they made a mess or were a nuisance. I never knew how many children I would find when I arrived in the morning, or for how long I would have them. Every now and then I would find that most of the class had been moved to the country institute at Shenfield in Essex, or that I had a vastly swollen population ranging in age from two to nine years, because the children who normally went to the local school were in quarantine for some infectious disease, so they came to me.

I found that, on my own, I enjoyed teaching, devising apparatus which would initiate the children into the rudiments

of the three R's, how to distinguish colours, to sing and dance, to listen to stories and then try to act them out or express themselves by drawing or modelling. I think I was a pretty poor teacher, but the Board of Guardians seemed satisfied. I lived in a big Methodist Central Hall in Stepney, where I paid the handsome sum of twenty-five shillings a week for board and lodging. I received £200 a year salary, ten days' holiday at Christmas, ten at Easter and four weeks in the summer. At the end of the year, as we seemed to be getting on better, father asked me to come home and run the house for him, but, alas, it did not work. I did a little private teaching and had a number of hobbies and interests, but fundamentally, I was bored and extremely bad-tempered.

One thing father and I did have in common was our love of music. He was an excellent pianist, though I never discovered whether he was self-taught, or whether, at some point he had had lessons. Most evenings, he would play Beethoven, Bach, Schuman, Schubert on our beautiful Bechstein piano, and I loved to listen to him. He also, through the good offices of an American friend who worked with Columbia Gramophones, had an excellent gramophone installed. You cranked it up by means of a handle, and the heavy old type records quickly needed reversing. Many of my favourite classics, I almost instinctively expect to come to a halt at certain points, where I was used to going to turn or change the records and re-crank the handle!

My own efforts on the piano were painstaking rather than pleasing, but I had enough of a contralto voice to sing, first in the school choir, and then to join Martin Shaw's choir. Here, I remember, we sang Brahms's German Oratorio, with its lovely contralto parts. A friend introduced me to the joys of country dancing, and I became a devotee of Cecil Sharp House; I went regularly for classes in country, morris and sword dancing. On Saturdays, father and I generally went to a concert, a theatre,

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or some kind of pleasant outing, perhaps to Kew, or, after I had a car, a trip into the country.

I meet my own mother

In those far-off days, 'putting up your hair' was a real landmark. Once up, it stayed up. Your skirts lengthened; even though you might still be at school, you had passed a point of no return. I remember my cousin Olga coming to visit us one day. Afterwards I said in awed tones to my mother: 'Did you see that Olga had her hair up?' She was no longer a young girl like myself, but had moved forward into early adulthood. Up till then, we teenagers wore our hair tied back with an enormous bow—a very flattering form of hairdressing! It was tethered at the back of your head by pins to a hair band and was the reason why we girls were called 'flappers'. The word 'teenager' had not then been invented. My own hair 'went up' just before I left school at 18.

During my last year of College, in 1926, I reached my 21st birthday. Father gave a dinner party for me, and I received some lovely presents, including a fox fur and a gold watch. A week before, father called me into his study and gave me a picture of a handsome, slightly artificial-looking woman. He told me that she was my own mother and that her name was Mrs Porter. Instantly, I remembered the mysterious Mrs Porter who had impressed my childish mind so many years before, and realised why. Although I had not recognised her then as my mother, it can only have been about a year or so since she and my own father and I were all together in Egypt. My adopted father told me that by the legal Agreement of my

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adoption, she had the right to see me when I was twenty-one, and that I would have to decide whether or not to go and see her. He put no pressure on me. It had to be my own decision, but I longed for someone to talk it over with. But on this there was a complete embargo. Eventually I decided to go.

My mother was in a job in Hertfordshire, but had a tiny flat in Chelsea, and it was there that I was to meet her. It proved to be at the top of a long, long flight of stone stairs. I had to sit down on them half way up, my heart was pounding so violently. Our actual meeting is somewhat blurred in my memory. Mother's employer had sent her to this historic meeting with flowers and a lovely meal, all ready for us to eat. The flat looked charming, and I liked my mother, but I had absolutely no sense of there being any special tie between us. Reading a letter she wrote to me after our first meeting, it seems to have been a very happy one for her. I think I was so bewildered and confused, so ignorant, and fearful of asking the wrong questions, or doing the wrong things, that I remember very little about it. My chief impression was that my mother was not at all like the mental pictures I had built up during the years since father told me that she still lived.

Father and I go travelling, and I fall in love

From the time that my adopted mother died, until the beginning of the second World War my father took me abroad once or twice a year. I can never be grateful enough for the store of wonderful memories I have, nor for the widening of my mind

that these trips gave me. Had I been twenty years older I would have been a much better and more appreciative companion; his interests were not mine. I longed to play around with others of my own age group rather than visit old ruins or sit in the lounges of comfortable hotels, doing tapestry, while father read a book. But there was very much that I did enjoy.

Holidays in Switzerland came nearest, perhaps, to uniting our divergent interests. There was the one, for example, when together we collected, named and pressed over 200 Alpine flowers for a friend who had requested them for her school. We both enjoyed this ploy equally. One cold, grey March we left England, crossed through France, dived under the Alps and emerged into glorious, hot spring sunshine, with all the flowers and trees fully out and Lake Maggiore a deep, shimmering blue. It was magical to experience such a swift contrast. Fast air travel has accustomed us now to such transformations.

One year we travelled down the Rhine by boat, past the fairy-like castles perched on their rocky hills. This trip was marred only by the wind blowing the lovely hat father had given me into the Rhine to sink swiftly to a watery grave. *I had* so looked forward to cutting a dash in it on my return to London! I could have wept. When we visited Normandy we travelled, again, by river to Caudebec-en-Caux. As we neared the town, the steamer paused, and passengers, luggage, bicycles, bags and bundles were more or less hurled into a waiting rowing boat. Then the steamer serenely went on its way. We the passengers continued to sit, rather less serenely, in the middle of the river. Soon I saw the reason why. Approaching us down river came a large wave, rather like the Severn Bore. It was slightly unnerving. However, by a few skilful strokes of his oars, our boatman got us onto the crest of the wave, which bore us, quite peacefully, to the quay and the ranks of cheering townspeople, to whom this was, I suppose, a regular source of interest.

Just as Adolf Hitler was beginning to make his presence felt, we visited Germany—mainly to see the Oberammagau Passion play. En route we visited Garmisch, Munich and Nuremberg. Churchill himself at this time still felt that Hitler might be the answer to Germany's problems, and I, for one, found it very tantalising that, at each place we visited, Hitler was either expected in the next few days, after we had left, or had just been to it. I remember standing in the square outside the Oberammagau theatre, listening to his speech over the radio at a Nazi rally. I do not understand German, but I was very interested actually to hear his voice. It had not, by then, developed its almost hysterical quality and greater power of later years. This, of course, was before he blotted out millions of Jews, took over Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and threatened all Europe with dictatorship, horror and ruin: it was long before we ourselves experienced Dunkirk or the Battle of Britain, or heard of Ravensbrück, Belsen and other such places of horror and genocide.

As for the Passion play, I found it quite overwhelming. The moment when the crowd parts, and you see the Christ on his donkey is indescribably moving, as was the wonderful backdrop of mountains, and, on the day we went, a deep blue sky. But what I think struck me most was the crowd. We went into the theatre early in the morning for a four-hour first period, then there was a break for lunch, then another four-hour series of tableaux and action scenes. The crowd, coming in for the morning sessions, was an ordinary theatre crowd, calling to each other, laughing, making jokes, eating oranges and sweets. When we went out in the evening they were totally different—quiet, thoughtful and, obviously, deeply impressed. You could have done anything with that crowd and I found myself wishing that there was some way in which a bridge could be built for us all between what we were so deeply and sincerely feeling just then, and our daily lives.

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Our last trip before the second World War was a Mediterranean cruise, and I specially recall the utter beauty of the Acropolis, crowned by the lovely ruins of the Parthenon. There were few tourists in those days, and one could wander about quietly and pause and wonder. I wish that I still had the photographs I took. The atmosphere was so clear that they were among the best ever achieved by my faithful little vest pocket Kodak camera.

It must have been about the same time as my meeting with my own mother that father took me on a cruise to the Northern Capitals—Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo. I loved Scandinavia, even though I only had a tourist-eye's view. The twisted spire of Copenhagen's Bourse, and the little mermaid, the Thorwaldsen statues in the cathedral; and the rocks and inlets of the sea and the beautiful modern Town Hall in Stockholm; Oslo's fjord and the folk-museum of Skansen outside Stockholm, and Holmenkollen near Oslo—all gave me much pleasure. It was too, my first experience of life on a big liner with its amazing menus; the fun, as I found it, of sleeping in a bunk; the slightly solemn honour of being invited to sit at the Captain's table.

My life had been so sheltered that, since Dick had left us, I virtually never met or spoke to a man or boy—other than my father's friends, who came to see him of course not me. A sea voyage is proverbially an opportunity for falling in love—I was no exception. Actually I was terrified of men and simply did not know what to say to them. I became completely tongue-tied in their presence. The few dances that had come my way had been torture, as I could not dance well; I knew that my dress never looked right; the ordeal of waiting to be asked for the next dance made me feel like any slave in the slave market!

However, fall in love I did. I suppose because the man was a good deal older than myself, and married, that some of my

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inhibitions were not aroused. He and father found that they had relations in common, so I got to know him and, to a lesser degree, his wife, who was naturally also on board. I think that until the last day of the cruise I thought of him as I would have of some older woman with whom I found I could talk unexpectedly easily and, certainly, I took every opportunity of doing so. It was especially easy to talk when we were alone with the stars coming out in the gathering darkness and the ship ploughing her steady way through the glimmering sea. We usually parted with a warm embrace but, though I certainly enjoyed that, it was innocent enough until the last evening. Then I realised that it was *not* an older woman with whom I was talking, and in whom I was interested, but a man who aroused more than a desire for a quick good-night kiss.

It would never have occurred to me that he would give, or I would take, more than that warm and, on my part, innocent embrace. But on the last evening, when I thought about the parting on the following day, I knew that there was something wrong; that his friendship meant more to me than I realised and that I did not know how I was going to bear parting from him. It seems almost unbelievable in this franker and more permissive age that I could have felt so much and so deeply for someone to whom I did not even have the courage to call by his Christian name! We kept in touch and I used to go and stay with him and his wife in their Suffolk home. She usually went out in the evenings, and he and I would talk as we had done on board ship, and I was blissfully happy. It did not occur to me to want anything more, until some years later when his wife was taken ill. I found myself hoping that she might die and that he would marry me. It is no exaggeration to say that I really *was* horrified at such thoughts. I knew they were wrong and I fought hard not to think them, but he still remained the centre of my affections.

With this problem, the growing inability to build a real

relationship with my own mother, my constant quarrels with my father, and the general pointlessness and meaninglessness of life, that little flicker of faith I had had died out. I had continued to go to the University Women's camps each summer—latterly as an officer—but there, too, things had gone wrong and the shining hope 'camp' had seemed to hold out of a religion that really answered the problems of life faded away. I felt completely despairing.

I had managed to make my life pretty full. Teaching, 'good works', country dancing, my dog, and above all the little Rover Ten car my father had given me all served to fill my days. The car specially opened up a new world. The first time I got into the driving seat I knew that this was where I felt totally at home and in control. With my dog and maybe a friend, we would explore the countryside around London at a dashing forty miles an hour. With petrol at 1/6d (about 7½p) a gallon and the roads almost empty, driving was sheer joy. To my distress, father had got rid of our Crowborough home. I understood that he could not bear to go there without his wife, but it hit me hard. My forays into the country made up for its loss. But all the things with which I filled my days to overflowing brought neither happiness nor peace of heart.

A new friend, an experiment, a historic Oxford visit

It was with little enthusiasm that I greeted my father's announcement one day early in 1931 that a young American, Kenaston Twitchell, would be spending the following weekend

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with us, as he was to speak about the Oxford Group at the morning service on Sunday. I little thought that that weekend was to prove a turning point in my life! The young man arrived, and the extraordinary thing was that, as the parlour maid showed him into the drawing-room and he walked across to greet my father and myself, something inside said 'That man has what you want.' The next morning as I listened in church to what he had to say, I felt like someone who, dying of thirst, sees water ahead. As soon as I could get him alone I did everything I could to pull to pieces all he had said. I was like a climber testing a rope—I had to tug and pull to see if the rope held. He was a wise man and he answered few, if any, of my questions. He listened quietly while I went on talking and talking. The one idea he did leave with me was that God could speak to me. That really intrigued me, for I had often wondered when God stopped speaking to people, as He seemed to have done in the Bible, with the saints, even with my namesake and heroine, Joan of Arc.

The next morning, I decided to make an experiment. I would ask the God I believed in, but was sure took no interest in me, to speak to me. If any thought came that could conceivably be construed as coming from God, I would take it seriously and act on it. It worked. Actually, the only thought that came was a text—I suppose I had such a narrow idea of God that I thought He would speak in texts. But what struck me most was that the text happened to be 'Be still and know that I am God.'

I knew my Bible pretty well so any number of other verses could have come into my mind. I found it at least interesting that a verse saying what I so much wanted to hear should be the one that came to me. Then another odd thing happened. My temper was always, to say the least, quickly aroused. That morning, almost as soon as I got downstairs, something happened to cross my will and my temper flared. But at once

that text slipped into my mind—and my temper vanished! I remember standing there by the dining-room table thinking 'That's a miracle!'

From then on I began to put aside a short time each morning in which to be quiet. Ken Twitchell had suggested writing down my thoughts, since memory is short, and this I did. It was just as well, for on the second morning I had a very uncomfortable recollection of the innumerable times that I had 'cooked' the housekeeping accounts to my own advantage. 'Go and be honest with your father,' said that inner voice. It took me a little while to decide to do so, but I had said that I would make the experiment a fair one so, to my father's immense surprise, and, I must confess, to my own, I went and told him the truth. I think that it was the first time in my life that I had voluntarily apologised to him and been honest with him. I wish that I could say that our relationship totally changed from that moment. It did not, but I think that it began to do so. Of course, conscience—my inner knowledge of right and wrong—had made me uneasy at times about my fiddling the money, but conscience can easily be stifled.

A day or two later, I began to think about this man with whom I had been for so long in love. As I said earlier, I knew it was wrong, but thought that there was nothing I could do about it. Now the idea came to write a very simple letter telling him of my decision to let God run my life and that I was trying the experiment of listening to the voice inside me and of doing what it said. I told him that I thought I had been wrong in the way I had regarded our friendship.

It was a very difficult letter to write and still more difficult to decide to put it into the post. But as I heard it drop down inside the box a burden seemed to drop off my shoulders. I knew that God had worked another miracle. My friend wrote a most understanding reply; I only saw him once more when he came to our home to have a meal with father and myself. I

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realised then that God had completely ended the wrong type of fascination he had held for me.

The conclusion I came to after I started to listen for God's wisdom was that I needed to look at both men and women as they related to God and His plan rather than as they related to me. The point was not how I affected them or they me, but what was God's plan for all our lives, separately or together.

The following summer Ken Twitchell invited me to a conference, run like a country house party, in Oxford. There I met a very varied group of men and women of all ages, and from many countries and backgrounds. I found in them a kind of implicit, whole-hearted belief in God and His Power to direct that was new to me. They had both a personal allegiance, which took in every aspect of their lives and gave them a new purpose, and also a passionate desire to let themselves, whatever the circumstances or setting, be used to help create a new kind of world.

With many there I found I could talk freely and honestly. Foremost among them was Joyce Machin—a young woman about my own age, and who at this time was working as secretary to Dr Graham Brown, Principal of Wycliffe Hall in Oxford. It was he who, in 1925, invited Loudon Hamilton, Buchman's first and chief co-worker in the Oxford Group in England, to come back to Oxford 'with lodging and three meals a day but no salary', to give to the students at the university the compelling faith that Hamilton had himself recently found. In Graham Brown's own words, 'the new illumination which had come to Oxford as the result of Buchman's own visit to Oxford in 1923, might be continued and advanced'. For this continuation and advancement public thanks were offered to God in the University pulpit in St Mary's Church.

Joyce had a gaiety and singleness of purpose, and yet a complete freedom from any hint of piety or stuffiness, which I found most refreshing. We kept in touch after the House Party

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ended, and she helped me through many a tough patch and difficult decision to put right things that I knew were wrong in my own life. I especially remember her coming with me to Folkestone to back me when I felt that I needed to break through to a real relationship with my mother by telling her about the kind of person I really was. I longed to destroy the barrier of coldness and contempt I had set up. I knew it would not be easy, but Joyce's simple faith and joy in living made all the difference. Mother and I had our time together, and indeed it was not easy, but I always remember Joyce taking us both off to the local theatre to a delightful play that evening, which somehow helped to build a new bridge between us. It was a good many years before that bridge became more than a rather tenuous structure; I so quickly responded with my mind to all that I heard and saw in the lives of my new friends, but I was slow indeed to see how to apply these new truths to my own problems and way of living.

'Listen and write down all you hear'

Some weeks later, a friend, a few years younger than myself, to whom I had with all the willingness and goodwill in the world given a great deal of good advice, came to stay for a few days. On the morning of her arrival I thought I should say nothing to her of my new experiment until I was sure it was the right moment. After she had been in the house for a couple of hours she said: 'What has happened to you? You're different.' I felt that the time to tell her had still not come, so I just replied that

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I would tell her some time. Each morning during my time of quiet listening to the inner voice, a thought would come of someone she might meet or of some story I might tell her.

Having attended the Oxford Group House Party just before her visit, I had quite a number of new friends, some of whom I was able to invite to my home to meet Eleanor. At the end of her stay, by which time I had told her quite simply of the various steps I had taken, she said that she wanted to think about it all and not take any decision merely because I advised it. I knew that this was sound, and that I could best help by letting her go, and praying for her. Soon I had a letter from her saying that not only had she given her own life to God, but that she had gone home to find that the boy who, later, she married, had made the same decision. He had told her: 'I tried to pass it on to you, but could not do so. I am going to find out why'.

During the next year a number of us around my home in Paddington began to discover together more about this new way of facing life. We learnt to be refreshingly honest with each other, to think about our country and our own lives and how they might have some relevance to the needs and problems around us. I think that what struck me about our group was that it was so mixed—in age ranging from the young twenties to a dear old man of over eighty, and from every sort of background and point of view. We had a very real and deep unity which was stronger than whatever might divide us.

My friendship with Joyce Machin, whom I had met in Oxford, had grown. For the first time I knew what it was to have a friend who was totally honest with me, loved me at my worst, but with whom I knew God would always come first. Somehow the demands and frustrations of friendships I had known until then just did not exist with her. It was a revelation to me of what human relationships could be if you would let them.

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It was some years before I met Frank Buchman, whose own experience of God's power to revolutionize his life had led to the work which had come to be known as the Oxford Group. The new spiritual life had come to the University of Oxford. It also had its effect on Joyce's life. Not long after I met her, she decided to give up her well paid and secure job with Dr Graham Brown and become Frank Buchman's secretary. As with all those who felt called to devote their time fully to working with the rapidly growing Oxford Group force, Joyce received no salary, no assured income or home, no specified working hours. It was a question of 'boots and all' when you responded to the challenge these people offered.

Until her death in 1935, Joyce selflessly worked alongside Frank Buchman in many countries and varying circumstances. Sometimes early in the morning, often late at night, she would always be available when needed. At the same time, she found time to care for innumerable people like myself, to whom she was a true friend, and to whom she passed on something of her own steady and shining faith.

At this point I realised that I needed to accept that I had to take responsibility for the kind of person I had allowed life to make me. My friends had so often said that of course I was difficult because I had had a difficult childhood. I felt as though I was in a cage that had no door. But directly I realised that I myself was responsible, and not circumstances, or anything or anyone else, the cage door opened, and I began to be free. I still felt that God disapproved of me more than He loved me, so that I had to do all I could to appear to be toeing the line. Though in my heart, I felt I would never quite manage that, still I did have a sense of hope. I began to feel that there was some kind of a plan for my life, and the miracles that I knew God had already done in it could be used to help people.

With this in mind, I decided that, as I had a good dress allowance, I would give up my teaching, such as it was, and

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throw in my lot with these people. They not only seemed to live their Christianity in such a complete and joyous way, but they also had the tremendous aim of giving people new motives, so that nations too would have the chance to find the same kind of living, and a new world might be ushered in.

The two keys that really unlocked the door for me were those of guidance—the habit of letting God speak to me through my thoughts, given, as sincerely as I knew how, to Him—and the four absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. I would of course never actually achieve them, but they were a measure by which I could see where I needed to be different; guidance showed me in clear and precise terms how change was to come about. Gradually I began to take more and more people and nations into my thinking and caring—to find that my morning quiet times were not only times when I myself received direction and correction, or where my problems were unravelled, but times when God also spoke to me about the need of my friends and of how and where I could help them through my own experience, and that inner voice which was, slowly but surely, changing my entire way of thinking and living.

Thus, in 1935, when the Oxford Group was working in Denmark, I had several invitations to join them. My father, however, was suffering from a very distressing and frightening form of senile epilepsy. Though the doctor said that he should have someone with him nearer to him in age, and with greater, because uninvolved, authority, my father would not hear of it. I felt I could not leave him.

Then one morning, clear as a bell, came the thought, 'Go to Denmark at once'. I told my friends and their reply was that they too had had the same thought—that I should go as soon as possible. I broke the news to my father and he was furious. He went to the phone to consult with one of my older cousins, in whom he had great confidence. After a few minutes, he

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returned, looking a little dazed. He said that Marian wished to speak to me. She told me that she had been wondering what to do. She knew of the doctor's advice, and had thought much about it. Now she had heard of someone who, she felt, would be just the right person. This woman was in London that very day; and was leaving the next evening.

Because of my decision to go to Denmark, my father agreed to see Mrs Cothay. She proved, indeed, to be just right, and she remained with us for the next eleven years, until my father's death in 1945. I never knew what salary she was paid, but I do know that she brought a new gaiety into our home, cared for all the material details of keeping the house going, gave my father wise and interesting companionship, and stuck by him all through the war, which he insisted on spending in London, even at the height of the blitz. She set me free, too, to do what I felt I should be doing. I can never thank her enough.

So, selling my stamp collection to help pay for my fare, I set off for Denmark.

Denmark

Joyce herself was in Denmark with the Group, and I much looked forward to seeing her again. What I did not know was that, for some time, she had been suffering from a brain tumour, though she had gone on working for as long as possible. Now she was in hospital, desperately ill. I arrived just in time to see her once more before she died.

Her death was another moment of truth for me. Till then ever since I had tried to live God's way, I had felt sure that if you did this, He kept you safe and shielded you from danger,

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pain or tragedy. Now I learned that even if God does not send pain, neither does He always protect you from it. He goes through it with you, and, if you will let Him, uses it for others over and over again. I also found that my faith in the eternal life, in continuing unity with those we love, was not only strengthened, but that real love for them meant that you truly let them go into God's keeping and trusted them to Him. I often have the feeling that those I love are near, but I am also sure that if I demand to have that sense of their presence, somehow I really do hold them back from the fullness of God's on-going plan for them.

After her death, the following statement was found among Joyce's papers: 'The acceptance of the challenge of the Oxford Group meant that my life was to revolve round a new axis—God—instead of the old one—self. I have found that on this basis God does guide, and that in following His Plan for my life, step by step, I know a peace that passes understanding, a purpose that involves the reconstruction of society, and a new relationship with other people that I know is the answer to all bitterness and hatred between individuals, classes, nations and races.'

Frank Buchman, concerned about the threat of Nazism rising under Hitler in Germany to confront Communism in Russia, felt that one antidote to the increasing nationalist totalitarian threat must come from what he called 'the surrounding democratic nations with the Cross on their flags'. With this in mind, he had taken a team of men and women drawn from every kind of background, with a common allegiance to the guidance of God, to the Scandinavian countries. This had been made possible through the initiative of President Hambro of Norway. He had caught the vision of what the Nordic countries could do if led by God, when he met Frank Buchman in Geneva in 1932. Throughout these northern countries many people had found fundamental,

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personal change and experience of God's guidance. But, for 'F. B.', personal change was but the raw material from which God wanted to fashion His new world. In giving your life to Him, you gave it in order that it might be used how, when and where He directed, to serve and fight that nations come under His control.

On Whitsunday, June 9th 1935, 10,000 people came from all over Scandinavia, and from further afield, and packed the courtyard of Kronborg Castle at Elsinore. I, too, was there. The Dean of Copenhagen's Cathedral, Paul Brodersen, led the vast gathering. The crowds were drawn from every strata of society. Worker and business man, housewife and countess, young and old stood shoulder to shoulder, as saddle-maker and Dean, statesman, labour leader and worker spoke together. Frank's own message was 'God calling the world'. His challenge; that some nation must take the lead in finding God's Will as her destiny, God-guided men as her representatives at home and abroad. Such men would produce new leadership, free from the bondage of fear and rising above ambition; they would be flexible to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Later, on the same occasion, Frank did not attempt to hide his deep grief as he told the great throng that Joyce Machin, who had given her life so sacrificially to forward these aims, had died.

She was to be given a true fighter's funeral in Copenhagen, with her well-worn typewriter, like a soldier's sword, on her coffin. The great church was bright with flowers and packed with the many friends who loved her and who gathered, less to mourn, than to praise God for a life which had made Him real to so many.

For Buchman, continual, practical thinking for the deepest needs of nations went hand in hand with unceasing care for the individuals around him. Whether they were heads of state, or the man who brought him a meal, or some quite ordinary,

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unremarkable person by the world's standards, made no difference; they were God's royal souls, and as such Frank treated us all.

One story illustrates this for me. The Christmas after Joyce had joined Buchman as his secretary, father and I went to the Temple Church for the Christmas morning service. Nearby I spotted Frank Buchman and one or two others, including Joyce. After the service, she came over to me and asked me if we could drive Buchman back to his lodgings. Of course, I was delighted. I introduced him to my father, and we all three climbed into my little car. I guess the journey took, at most, twenty minutes. Thirty years later, again at Christmas, I had sent Frank a small silver box—the last gift I had given my father on his eightieth birthday, shortly before his death. In a note I mentioned this to Frank. A day or two later I was at one of the huge Christmas tea and carol parties he loved to give. About a hundred of his friends were there—a truly mixed bunch, as always, at his parties. Suddenly, the crowd seemed to part, and I saw Frank sitting at the other side of the room. Immediately he spotted me and beckoned me over. When I reached his side, he said: 'Thank you so much for your gift. I am so glad to have something of your father's. I so well remember meeting him that Christmas when you drove me back from church.' I had almost forgotten the occasion, but Frank had not. He himself was then about eighty years old, the incident was thirty years old, and we were in the midst of a large and lively party—but Frank had not forgotten.

Annie the valiant

As the world moved forward towards World War II, Frank Buchman fought to help those who listened to him to understand that it was not Communism or Fascism or Nazism that really menaced our country and the world. It was the bitterness, hatred and selfishness in human hearts. Unless these could change, war was inevitable. As the need for material re-armament increased, he proclaimed that moral and spiritual re-armament were even more essential. So the Oxford Group grew into the larger force and conception of Moral Re-Armament.

In London, a strong team was at work in both East and West Ends and it was when I joined them, on my return from Scandinavia, that I met Annie Jaeger and some of those working with her. I had had little opportunity until now to meet with people of her background, and there was in me a deep sense of inferiority as I thought of all they had suffered that I had never had to face, and the conditions with which they had lived, which had been so different from my own. But meeting Annie made me realise that we were all the same underneath—it was a question of what we let God make of us.

Annie came from Stockport, where she had a little milliner's shop. Her son, Bill, during his time at College in London, had met the Oxford Group. He was now living and working in North London. I had never met anyone like him; stocky, rough-hewn with a craggy face and a North country accent, he seemed to be bursting with conviction and energy. As a result of his change, Annie, because she had found a compelling faith herself, had sold her shop, her only security, and come

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down to London to work with Bill. Mother and son lived and worked together, and quickly got to know many families and many of the leading citizens of East and West Ham. Annie would walk miles in a day to visit her new friends. I remember her saying at the end of one long day that she was so tired that she had said to God, 'God, if you'll pick my feet up, I'll put them down.' Annie was tiny in build, but enormous in spirit and both she and Bill were convinced that Labour, if led by God, could lead the world in the right direction.

Later, she was to go to America, where, finally, she died. After her death, Bill had letters from over five hundred families telling of what she had done to unite and change them and make them part of a force in the life of the country. When the Blitz came and the flattened houses were cleared up, in many of them were found the pamphlets and books Annie had given the friends she had made, and people said that much of the indomitable spirit of East London went back to the faith she had passed on to so many of them. Many years later London's West End was to see a lively, moving and heart-warming musical, based on Annie's life.

Father and I go to America

It was in 1936 that my father offered to take me to America for a visit. I think he felt that this trip might wean me from my work with Moral Re-Armament. Anyway, he gave me £60 for an outfit and in those days I got quite a considerable wardrobe (and a nice one) for that sum. Owing to treatment, my father's illness had, thank goodness, been brought under control.

So off to America we went, by boat of course. We were to

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stay with old friends in Connecticut. It was the time when the Dogwood flowers were out; I had a full set of new clothes for the first time in my life; the sun shone; our friends were more than kind, and I adored every moment. America seemed a magic land. We explored New England and New York with its incredible skyscrapers. We rushed along the freeways at fantastic speeds. We ate delicious ice cream in drug stores. And then, wonder of wonders, we heard the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the 'wireless', as if it were in the next room. We visited Atlantic City, Washington, Niagara Falls and had a week in Canada. But during this time of excitement and so many new experiences, I discovered how much of my so-called faith had really been conforming to the atmosphere around me; picking up the faith of those I was with without necessarily making it my own. Then we went to Arlington and the Cemetery there—where the men who fell in the American Revolution are buried. It was something I shall never forget—those rows upon rows of neat, white crosses, each marking the grave of a man who died for what he felt to be right. As I looked, I remembered Joyce, and what her death away in Denmark had meant to me—how deeply it had hurt. The thought came of the hurt to God, not only of those who died in battle, or indeed of those who died by any other means than at His timing, but the hurt to Him of people like me, who said they gave Him their allegiance and then withdrew it. I thought about it a good deal and weighed up the cost of an all-out, all-time decision to obey Him. When we visited the Lincoln Memorial and I looked at that statue, I inwardly made the decision that I would never again turn my back on God. For the rest of my life I would seek, first and foremost, to try to discover and do His Will and to play my part in His world-wide plan. I would, I knew, often fail, but I would never again give up.

When I returned to Britain I decided that I would train as a

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secretary. Joyce had for so many years worked as secretary to Dr Buchman and I felt that I was meant, somehow, to carry on the same kind of work that she had done with such devotion and selflessness. Three of us decided to go together to the Triangle Secretarial College in London to learn typing and speedwriting. Speedwriting was not quite so fast as ordinary shorthand but it did not take so long to learn, and I reached a speed where I could get down most of any speeches at a meeting. It was interesting the difference that our natural handwriting made. Speedwriting is based on all the letters and signs on a typewriter. I have a large and certainly not very legible hand, so that in order to understand the shortened code form of speedwriting I had to form my letters with greater care than normal. One of my friends, on the other hand, not only had a very small handwriting, but she also seemed able to decipher quite easily what, to me, appeared to be merely a straight line! Needless to say, her speed was a good deal faster than mine.

Soon after I had finished the course, I again joined the Group working in Scandinavia. I worked in the same room as that in which Joyce had spent so many hours before she was taken ill. It was hard, but it was a continual challenge to me to give of my best, as I knew she would have done, and I felt her spirit very near me.

The second World War

About a year after the outbreak of the second World War I went up to Cheshire. Tirley Garth was the home of Miss Irene Prestwich, the daughter of a Lancashire cotton manufacturer,

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and one of a long line of Lancashire Prestwiches. The family had moved there in 1912. It is a beautiful house surrounded by thirty-nine acres of land and it was cared for by a large staff of servants and gardeners. The parents had died in the '30s, and Miss Prestwich and her sister lived on there until Miss Lois decided to move to a small home of her own nearby. Irene then had the thought to make the house available for the evacuation of the Headquarters of Moral Re-Armament. In her own words: 'The main purpose of this Centre was to find an answer in men's lives to a torn and divided world engaged in a second devastating war. . . . An exact and often painful discipline started at Tirley; punctuality, perfect standards of work, early morning quiet times, obedience to God's guidance. The training, in short, of a force who could bring moral and spiritual breakthrough to a country in mortal peril, not only from the enemy without, but from the enemy within.'

It would take a book to record all that happened in the lives of people and nations as the result of that courageous decision. Miss Prestwich, at the age of 87, herself wrote the story, saying that it was the story of a 'property with a purpose'.

For the duration of the war, the beautiful rich man's pleasure garden was worked by seven young women as a market garden, which produced a steady stream of fresh food for a nation on short rations. The maids and gardeners, of course, had all gone, and the home was cared for by fifteen elderly women who had given up their own homes in order to be part of this mighty contribution to Britain's war effort—the building of faith and conviction in men's hearts, so that they knew what they were fighting for and not only what they were fighting against. At weekends, we might be anything up to eighty or ninety people. I can, even now, see the kitchen table, covered with the little bits of butter, marg., bacon, sugar that visitors had brought out of their meagre rations—there was even an egg sometimes! Men and women came from the

forces, also from engineering plants, factories, pits and schools, for long visits or short. They not only found the strength and inspiration they needed for the job in hand, but they laid the foundation of a force that would, after the war, continue to give everything that peace might be a reality and not just a dream.

Since the war, Tirley has become known round the world as a Centre where all races, colours, classes can meet, be honest about the problems with which they are concerned, and together find God's plan—sometimes so surprisingly simple when people are honest and ready to see the other fellow's point of view. The day she died, soon after her ninetieth birthday, Irene Prestwich had been speaking of her own faith to two young Egyptian women, delegates in a party of students sent officially by the Egyptian Government for training in Moral Re-Armament. One of the girls (a Muslim) said: 'I have never before understood so well what Christianity meant.'

During those war years, we had to report regularly, I think twice a year, to a Tribunal, who decided whether you were really doing the thing that was most needed in the circumstances. For some reason, thankfully, I had to travel to London for my Tribunal, which meant that I could see both my adopted father, and my mother, from time to time.

One story before I leave Tirley Garth, which I think illustrates the spirit permeating all that was done there. The day had been long and hard, and the market gardeners were glad to get out of their boots. Then one of them had the thought to go and take a last look at the lettuces, just coming into season. She came back to tell the rest of the girls that many of the lettuces were in perfect condition for market, and she thought they ought to be picked and packed right away so that they could go to market early in the morning. What to do after a hard day? Forget the lettuces and kid themselves that they would keep? Remember the families who needed fresh

vegetables at their peak? Quietly, they all stopped and considered; to all of them came the clear thought 'People's needs must come first.' Next morning, they arrived at market to find that their's were the only lettuces available. As each box was handed down, it was bought up eagerly. The tough little decision, made aright, not only was a contribution to the feeding of the nation in wartime, but brought new spirit to the gardeners themselves, and a fresh realisation of the importance of all their hard work.

Father dies

In January 1945 the doctor said I must have a holiday. I had begun to sleep very badly, lost my appetite and a good deal of weight. Somehow I felt that my time in Cheshire had come to an end, though nothing of this had been suggested to me. I had a clear thought to go down to Crowborough for my holiday. There was a little hotel there where father and I had stayed several times. The proprietors had bought many of our things when we broke up the Crowborough home, and when we stayed at the hotel they would set our table with our own china and silver—an act that always touched us deeply. An Australian friend who had also been working in Cheshire said she would come with me. As Beatrice and I boarded the well-remembered three o'clock train for Crowborough I had a great sense of going home. We even found a porter who carried our luggage and was especially kind in finding us good seats. During the next week we took long walks and I showed Beatrice many of my old haunts; it was a blessed time of relaxation and peace.

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One morning when I was thinking, unexpected ideas began to pour into my mind. They seemed to be warnings of a completely new kind of life; one where I would have to stand alone with God in a new way; take on new challenges and responsibilities. I could not make head or tail of them, though I was sure the thoughts must have some very real meaning. I told Beatrice about them and she, wisely, did not attempt to explain them nor to make light of them. Rather, she said, 'Don't ignore or worry about them. You will know what they mean at the right time.'

Meanwhile, the weather had turned very cold and we had frost and deep snow. A few days later, while at breakfast, there was a telephone call for me from home. This was Mrs Cothay, who had looked after father so faithfully for so long. She was ringing to tell me that he had had some kind of attack and that I ought to come at once. I realised then why I had felt so strongly that I should come South for my holiday, rather than doing the more natural thing, which would have been to go somewhere nearer to Cheshire. There the near blizzard conditions would have made the journey to London impossible. As it was we had real difficulty in getting to the station, and had to go by a very roundabout route because the snow drifts were so high.

When I got home I found that father had slowed down in every way, but was perfectly lucid. He seemed pleased to see me and to have me around, but during the next few days he deteriorated rapidly, getting weaker and more confused, until we had to have help with nursing him. I was so grateful that I had been able to get home in time to have at least a little while in which to talk with him and, when we could not do that, to be able to care for him.

Strangely, I had for a long time had a great dread of my approaching fortieth birthday. It not only meant that I was 'getting on', but I had a great sense that it was going to be a

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big hurdle. And so it proved, for it was on the morning of my fortieth birthday at about three o'clock that my father slipped peacefully away.

It was then that I began to understand the meaning of the thoughts I had had that morning at Crowborough, and realised how they had prepared me for what lay ahead. For one thing, until he actually went, I really had no idea of how dependent I still was on my father and my home. Although, by this time, I had spent so much time away, they were always there to return to. I knew practically nothing of my father's affairs except that there was always plenty to live on, and I took my comfortable home completely for granted. For thirty-eight years I had lived in the same square though we had moved to a slightly smaller house after my adopted mother's death.

So it was something of a shock to find that in fact I was left with very little money, enough furniture to equip a small flat, and a small income in a Trust to be administered by my cousins. Also that I had about six weeks in which to leave home and decide on my next move. The thoughts that had come to me had prepared me in a marvellous if not in an apparent way, and I had a real sense that God would show me what to do. I barely knew my cousins up till then. But we became true friends and they did all they could to help make the situation as easy as possible. Since some of them stood to benefit by the bulk of my father's money and property, they were marvellous in interpreting his Will in the most generous and helpful way possible.

My first homes—Hampstead, and life with the Connors

The thought that persistently took command of my mind at that time of decision was to make it in the light of the country's need. Obviously the war would end in another month or two. Homes and furniture were already hard to find, and would be harder. What was needed were homes which not only had the kind of gracious, beautiful things I had inherited, but also homes that were open and welcoming, and would build into the people who came to them new qualities of heart and body. I decided to try to make that kind of home. I had absolutely no experience of taking on this sort of responsibility, and flats were extremely difficult to come by! However, a friend discovered one in Hampstead. It was shabby, not in too good repair, had no heating or hot water system and a very rocky bath. But it had four bedrooms, a lovely sitting-room with real possibilities, and a big kitchen which would serve as a dining room. A few days after D Day I moved in. The furniture from my old home shone out with new beauty, and I had been able to get a water storage heater, a decent bath and some kind of general heating—all miracles at those end-of-war days. By the end of moving-in day, it really began to look like home.

But one person does not make a home, so I welcomed the suggestion, made by a friend, that I might share it with a mother and daughter who badly needed somewhere to live. The daughter had recently left school and the mother had recently been left by her husband.

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We were all three tall, and we all three had very decided views of our own. Elizabeth, the mother, had run her own home for many years. Anne, the daughter, hoped to have one to run in the not too far distant future. I was very conscious that this was, materially at any rate, *my* home and the first home I had had of my own. I was anxious beyond words to make it the kind of home *I* felt it should be. Elizabeth was a careful and meticulous worker who delighted in seeing the flat clean and shining; I felt likewise; our methods of achieving that end were rarely the same. Anne had her job and was out all day. She, not unnaturally, felt she had a right to leisure and rest from chores on her return. Elizabeth, equally naturally, tended to protect her. I felt she should do a little at least towards her share of the work.

Our first visitor arrived less than twenty-four hours after we had moved in. We were thrilled, for we all three wanted our home to have lots of people coming and going. The visitor looked around our rooms, which were already straight and tidy, with amazement. 'Why,' she said, 'you look as though you have been here for months! It really feels like home.'

But we soon discovered that it took more than goodwill, nicely arranged furniture and a vase of flowers to make the kind of home where people really wanted to come. We found that when Elizabeth and I disagreed, as we often did, Anne did not very much want to come home in the evenings, or if she did, preferred the quiet of her own room to the unspoken cross currents of feeling she sensed in the sitting room. I think the change really began to come when, one day, I went to my room after a major disagreement with Elizabeth, in which I felt I had been eminently patient and, above all, right. I knew that this was not how God meant our home to be, but was I willing to take the full blame for all that had gone wrong, be completely honest with Elizabeth about the fact that fundamentally I had wanted to keep my home to myself—to regard it as *my*

home, and not really theirs—was I prepared to ask her forgiveness? It took me a long time to overcome my pride and the feeling that, if I was wrong, so was she. Finally, I went down on my knees and told God that I didn't feel all that sorry, but that if He would change my whole attitude, I would obey what I knew He wanted, and go and be honest with Elizabeth. I had to get up from my knees, go into the kitchen, and right up to Elizabeth before I felt any different, but as I said her name the miracle happened, and I was deeply sorry for my selfishness and hardness of heart. We left the dishes and cleaning and sat down at the kitchen table and for the first time really opened our hearts to one another. I began to understand all the loneliness, sorrow and fear that the break up of her marriage had meant for Elizabeth; all that Anne had been deprived of. I was able to tell Elizabeth something of what father's death and the total change of circumstances had meant for me. I can't pretend that everything was easy from that time on but we learnt the first essential lesson, not to have secrets from each other, and not to fool ourselves about what we really felt. Honesty about our own wrong motives was an excellent cure to finding fault with the other. By the time that Elizabeth and Anne moved on we had become real friends, and many people had found new heart and hope in our home.

I spent two years in that funny flat. It was like a doll's house, perched on top of a garage. You went up a narrow flight of stairs and, if it was raining, you did not put your umbrella down till you had got to the top of them, since the roof leaked. I remember going into our guest room to awaken our current guest to find her peacefully sleeping, while the rain drops pattered down on to the bedclothes! Following Elizabeth and Anne I had a succession of friends sharing the home. One was a woman a little younger than myself, who had spent the war in Jersey, with her mother. The years spent under German occupation had taken their toll and I am always grateful to

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think that my home played a part in helping her to recover from those experiences. The Christmas she was with me I returned to Cheshire for the Christmas season—my first visit since I had left before my father's death. My Jersey friend had her mother and brother to spend Christmas with her, and the flat never seemed so much a home as when they told me what it had meant to be together there as a family. The other friend who joined us was the Australian who had gone to Crowborough with me for that holiday, before father's death.

That winter was bitterly cold. The taps and waste pipes all froze. The flat was on a very steep hill and it was quite a problem slithering up and down it. Each day we had to go to a house a bit further down the hill for water, as house after house froze up. To add to our problems, I was taken ill with a mysterious fever and various other symptoms, and had to retire to bed. The other two, Joyce from Jersey and Beatrice from Australia, coped marvellously, and cheerfully added an invalid to their list of chores.

While I was still laid low, an invitation came from a newly married couple for me to join them in a flat they had taken in Westminster, close to the Cathedral. I had begun to feel that the days in Hampstead were numbered and this seemed the right next step. Chérie and Bill were short of furniture so mine was just what was needed. Like me, they wanted their home to be a place that welcomed many people all the time. Chérie had not had much experience of housekeeping, so I felt I could fill a real need. I realised I would have to find a good deal of change in my own nature. Sharing a home with a young couple meant that I needed to learn to take second place and help them to be host and hostess. Being several years older, and having run my own home now, it was quite a big lesson to learn. The flat was always full. A couple of Bill's friends would occupy one room, maybe for some weeks or months, while Chérie and I would have one or more of our women friends also

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visiting for a while. Our concern was not just to be hospitable, but to care for other countries through the men and women who became part of the family.

Unfortunately, not long after we had moved into the flat, my previous symptoms returned and I had to spend first six weeks in bed at home, and then six weeks in hospital. I felt I was letting Chérie down badly, especially as by this time she was pregnant. However, she took it all in her stride. I well remember her coming into my room one Sunday morning bearing the joint in its roasting tin, hot from the oven, to consult with me as to whether it was cooked or not!

It was a great joy when little Patrick was born and Chérie brought him home from the hospital. Still greater was my joy and gratitude when she and Bill asked me to be one of his godmothers. I already had two other godsons here in England, and a goddaughter—my brother's eldest daughter—in Rhodesia. Of course, I had not seen her. Eventually in the course of time I was to be given two more godchildren. Now they are all grown up and most of them married with children of their own, but I am grateful that all but one of them keep in touch with me and have become very real friends.

Scandinavia, and a Bishop's home

After my return from hospital and a period of convalescence, I was invited to Sweden. The Bishop of Karlstad, Bishop Arvid Runestam, wanted some help with his English as he was attending a conference where English would be necessary.

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Son-in-law to the famous Archbishop Söderblom, Arvid Runestam was, at the conference, carrying on his father-in-law's work. He was also one of Buchman's most enthusiastic backers. After the conference he wrote: 'Unless the inspiration, which shows itself in people from all backgrounds, inspired by the Holy Spirit through M. R. A., is allowed to move within, and shape ecumenism, the movement will be a dry and sterile phenomenon instead of a living organism.'

Frank Buchman believed that Sweden could give the world a pattern of true democratic brotherhood; that, under God, she could be a 'Reconciler of the nations'. It was on this basis that Bishop Runestam was working, and his work is being carried on by his daughter, Monika, and her husband, Anders Tauson-Hassler.

I was very happy to be going to Scandinavia again, though I did not know Sweden nearly as well as Denmark. However, a friend who had spent much time in Scandinavia was also going out, so we travelled together. Mary came with me to Karlstad which is north-west of Stockholm, situated on the river Klara. The winter was drawing in, and as we got out of the train at stations en route in order to get a meal (there was no dining-car on board) I could feel the frost crunching under my feet and the fresh, dry cold in my nostrils.

In Karlstad I found that the family consisted of the Bishop and his wife, a son and three daughters. Monika and Yvonne were in their late teens, Louise about ten or eleven. Biskopsgården, as the Bishop's residence was called, was a delightful, rather stately wooden house with family quarters and a state dining-room where solemn dinner parties were held at what, for me, was the somewhat surprising hour of three o'clock in the afternoon. Even at that early hour the ladies wore long, generally black, dresses. I well remember the family all standing in line in the drawing-room, with me at the end, and the guests entering one by one, the men bowing and women

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shaking the hand of every person as each guest said his or her name. After the meal you said 'Tak' to your hostess and again at the end of the evening. Every guest seemed to make a point of saying goodbye to every other person present. The next time you met your host or hostess after being entertained, you had to remember to say, 'Tak för Sist'—or 'Thank you for the last time'.

The whole visit was quite an adventure, for we from England were still not allowed to take any money abroad. I knew no Swedish and I had no friends in that part of Sweden. Fru Runestam was a shy and solitary person and I had difficulty in finding my way around the house or round Swedish customs. However, I quickly began to find friends, and discovered that wherever you called you would always be offered coffee and home-made cookies. It was nearing Christmas and my hostesses were very apologetic that, owing to the war (although Sweden was neutral there was a certain amount of rationing) they could only produce eight kinds of cookies, whereas at Christmas time there should have been twelve. To me, straight from a Britain still recovering from the war, eight kinds of cookies seemed fantastic.

I shall never forget the beauty of the snow. I had never seen anything like it—the smooth prospect of the river Klara—one curving white sheet unbroken across its width and the fields beyond. I recall the mornings with the early sun shining through the pine trees and casting blue shadows on the gleaming whiteness; the long icicles hanging from the roofs like Christmas tree crystal baubles. Through the still air would come the sound of the bells on the horses' harness as they drew the snow-carts carrying ice for sale, or snow from the roads. Then there were the 'Sparks'—wooden chairs on runners on which the owner stood and, by pushing off with one foot got up a fine turn of speed. On the seat might be a small child or the household shopping, while another child would stand on the

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runners in front of its mother. Everyone skied, of course, and children started as soon as they could walk, darting about like small swallows, swooping and gliding, and well wrapped up in furry hoods and gloves.

It was here in Karlstad that I had new proof of God's wonderful provision. As I said, I was not able to bring any money with me, though the Bishop gave me pocket money. I remember one incident with clarity. I had been asked to visit an elderly lady a little way out of Karlstad, who had recently lost her husband. As I made my way through the dry, very thick snow, I found myself saying 'Please God, I would be grateful for a pair of boots'. I had a very happy meal and chat with my new friend and then after the meal, with some embarrassment, she suddenly said, 'A little bird has spoken to me. He said that I should give you some money', and with that she pressed a 100 Kroner note into my hand. When I told her that I had actually been praying for boots on my way to her, she was absolutely delighted, and I think this incident did more than anything else at that point to help her feel that God loved her and still had something for her to do in His plan, even though her beloved husband had left her.

Christmas in Sweden is a marvellous time. For days ahead there had been a large basket in the sitting-room in which presents for everyone were steadily accumulating. Delicious smells wafted from the kitchen. On the balconies were fixed sheaves of grain for the birds, and over the front door of each house was a star, lit up at night. Christmas Eve was the time for present giving so that by then Christmas trees had been put up and decorated. There was a very bright and colourful one in the kitchen, and another in the sitting room. In the main drawing-room there was also a tree, and this was all gold and silver, with gold-coloured straw stars and angels, and shiny rosy apples. On Christmas Eve we had our main meal in the kitchen made gay with special cloths hiding sink and other

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utilities. On the stove was a huge pan containing a ham simmering in its juices. The first course was what was called 'Dopper', where you dipped specially made bread in the liquor. This symbolised the baptism of Christ. Afterwards you had the ham itself, with beetroot and dried beans. At some point there was 'Lutfisk'—a *very* dried form of cod which had been steeped in lye. The only good thing about it as far as I was concerned was the melted butter! But it was very much part of the Christmas Eve meal. After that we had special Christmas rice porridge—a kind of rice pudding, made delicious with cream and crystallized fruit. In it was one almond, and whoever got the almond got an extra Christmas gift.

On Christmas Day itself, a much more solemn occasion, we started out very early, going through the dark streets to church. There we found the whole of Karlstad assembled—babies and all—and the Christmas tree shining with its candles. There were none of the gay and hearty carols to which we are accustomed, and I missed them, but the Swedish carols, though somewhat solemn, were also very beautiful. I always remember coming out of church to find that every window in every home by this time had a lighted candle shining through it. The lights and the glistening snow made a lovely picture. On Christmas Day itself we had dinner in the state dining room—roast elk was the main dish. I had made a kind of plum pudding but, as I could not get all the right ingredients, and no one would believe it could take so long to cook, so obligingly removed it from the stove whenever it boiled, it was not wholly successful!

After some weeks at Biskopsgården, I went on to Oslo to join another friend, Nancy Archer. She was one of a group helping to prepare for a series of M. R. A. meetings in each of the Scandinavian capitals. Nan was a talented musician and in each city in which we stayed she raised up and trained a choir in preparation for the meetings. In this way we met many

people, made many friends and visited many homes. I recall one choir practice in Stockholm. As I said, we had no English money and it was not always easy to afford a meal. I noticed a tall, striking, dark-eyed girl in the back row who seemed to be watching me with interest. After the practice was over, she came up to me and said, 'I am Gunda Holmgren, and I kom from Lapland. I sink you look hongry. I take you for a meal.' I will never forget that act of sensitive kindness from a complete stranger. As I write, I have just finished a little book published a short time ago, here in England. It is called 'My Roots Survive the Flood', and is by that same friend, Gunda. With a clear economy of words, she sketches vividly her northern childhood, the cold, the hardship, the hunger; the integrity and affection of her family life. As I read it, I understood a great deal more of what lay behind that simple and generous gesture in Stockholm so many years ago. Since then Gunda has married, and she and Lennart have travelled the world, giving the bread and water of life to many people and many situations; they have aimed to be a part of F. B.'s vision that 'Sweden will be a Reconciler of the nations'.

Remembering this vision of Frank Buchman's for Scandinavia, it may not be out of place to recall here the statement made by the Bishop of Trondheim, Bishop Fjellbu, in 1945. Speaking in St Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, he declared: 'I wish to state publicly that the foundations of the united resistance of Norwegian Churchmen to Nazism were laid by the Oxford Group's work'. In a Press statement later, he said: 'The first coming of the Oxford Group to Norway was an intervention of Providence in history, like Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain. . . . They helped to bridge the gap between religion and the people and make it real every day. We have been fighting Godless materialism. The Oxford Group gave us men who helped us to fight for a Christian ideology.'

In Norway and Denmark, therefore, the work of these men

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and women bore fruit in giving the unity and determination which helped to provide a steel backbone to the Resistance movement. In both their capitals, together with Sweden, these countries were now seeking to make real once more Buchman's vision. In each of the three capitals big meetings were being planned by a united Nordic force. This is why I joined Nancy Archer, who was there with other members from Britain. They were then in Oslo, and from there we went to Copenhagen, back to Karlstad, and finally to Stockholm.

Towards the end of my time in Scandinavia I went to stay with a friend who ran a rheumatism clinic near Aarhus. Another, Danish, friend came with me and we walked, met other Danes, and visited 'Den Gamle By' or 'The Ancient Village'. This was a collection of old Jutland buildings grouped together—shops, a church, with the crow-stepped roof I had learned to love, country homes and barns painted with special red paint (a by-product of the Swedish iron ore mines) picked out with white.

But alas, as we stood waiting for our bus to take us back to our friend's home my back began to hurt. By the time we got home I hardly knew how to stand. In an hour or two I could not move my left leg and I was having cramp up that side and pain such as I had never known before. In fact, it proved to be a slipped disc, but a very painful one, and I was to lie there, literally helpless, for nearly a month. However, I felt it was a wonderful gift of providence that it should happen when I was actually staying in a hospital where I could be nursed without causing too much trouble. Everyone was so good to me.

I learned one very big thing about pain. I am not by nature a person who bears pain gladly or easily. At first I just lay and prayed for the moment when I would be given pain killing drugs. Then one day God said very clearly to me, 'Let go and give yourself to your pain. Stop resisting it. It is a way in which to a small degree you can enter into some understanding of My

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pain on the Cross.' It was not easy to follow this out, but I kept on trying, and I have never forgotten that lesson. Ever since, whenever pain, whether physical or emotional, has come my way I have tried to face it in that spirit. Pain for me now is no longer an enemy to be resisted at all costs. Rather, if God allows it I can accept it as His gift, asking Him to go through it with me, and then I find that invariably He uses it in some way to help or to understand the need of someone else. Obviously, I do not always succeed, but it is something to aim at and it undercuts self-pity and resentment.

As I got better my bed would be put on a flat roof in the sunshine and I lay and watched the fields and woods of Jutland, stretching away to the blue sea. Gradually they clothed themselves in a veil of brilliant green as the leaves began to come out on the hundreds of birch trees. On Sundays and holidays the view was made even more gay when every home flew 'Dannebrog'—the red and white flag of Denmark. Before I left, I was able to go and see the Easter market, the stalls gay with birch branches to which had been fastened bunches of little coloured feathers. These are used to decorate homes over Easter and gradually the leaves themselves come out.

Pont Street

I returned to England still rather lame and walking with a stick, but it was good to be back with Bill and Chérie and little Patrick, to say nothing of meeting all the rest of the family staying in the flat. But it was not to last for long. The Conners were called to move to a different part of the country, and sadly, though at the same time knowing without doubt that the

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next stage of God's plan lay ahead, we began to dismantle our home. I moved to a top floor flat in a friend's house in Pont Street (little thinking that, as I watched the old, bombed church opposite being pulled down and the new St Columba's being built, that one day I would actually live in a Home for retired people run by that church!). Meanwhile, after climbing 96 stairs you reached my new and delightful flat. It had a long, light sitting-room which very easily divided into bedroom, sitting-room and dining-areas. The kitchen was also roomy so that, except when one had guests, meals could be eaten there. The bedroom was big enough for two. All through my time in the flat I always had at least one, and generally two, friends staying with me, they in the bedroom, while I slept in the sitting-room.

Owing to my father's connection with Africa I grew up with no conscious colour bar in my mind at all. When, a year or two before my own first visit to Africa, I was asked to have a Nigerian woman to stay for a week or two till the right hospital could be found for her to train as a nurse, I was delighted. Mercy's husband was a head of a big hospital in Enugu, and she had left her family in order to train so that she could help in his work. I realised that I might have much to learn, and that I must not have any preconceived ideas. With all the years of academic interest in Africa this was my first experience of actually meeting and knowing an African.

There were many small things that would have made me critical, had I not had that warning thought. Mercy's English was not too good, and we found verbal communication difficult, but we soon came to love and value each other. One thing had puzzled me, however, when Mercy stayed with me in my Pont Street flat, which had no front door of its own. From early morning till late evening, without any invitation from me, Mercy's friends and relations came toiling up my 96 stairs. It was not till her last evening when I had a small party for some

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of her relations that I understood. After supper one of her cousins stood up and said, 'I am not a Christian, but in your Bible it says "Inasmuch as you have done it to one of these you have done it to Me". We want to thank you for the care you have taken of our sister Mercy.' He then explained that although Mercy's visitors were her cousins they were looked on by her and her husband and husband's family as her brothers and sisters. They would be held responsible by her family in Nigeria if anything happened to her. I was so grateful to hear that they had all felt so strongly that Mercy was safe and well looked after in my home. This was my first introduction to the concept of the extended family—one of the many characteristics of African life from which I feel we in the West could learn much.

All through her time in England, Mercy looked on my home, first in Pont Street and then in Putney, as her home. She met much kindness, especially in the first hospital to which she went, where the Matron took a very special interest in helping her. Later she came up against treatment that would have made her very bitter had she not been able to come to a home and find a warm welcome and an atmosphere in which she could be honest about what she was feeling.

Many years after she had returned to Nigeria, she came back to England for treatment at the Royal Marsden Hospital and I was able to visit her there. I met her two daughters, by now themselves both training as nurses, one in Kingston and the other in Oxford. When she finally returned to Nigeria she wrote to me telling me that she was better but that she wanted me to know how much our friendship and my home had meant to her. A few weeks later her younger daughter told me that she had died. Except for that one letter Mercy never found it very easy to express what was going on inside her, but our hearts and minds met and found a unity that was above race and colour. Since then, in Rhodesia especially, I have found

many deeply valued friendships among Africans I have met and have been warmly welcomed to their homes where we were able to talk freely of what was in our hearts.

My natural mother and the healing of a rift

There was one very big problem that constantly weighed on my mind and that was my relationship with my own mother. Since my adopted father's death I had felt free to be quite open about the whole situation. Also his cousins, who knew far more about it all than I realised, were able to tell me many of the facts of which I was ignorant. Through their friendship and help I began to understand far more deeply why my adopted parents had made the mistakes they had, as I heard of the problems they themselves had had to contend with in their own lives.

I realised, for instance, that much of their apparent harshness and over discipline sprang from a very real fear in my adopted mother of this child she had taken on; in whose creation she had had no part; of whose background and antecedents she knew so little. There were no panels of counsellors to help her in those days; there was not even a properly set up adoption system. When she caught me stealing or saw me in one of my ungovernable rages she really felt, I think, that she had a potential criminal on her hands and that the evil must be punished out of me. Had I been her own child I am sure that she would have understood better.

By this time I did not think that I had any conscious

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bitterness about any of the things that happened after my adoption. I think I was far more aware of how much had been given to me—a steady home, a good education, travel, the chance to develop many wide interests: so much that had enriched life.

But it was not the same with my own mother. I saw her regularly, but it was always as though there was a glass wall between her and me. I prayed a great deal about what I recognised as my coldness of heart, superiority and criticism—but nothing changed.

It was in 1954 that a friend asked me a question which, she said, had come to her while thinking of me in her time of quiet. The question was, 'Why have you never made a home for your mother?' My reply was to laugh and say it was quite impossible, financially or any other way. But, I am grateful to remember, she persisted and at intervals twice more repeated the question. The third time I really blew up. To my own surprise I heard myself say with great violence, 'If you think I'd make a home for the woman who abandoned me as a baby, you are wrong!' Then, of course, I pulled myself together and apologised. I said I had no idea why I had burst out like that. It was not at all how I really felt. But of course it *was* true that I had never really felt close to my mother.

My wise friend did not argue or press the point. Quietly she said, 'The way you spoke was very real. Why don't you take time alone with God and ask Him to show you the truth?' So I went home and did just that. For a time my mind was in a turmoil, then one devastatingly clear thought came. 'You hate your mother.' It came with blinding truth. I had felt badly enough that, as a professing Christian, I had had so little love for her, but to accept that I *hated* her, whatever the circumstances was really shattering. I could only admit that it was true and that I had no idea what to do about it. If I was honest, I didn't really want to do anything about it, except to

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be free of the sense of guilt. But I also told God that I knew it was utterly wrong. I don't think that until then I had ever understood what was meant by 'being saved'. I did then, for I knew that I needed saving from something far beyond any power of mine to cope with. Now the truth was out I found myself literally shaking with hate. The thought of seeing my mother was almost unbearable. Then God spoke to me again: 'If you will do what I tell you, I will deal with your hate.'

Years later I came across and re-read the letter my mother had written to me after our first meeting. In it she said how much our reunion meant to her and how much she had longed for it; how much she looked forward to our getting to know and love each other; how much she loved me and longed for my love. Reading it again, I marvelled at my hardness of heart that had been so utterly blind to so much that was being held out to me; to so much that I was being given the opportunity to do. I thought again how self pity, self concern, bitterness deafen and deaden the human spirit and how much they rob both the bitter person and those around.

But at this point I could only follow the thoughts that God put into my mind. My mother by now was in a home in Sussex, having had a stroke. My thought was to let my flat, and go and live near her for as long as her life should last. This was the cross for me, for it cut across all I wanted to do, and I knew that, short of a miracle, I could never give her the love and care she so badly needed at this time of her life. But when I acted, God opened the way. I understood the miracle on the Damascus road. Suddenly He turned my hate to love. Suddenly I knew that everything had changed. I, who had condemned her without ever having really listened to her story, was being given the chance to make her last days full and joyful; to let her tell me the real truth about my adoption; to understand all that had gone through her heart and mine. Above all I knew I could help her as no one else could.

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I found a home with a friend nearby and was able to visit mother as often as I liked. She had a second stroke which left her physically helpless, but her mind clear. The new interest and affection that had come into her life gave her peace and tranquillity and helped her to realise how much she had to give to those around her. She lived for six months and we had rich and happy times together—times when she told me of the early days of her marriage, of her struggle to make ends meet after my father's sudden death in Egypt. She told me how she had trained and taken a job as a midwife, and had run a hospital for wounded officers during the first world war. Her one idea after her husband's death had been to do the best for me and to give me the best possible chance in life—though to part with me had been like 'tearing a bit out of her heart'; that was the reason why she had accepted the offer of my adoption into the Buxton home. I began to understand all the gaiety, courage and warmth of her character which I had dismissed as superficiality and shallowness. In very truth we became mother and daughter.

She found it hard to believe that she really had a daughter at last, who loved her. I asked God what to do. 'Make her 80th birthday cake in her favourite colours', came the thought. So simple, almost childish, but somehow it did the trick.

One Sunday, after a particularly happy afternoon in which she said what it had meant to her to have me with her, she died—swiftly and peacefully. As I looked at her face with its happy little smile, I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for His love and goodness; for the miracle of forgiveness, the power that changes character, dissolves bitterness and builds eternal unity. I was so grateful that I had obeyed the thought that came as I was leaving her room that Sunday—to go back and give her another kiss and tell her how much I loved her. 'Darling,' was her reply. 'I don't know what I'd have done without you these last months.'

What does adoption require ?

Not long ago I picked up a book in the Public Library. The delightful dust cover drew my attention. Its title was 'Jody', and it was by an American writer, Jerry Hulse. When I came to read it, I found that it was the story of the search for the roots and origin of a woman who, like me, had been adopted. Eventually, her husband found the mother and there is a moving account of the meeting between mother and daughter. It went straight to my heart, for Jody's attitude to her natural mother was so different—so warm and out-going—from my own to mine. She had none of that glass wall within which I had encased myself, so that I did not even recognise my own feelings at the time, or for so long after. Reading this book re-activated convictions I have long held concerning the whole question of adoption. I expect that these problems are now taken into account when adoption is contemplated, and that they are explored with the adopting parents.

The main reason for adopting a child should never be to fulfil the longings and frustrations of the adoptive parents. No prospective parent is free to take on a child for its own sake until the very real hurts and demands in the older person's heart have been well and truly healed. To adopt a child to satisfy some longing, however legitimate, in the adopter is to put a burden on the child too heavy to be borne. It means that disappointment and judgement will be visited on the youngster whenever it fails to behave according to expectations or requirements, probably unspoken and not comprehended by the child at all. But wherever the adoption has been undertaken for the child's sake, with no demand that it be anything

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but its natural self, then understanding is established with a bond that cannot be broken by any problem discovered in its nature.

Adoptive parents must not desire gratitude. They must not express such a desire either overtly or covertly. They must not allow themselves to entertain the idea. For this again lays on the child too heavy a burden. I experienced this from my own adoptive mother, both from her unspoken attitude before 1917, and from her outburst, when I was twelve, and she had revealed that I had been adopted. The desire for gratitude is as natural as the desire to be loved. But to let it rule a relationship injects the poison of selfishness just where selfless caring is most called for.

Nor does it go to the heart of the problem in the child to seek to prove its preciousness by saying, 'You were especially chosen by us.' A child longs most of all to know where its own roots are. It is a law of nature to want to experience the love of the mother out of whose body you came. This is rendered impossible for the adopted child—or was until recently. The new legislation facilitating an adopted child's knowledge of and friendship with its real parent(s) is aimed at solving this problem. But this tracing of actual relationships is not always desirable, and raises as many problems as it solves, only too often. Only a steady, reliable love which the child knows will not 'give' under stress, by the adoptive parents, can approach the longing to know, and ease the sense of not belonging. As an adopted child I know that it is not easy to know oneself what one is feeling—yet deep resentments and warping bitterness can be created. To be free to ask questions, to talk about the whole thing, as I was not, must help immeasurably. But something far greater than the best human love of which any adoptive parent is capable is called for. In my own case, certainly, the one and only thing that answered that deep need in my heart was first, when I could be totally open about it,

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and then take it to God who healed it fully and satisfyingly from inside.

I have often thought that it may be better and more natural to let the child grow up with the knowledge of its adoption just as it grows with the knowledge of any other fact of life, rather than reserving the revelations for some specific moment, earlier or later. I have recently met a friend with an adopted son who took this way, and it certainly worked with him. I know that had I been able to ask questions, to express my feelings, just to talk about the whole thing, everything would have been different—even, I think, in spite of the fact that I was told more than usually late in my childhood. At the same time, I realise that many other situations create similar problems in a child's life, and that there are many ways in which a sense of rejection and unworthiness can grow.

Rhodesia—the first journey to visit my brother

My one time 'brother', Dick, had left England when he was 19 and gone to Rhodesia, where he had been offered a job in an Insurance Company. It was strange that he should have been the one to go to Africa, make a permanent home there, and raise a family. My father's main work was with the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, of which, more later. But he never seems to have considered visiting the continent.

Soon after my mother's death, I found myself thinking constantly about Dick. We had written to each other over the

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years. I knew that he was now farming and that his first marriage had broken up, and that he had been divorced and had left my god-daughter, Angela, with her mother. I knew too that he had re-married and had four more children, two boys and two girls. Now, however, my heart seemed to come alive in a new way and I began to think about all he must have felt and suffered down the years since he left our joint adopted home. I also realised that there was now no one left but me who had lived through it with him. It had never entered my mind to go out to see him. But now I found myself wondering whether I could visit him and at least see for myself how he was, give him the chance to talk about the past. It would be good to know his family and the country he had made his own. I had no money for the trip, but the more I thought about it the more right it seemed. Eventually I wrote to him suggesting a six months' visit. He replied that I would be more than welcome to visit for as long as I liked. He also gave me the address of his own mother and of his two sisters and asked that I go and see them before I came out. This I did, and we quickly became friends. I promised to come and see them again on my return and tell them all about Dick and his home and family. The money for the trip came through many miracles as well as my selling some family treasures.

I little thought, as I stepped on to that little Viking plane, which was to take me to Rhodesia, what a marvellous gift I was being given. The Suez crisis had just taken place, so that we could not go by the normal route, and everything was somewhat disorganised. The plane itself was very small. In the departure lounge I got into conversation with an elderly lady who, I later discovered, was Lady Malvern. Her comment on our conveyance was, 'Just held together with string and safety pins my dear!' Very reassuring! It was a three day journey, stopping constantly for refuelling. We left on a cold, wet, winter Sunday. Late that afternoon, we stopped in Rome to

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refuel and then flew on to Algiers where we spent the remainder of the night in great comfort in the hotel which had been General Eisenhower's HQ during the war. All next day was spent travelling the length of the Sahara—a wonderful experience, for sometimes we flew over golden sand, whipped by the wind into fantastic shapes and hollows, sometimes over reddish, rocky soil, and sometimes we saw fantastic and weird shapes of rocky out-crops in the distance.

Twice we stopped in a desert oasis to refuel. I could see the men's trousers blowing in the breeze before we alighted the first time, and thought, 'Well, at least that will cool us.' I was to find that the wind was like air from an oven at top heat. At one stop we found a thick-walled stone hut where you could buy drinks. Inside were iron chairs and tables. When I put my hand on them they almost burnt it. The next night we stopped in Brazzaville in a strange, luxurious-looking, but somehow very odd 'hotel'. There seemed no one about, and we had to go out for our meal. I insisted on having some sort of escort but, though we were taken to the restaurant, we had to find our own way back. During the night, a violent banging on my wall awakened me and, going to find out what was wrong next door, I found the two girl occupants were terrified as the 'manager' had been trying to get in, and peering through the fanlight at them. I slept the rest of the night with a shoe in one hand ready to go to the rescue if necessary! Lady Malvern's comment next morning was, 'Just a brothel, dear, just a brothel!' Our third night was spent, three in a room (and indeed, two in a bed—and strangers at that), in a rest house—extremely primitive. As we got in at about 4 p.m. another passenger and I hired a taxi and careered off across the desert to visit the old walled city of Kano. I am not sure that I would take such a risk now, knowing the possible dangers, and that the dark falls early and suddenly, but I am glad we did it. It was a perfect introduction to Africa. The mud houses growing

out of the mud ground, some of them painted in bright colours swirling over the walls, their roofs ornamented with turrets. In the roadway sat men with sewing machines, treadling away madly, or on the steps ironing. The little children clustered round calling for 'dash'—even the smallest had her eyes ringed with kohl and her hair in complicated plaits. We saw the famous indigo dye vats, and bargained for native made leather goods, finally arriving back at the rest house a little after dark, to wonder at the deep blue velvet of the night sky, the thousands of brilliant stars, and, for me, my first sight of the 'Southern Cross'.

At Salisbury airport I was met by Dick and my god-daughter, Angela. We stayed the night in the famous old Meikles hotel in Salisbury before driving the 300 miles to his farm beyond Fort Victoria. That evening Dick and I talked and talked. All the bitterness of the years poured out, and I could only ask God to forgive us as a family and to thank Him that here, at least, was the beginning of a new unity. We drove up to the farm next day and I quickly learned to love Dick's wife, Elaine, and his four children—10-year-old Richard, 8-year-old Pamela, 6-year-old Peter, and small Mary, known as 'Twinks', who was three. From the moment of my arrival I felt that they were indeed my family, and I think that they felt the same about me. With Angela, too, there was immediately a real and deep link. So God continued His work of building a mosaic of unity out of a life that had been so fragmented.

Rhodesia is a country easy to love with its great granite Kopjes, its clover red grasses, acres of maize, and glorious flowering trees along the streets of Salisbury and Bulawayo. I met farmers and businessmen, housewives and teachers, black, coloured and white. I found hospitality and a warmth of welcome from people of every colour, background and political opinion. Strangers made their home my home. I began to see just a tiny corner of the enormous problems and the colossal

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gifts that Africa represented.

I met men and women who were looking forward to the years ahead and doing all in their power to build relationships of trust and a big enough common aim; men and women who already were foreseeing something of the confusion and turmoil through which Southern Africa is now passing, but who believed that God had a Plan which could be found as people turned to Him for change and direction. Somehow I felt that just as God had made Dick and me brother and sister in His eyes, and that Dick's family had now become mine, so too Rhodesia had truly become my country and one for which I would thenceforth think and care and I hope often re-visit. I did go back seven years later in 1965, then in 1972, 1974 (when the Pearce Commission was in the country), and finally in 1977. During each visit I had the opportunity, which I eagerly took, of meeting people from every sort of background and point of view, political and otherwise.

The Westminster Theatre

After a packed and most interesting six months, I returned to England and my Pont Street flat. It was while I lived there that my whole conception of possessions, finance and security began to deepen and expand. For many years I had lived as far as I knew how on the basis that where you honestly tried to do what you felt was right and God's plan, He would open the way, financially as in every other respect. But as I had a small income of my own I felt that all I could do was to learn what things to spend it on and how to use it aright in terms of thinking for my nation and the world's needs.

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By this time Moral Re-Armament, through the sacrifice of many people, had been given a theatre in memory of our friends who had died during the war. Here we put on plays of hope, giving an answer, rather than those of despair and kitchen sink philosophy. It was at a point of particular advance in this theatre that I had the uncomfortable and rather scaring thought that I should give a sum far in excess of what I had or could hope to have. In a time of quiet, the answer came very clearly; 'Sell your desk'. Now, this desk had belonged to my adopted mother and she had always used it as a dressing table. It was a beautiful inlaid Louis Quatorze piece which I had loved and admired for as long as I could remember. Not only did I love it for my mother's sake, but I had never believed anything so beautiful could belong to me. God gave me another reason, however, for my unwillingness to part with it, which I realised was just as true. The fact that I possessed such a valuable and beautiful treasure helped to boost my ego and gave me a false sense of status and security—quite a new thought. I did have a pang as the little desk was carried out of my flat, but it sold for the amount I had had the thought to give, and I was at peace for I knew I had the security and status of being part of God's plan to bring new hope and purpose to the world.

Move to Putney

The friend who was sharing the flat with me at this time, and I myself, decided in 1955 that our 96 stairs were getting too much for us to climb—also our rent was increasing considerably. We talked it over and decided that we would continue to

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make a home together and invite our mutual friend Nancy Archer to join us when she returned from Australia, where she had been for the past year. Our joint feeling was that Putney was the place to live and we managed to get a delightful flat in Kenilworth Court, close by the river—where already two of our friends both had their own flat. At that time the proprietors were re-wiring, re-plumbing and re-decorating the flats as they became vacant, and then selling rather than re-letting. We greatly enjoyed the fun of choosing our own wallpaper and paint—paid for by the proprietors!

When we moved in, Moya, for the first time during our joint home making, had her own furniture. I remember we had a heated argument as to which of our personal treasures should be in the sitting-room. Neither of us much cared for those of the other, while we were both very conscious that certain things always *had* had a place in our own sitting-rooms. However, finally we came to the simple conclusion that the obvious thing to do was to think how the room would look to the people who were coming to visit us. We sat quietly together among our bits and pieces and considered the matter. Presently we shared our ideas. They proved to work out identically. Each treasured possession found its right place—many of them in our own bedrooms, which we each made into bed sitting-rooms so as to add to the possibilities of entertaining—and our joint room ended by looking most attractive, with personality and character, but with neither my personality nor Moya's swamping it.

Does this sound petty? Somewhere I seem to have heard of vital international conferences being held up or broken up because of disagreement as to the shape of the table round which the delegates were to sit.

While I was in Rhodesia Moya and Nancy lived at the Kenilworth Court flat, having my room available for any visitors. Before I left for my second visit to Africa we had all three decided that we wanted to become as much a part of the com-

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munity and borough as we possibly could. With this in mind Nan joined the Townswomen's Guild in Balham, I joined one of the Putney Guilds and Moya became a member of the National Council of Women. Together we regularly attended Council meetings at the Town Hall and got to know many of the Councillors. The leader of the Council at that time, Alderman Bill Carnie, and his wife Elizabeth, became special and much valued friends and counted on our backing in their work for the borough and entered into our work with the Westminster Theatre. On one occasion they attended the current play officially, wearing the magnificent civic chains of office.

We all three felt strongly that when bills came in they should be paid at once. I remember a young electrician who did some work for us. When he handed us his account, after checking it, we handed him his money. He nearly collapsed. Then he told us that he was having to go out of the little business he had built up because so many of his customers put off paying their bills, or defaulted on them.

I have often thought of that young man when I have been tempted to defer payment 'till a more convenient season'. When we had not the money we needed, we prayed. None of us smoked or drank. We did not feel the need of such stimulants or tranquilisers, nor that they were things on which we wanted to spend such money as we did have. Actually my own addiction to smoking had disappeared completely soon after I first decided to let God run my life. We felt that money was not something to worry over, hoard or squander, or to use as a means of power. It was not a question of whether we had a lot or very little. It was not meant to be a political issue. Any money I have is a trust and with it I can begin to deal with inflation and devaluation. Money is the life blood of our care for others.

We had many people for meals, or to stay. We felt that meals served with care, attention to detail, and with thought

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for the special need for the special guest, sometimes opened people's hearts and made them feel valued and wanted in a way nothing else did.

My Nigerian friend, Mercy, often stayed with us when on leave from hospital. Then there was delightful Shamsi Isfandiary, a young Iranian woman who lived with us for some months in, I think, 1965. She was one of the few people who came on a paying basis. She had left her husband and two small girls in Iran in order to come here to learn English. It meant so much to her to be in a home where she really felt at home. The crowning experience was on Iranian New Year's Day when she asked many of her friends to join us for the traditional Iranian meal for that occasion. Traditionally there had to be seven objects on the table whose names began with 'S' in Farsi (the Iranian language). No one knows why—this is lost in the mists of antiquity. There should also be a mirror with a lamp behind it, which is the sign for looking forward to a 'light future'. I remember the piles of special green rice she cooked—and that we ate green rice for days and days afterwards! But it was a wonderful evening for us all and gave us British a glimpse of Iran.

Then there was the eminent woman barrister, Mrs Oon, and Mr and Mrs Tan and their son, all Chinese from Malaysia, who came to look on our flat as home to them in England. One New Year's Eve we had five or six young nurses from the local hospital—all from different countries—to see the New Year in and to eat mince pies and drink spiced fruit punch.

Africa—towards a multi-racial society

My growing love for Rhodesia and for Africa as a continent was a fitting and perhaps natural development from my adopted family's history. It was Thomas Fowell Buxton who was inspired by, and carried on the work of, Wilberforce in the ending of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves. The Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society arose from this. It is their concern to track down any kind of slavery that might be going on in any part of the world—not only in Africa. I remember, for example, the fight they put up on behalf of the young girls taken into virtual slavery in China under the guise of temple servants. As a child the names of the African countries of Barotseland and Basutoland were household words, with my father discussing the problems and needs of the Africans there. He worked tirelessly, first as paid, then as full time voluntary Secretary to the Society at their offices in London, though he never went to Africa to see for himself. This may partly have been because he was a shy, retiring man while his colleague, John (later Sir John) Harris was extremely active and energetic and so did all the travelling. Incidentally, besides my father's full time work with the Anti-slavery Society he was also a magistrate on the Paddington Bench, a Governor of two local schools, a keen supporter of the League of Nations and of various missionary Societies as well as being senior session clerk at our large Presbyterian church—a responsible and onerous position.

One of my very early memories is of the visit of a delegation

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of African Chiefs from, I think, Basutoland. We children were allowed to accompany them on a visit to the Zoo. We had never before met such splendid figures; one was a huge statuesque man in a purple satin robe, another wore two hats one on top of the other. The Zoo keepers made us all extremely welcome, and took us round to the back of the cages. When we reached the snakes, however, we were astonished that when the keeper in charge offered to let the Chiefs hold the snakes, they showed every sign of disinclination, while Dick and I were only too eager to do so. Of course, we knew nothing about snake bites and they did!

In spite of my lack of colour prejudice, I began to see more and more clearly the deep, unconscious, quiet superiority which is, I think, very much a part of the British character. In me it was not so much the superiority of colour, as just superiority; superiority to people of any other nation to say nothing of superiority to many of my own. How contradictory human nature is! At the same time I could feel superior and yet so deeply inferior.

At one point I was working with a group of women from various countries, creating costumes for the shows being given at an MRA Conference. One day one of the girls, in whose country the conference was being held, said, more or less casually, 'I wonder why Joan always sits at the head of the table?' My reply was immediate, and stunned even me by its total, spontaneous arrogance: 'Well, I'm the only British person here.' I could have bitten my tongue out as soon as I said it, but it was a real indication of how I regarded my friends from other countries. How often do we rob other nations because we never realise the depth of superiority in our attitudes; our blindness to the gifts they have to offer; our lack of compassion for their needs and hurts.

When I thought about this incident, I remembered something that had happened soon after I had begun to try to live

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my life God's way rather than my own. For the first time I had begun to see the women who served us in our home as people, not just as servants, there for my convenience. I talked to one of them one day, and thanked her for all she had given us through the years she had been with us. She burst into tears and said, 'No one has ever before thanked me in this house as if I were a human being.' Apartheid isn't a question of colour. It is created by me and anyone else to whom I feel superior, or inferior—for often my apparent superiority is really a mask to hide my sense of inferiority.

It was as I began to learn about this 'apartheidism' in my own nature, that I realised how rejection breeds bitterness and mistrust.

A friend once told me that she had always felt I was 'phoney'. This was hard to take, but I recognised that there was some truth there that I needed to pursue. I saw that the double life I had led during the years when I knew that I was not Joan Buxton but at first did not know, and later was prevented from admitting, who I really was, had only increased the innate dishonesty in my nature. The sense of rejection which, I think, is common to many individuals and nations these days, eats into your soul. It blinds you to the true facts; you try to look as though you were independent and could not care less what others think, but inside your heart is bleeding and lost. It makes you hate, and it makes you determined to have power one way or another. You find a spurious security in keeping others out of your own tight little circle. You become impervious to what is going on in the hearts of those around you. Your vision and judgment are both warped. You become a builder of walls where you could build bridges.

Honesty is a necessary prelude to trust. As long as I refuse to face the truth my immediate response is one of mistrust. That is the greatest need in Africa today—and certainly in Rhodesia—the ability to build trust between black and white, black and

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black, and white and white. You cannot do it by thinking you have all the answers; God can do it through you if you are honest and dare enough to change your way of living, your points of view, and the motives that rule your life when 'I' is at the centre.

It is one thing to decide to try to help a country or a continent and to think and care for her—but how, in fact, does a very ordinary, elderly woman do it? Well, I suppose it begins, continues and ends with people. We have had ample proof that legislation, human control and human wisdom have all failed to create the kind of world most of us want to see. In Rhodesia we have tried condemnation, coercion by sanctions, backing one side or another, giving advice, turning a blind eye, making superficial judgments—the lot. The result has been that, due to sanctions, Rhodesia has learnt to make a great many goods herself which formerly she bought from other countries, men have been killed, hearts broken, trust steadily destroyed. The answer still has to be found. I not only love the beautiful land of Rhodesia, but I also love her people. How could I help?

Personally, I believe that it is the ordinary man and perhaps even more the ordinary woman who will bring change. If each took the positive action that occurred to them on any problem, the 'silent majority' would become a vocal and constructive force. One person may not be able to do much, but a hundred can move mountains—and have. But someone has to start. So I decided to try to build bridges between individuals, between people here and in Rhodesia by giving them facts without bias, friendship, and where I could, the answer of my own faith. But how could I help to reach many more people?

Excuses that others make for me, or their criticism of my ways do not make me want to change those ways. I want to change and to pay the price of change when others care for me enough to be honest with me, are open about their own

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failures, not 'holier than thou', and do not tell me what I should do or be, but point me to God who speaks to my inmost heart if I will listen. When I met people who themselves had given everything for the immense aim of building a new world, I wanted to be part of that kind of living.

The film *A Man for All People* showed the life of a black South African, Dr William Nkomo, Founder of the National Congress Youth League of South Africa. (William Nkomo is no relation of Rhodesia's Joshua Nkomo.) He had had much to make him bitter, but had turned away from his bitterness and had built bridges between his own people and Europeans where before he had built walls. The film showed the practical steps that he had had to take, the unimaginable miracles God then gave, the changes that followed in which completely unforeseen factors emerged and brought solutions to apparently hopeless problems. The film condemned no one, it condoned nothing, it did not take sides. It showed that a man's whole nature could be re-built, his whole outlook re-orientated; the result was that he had something to give not only to his own people, but to others in Africa, Europe, Ireland—all over the world. When he met black and white who had found the secret of unity, Nkomo said, 'I saw black men change and I saw white men change, and I changed.' From then on he worked with anyone who would do so on the same basis.

I decided that, somehow, Rhodesia should see this film, and see it quickly. At the same time I had no money with which to buy it. So I asked God what to do. Two thoughts came, 1) you must yourself sacrifice, and 2) let others have the privilege of helping.

As I have already said, my much-loved uncle was a famous bird artist. His work is still greatly prized and in much demand. When I was in my teens he painted for my autograph album (the 'in' thing for schoolgirls in those days) a charming study of a goldfinch feeding on a head of thistle-down. Ever

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since, it had hung on my wall and been one of my most treasured possessions. That was the sacrifice I knew God was asking of me, so I sold it. The previous Christmas, having just returned from Rhodesia, I had written a long, descriptive letter to go with my Christmas wishes. Many had replied saying how much that letter had interested them with the new light it threw on the situation out there in Southern Africa. This I realised was the moment to give these people the opportunity to make their interest practical. So I wrote to each telling them what I wanted to do and saying how much I would like them to have a part if they wished. I had over twenty replies. Many contained quite small sums, for most were OAPs (the most was £10) but the film was paid for and the air freight covered.

I had already written to my friends in Rhodesia that the film would be coming and, in faith, they had arranged a multi-racial gathering where it could be shown. It arrived just half an hour before the meeting was scheduled to begin. Since then it has travelled the length and breadth of the country, bringing new hope, motives and trust wherever it has been shown.

A changing Southern Africa

During my last visit but one, in 1975, I celebrated my 70th birthday. My brother and sister-in-law (as I now fully feel them to be) gave me a marvellous party in their home in Salisbury. Their Pastor and some of their Church friends came and, of the ten of my own friends, nine were people with whom I had special links in England long before they came out to Rhodesia. It was a wonderful evening and, indeed, I shall never forget all

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that Dick and Elaine and the family gave me throughout the day. But the thing that moved me most was, towards the end of the party, my brother speaking about our relationship, explaining our adoption, and adding that it was when I came out more than 20 years before that he had first been stirred with a desire to find God as an experience in his own life.

Another highlight of my last trip to Rhodesia was the two day visit I was privileged to make to President and Mrs John Wrathall at Government House. The President's official home is a gracious, one-storey, Cape Dutch style house of rose-red brick and white colonnades. Its elegant rooms are cool and peaceful with their soft green-blue decor and curtains. Mrs Wrathall herself created the beautiful flower arrangements that enhanced every room, and the large garden owes its present lay-out very much to her inspiration.

The President had a quiet manner and a strong sense of humour. With a serious face but revealing twinkle in his blue eyes, he pulled your leg unmercifully—and thoroughly enjoyed a leg-pull in reply.

Mr and Mrs Wrathall succeeded in a marvellous way in creating a warm, relaxed and welcoming home amid the inevitable formalities of an official residence and, in spite of their many engagements, always gave a sense of leisure and of genuine interest in the person they are with.

During his eighteen months' term of office, the President, four or five times, called for a national day of prayer and repentance. He and Mrs Wrathall had a steady faith, and quietly, without fuss, they gave a positive and creative lead to the country during a time of change and uncertainty. Rhodesia was fortunate in having John and Doreen Wrathall as her heads of state. I count myself fortunate in being able to call them my friends. The whole country grieved when the President's sudden death, in 1978, from a heart attack, was announced. It was typical that he should have spent his last

day at Rhodesia's Trade Fair, meeting and greeting his many friends, black and white.

My clearest and happiest memory of my visit is of them standing on the lawn of Government House, surrounded by a cloud of their tame white doves, which came and went at a call from the President. To my mind, the Wrathalls represented the best of the European element in Rhodesia.

On one visit, I returned home via South Africa. While in Johannesburg, I was taken to the home, in the African township of Soweto, of Mr and Mrs Vundla. P. K. Vundla was a full-time organiser of the African Mineworkers' Union, and as such led the biggest industrial strike known in South Africa up till then. He was governed by hatred and bitterness towards the whites. Through the humble apology of a young white nationalist, he started to think afresh about what he was fighting for, and what was, in fact, right. He changed profoundly and adopted an entirely new attitude to other races. Some years later he met one of his old enemies at a multi-racial conference. They talked honestly and were reconciled. 'P. K.', as he was known, apologised to his wife, Kathleen, for having treated her more as a servant than as a wife. His children lost their fear of him. 'The real issue is character, not colour,' said the new Vundla. While I sat enjoying the warmth of his and Kathleen's welcome and hospitality, I asked him what he saw for the future. 'I lie awake at night thinking about the white man; unless he changes, and we change, there will be a blood bath,' was his reply. Vundla never lost a chance to bring black and white together, and seek to give both the faith that had become so real for him.

On my first visit to Rhodesia, I went to a tiny home in an African township near Bulawayo. There I met a young couple; he was a bright, up-and-coming teacher, she a shy, slim slip of a girl, who was fearful of speaking in front of us, and silently served us tea. About 20 years later, I met her again. We were

fellow speakers at a meeting of the Bulawayo National Council of Women. She spoke with dignity and knowledge on some point in connection with the Pearce Commission, then visiting Rhodesia. Afterwards she took me to see the large Piccanin school she ran with an assistant. 'Dabola,' I said, 'you are such a different person from that shy, silent young girl I first met!' 'Yes', she answered, 'through MRA I found God, and He taught me to love my people.'

At the Multi-racial University in Salisbury I met one of the European lecturers. He told me how, recently, he had realised that he had totally written off one of his African colleagues, as a 'light-weight', simply on account of the colour of his skin. He had apologised to the man, found that, indeed, he had an extremely good brain, and, as a result, the two men and their wives began a series of dinner parties in their homes, turn and turn about. At these meals, black and white, including some of the country's leaders on both sides, met and talked together in a relaxed atmosphere of friendship, understanding, and a deep desire to find the way together to build the new Zimbabwe.

On my last visit I was taken to a large Methodist church in the Harare African Township, not far from the church at which my brother worshipped. Here Rev. Arthur Kanadereka is the Methodist Minister. He is also Head of the Methodist Church in Salisbury and, at that time, Treasurer to the African National Council. Sunday by Sunday he set himself, with a group of men from all races, to train black and white young men to understand each other and, in obedience to God's promptings, to build a truly multi-racial society.

The days of prayer called for by President Wrathall were regarded by black Africans as the business of Europeans, and having nothing to do with them. In February, 1977, however, the President called for a 'day of prayer and fasting' 'to enable Rhodesians to repent and re-dedicate themselves to God, that He may lead them to a just and peaceful country for all

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“races”.’

On the Sunday previous to the Friday suggested for this most recent Day of Prayer, at the Reverend Arthur Kanadereka's Church, Professor Reader of Salisbury University spoke. He talked of the choice between 'The path of the gun and the path of God', and referred to the President's call. At the end of Prof. Reader's speech, Arthur Kanadereka asked the congregation: 'What should we do here next Friday?' Immediately a young black African proposed that the church be opened for a prayer service. This was agreed to by a unanimous show of hands. The Prime Minister's son, Alec, stood by Arthur Kanadereka's side to lead the Friday service, translated from English to Shona and vice versa by a young black man.

Among the many leaders, black and white, who attended that Friday service, was Sir Cyril Hatty, former Cabinet Minister in the Smith Government. He told publicly, for the first time, the story of his apology to Herbert Chitepo, leader of the guerillas at that period. Sir Cyril said that he had realised that his own superior attitude had helped to create the bitterness which motivated Chitepo. It cost him much to write the letter, which he did in full consultation with his Government colleagues, but he read Chitepo's answer. In it, the guerilla leader renounced hatred, and said: 'The best restitution is to build a new society where all are free.' At the end of Sir Cyril's words, came a deep-throated African 'A-a-ah!' from the whole congregation. Tragically, Chitepo was killed shortly after this exchange of letters.

Lyle Park

It was when I was about sixty and, of course, back in England, that it dawned on me that I had to look to the future and realise that, given another ten years, I might need to be somewhere where people of retirement age were catered for. I hated the idea and felt it was far too soon to think of such things. However, the thought persisted. Just at this point a Swedish friend, who was staying in Putney, phoned to ask if I would go with her to 'a big house on Putney Hill' called Lyle Park. She knew nothing about it, but it seemed to have a lot of people living there. We were taking coaches to the Westminster Theatre at the time, and wanted to give as many people as possible the chance of joining us, so I at once agreed to go. As we walked up the steps of the house—quite a landmark, with its green dome at one end, and its white painted balconies—I had the strangest feeling that one day I would be living there. The door opened, and a kindly woman told us it was a home for retired people run by St Columba's Church, Pont Street.

Coming as it did so quickly on the heels of my thought about looking to the future, plus the fact that it was a Presbyterian home, and in Putney, where I felt I should continue to live, gave me a sense that I might be on the right track. A few weeks later I called again, went round the house and was told to whom I should apply for information. In the Matron's view I stood a good chance of being accepted, especially as a scheme of flatlets had been started for rather younger people in what used to be the stables of the big house. These had now been transformed, in most cases accommodating one resident each.

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Only in one flat do four people share. It was not for another two years that I needed to apply for admission.

After 11 years at Kenilworth Court, my friends had both left to care for elderly relatives and I had found a little flat in the home of a friend in Putney, where I learned to live alone and enjoy it. But in 1968, two years after I had seen Lyle Park, my friend told me she needed my flat for her brother, and that while there was no immediate hurry, I obviously had to find some other place. After a good deal of searching, I decided to write to the Secretary of Lyle Park and find out what my chances might be. I felt pretty sure there would be a waiting list, but that there was a plan and this was the next step to take. I had an immediate reply saying that there was a flatlet vacant and I could go and look at it. It was quite delightful, looking on the garden and comprising a kitchen, bathroom, attractive sitting-room and bedroom. There were about 30 other residents, all a good deal older than myself, but I had a real sense that this was where I was meant to be, and my family and friends seemed to feel the same.

The first time I went into a meal and saw that most of my companions were walking with sticks, had difficulty in hearing or seeing, or both, I realised that my own old age really was advancing and I found it hard to accept. But I knew that at any age God would have a job for me to do and would make it possible for me to do it. Indeed, soon after my arrival at Lyle Park, a friend gave me a little mini car. It was so utterly unexpected—but she said that she wanted to help in the work I was doing and, as she was over 90 and had no family, she felt she would like to help me in this very practical way. Another friend gave me a covenant which covered the running costs. As the next four years brought a good deal of ill-health, culminating in a big operation, the little car enabled me to keep in touch with the Westminster Theatre, my Church in Putney, and with the Townswomen's Guild, where I was a section

chairman, and later, Chairman. It was while I was at Lyle Park that I paid my last two visits to Rhodesia.

Queen Mary's Hospital

So much was to happen through that last, serious operation. I had gone in for a test with no idea of an operation looming, though I had had the thought to take a small case with me (a hint that, unfortunately, I did not take, as I thought it would look 'silly'). When I came round from the anaesthetic required by the test, my kind specialist told me that I needed this immediate and serious operation, and that I must stay in; a bed would be found. However, I was allowed to go home and collect the case that it would have been wise to have brought. On my return, I was put into a single room in the men's ward and, a day or two later, transferred to the big women's surgical ward. Here there was no Sister for the moment, but we were blessed by the most wonderful team of nurses, to whom nothing was too much trouble. Now the rather unpleasant preparations for a big abdominal operation could begin.

It was not till the morning of the operation that I suddenly thought, 'I might die this afternoon!' Until then I had been completely free of fear. At once God asked me the old question, 'If you *should* die, do you believe that I will be with you?' My answer was, of course, 'Yes!' and my fear left me. It was replaced by the thought, 'Underneath are the Everlasting arms, and they never fail, or falter.' I was often to lie back on those arms during the next days, and they were always there, giving peace, security, and something that I could give to those around me and to my many visitors.

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I remember being put on to a stretcher, taken up to the theatre, and given my last 'prick'. Then I was looking over a low fence into a shining white expanse of utter peace. Somehow I knew that I was on the edge of the next world and I longed with all my heart to stay. But a loud and insistent voice kept calling to me to return. I remember saying to myself, 'I cannot make that long trudge back.' But the voice went on and I knew that I had to obey. Before long I began to realise pain, and kind faces. Days later a German nun, one of the team who had been looking after me, told me that she had come to the ward on my return from the theatre to see how I was. 'When I saw you,' she said, 'I felt sure you could not live. But I felt that God did not mean you to die, so I went away and prayed.' I know that I had had the prayers of many, many other people. I shall never fear death now.

As I lay, pretty weak and unable to do anything for myself, I marvelled that God had loved me well enough to want me to go on living and doing His will. I realised with vivid clarity that He loved me *because* of what I was, not in spite of it. My limiting of His love had, in fact, denied His whole nature, as had my life-long dependence on what people thought about me. Suddenly that burden lifted and rolled away completely. I felt deeply and humbly ashamed for so insulting His love, and I asked forgiveness, and committed my life afresh for a new depth of service.

I was free, as I had never been in all my life, to be myself, and yet to accept the fact that I needed a miracle every minute of the day to be what God wanted me to be. But I need never again be too proud to say 'sorry', or too fearful of criticism to be dishonest about what I think or feel. My sins, mistakes, fears and my sorrows, God uses to help others, and to give me understanding of their needs. Everything has been different since then—all my attitudes, all my relationships. Nothing is quite the same—so many places where I had expected enmity I

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found held nothing but friendship. Life lived in obedience to God was so much simpler than trying to prove one was right! *And* it is so much more fun—so completely satisfying.

Getting old—the mosaic of life

As I look back, I marvel at the unbroken thread of God's love and guidance. Even at my most rebellious and unbelieving, His hand led and provided for me. When I opened the door of my heart the least crack, He, so to speak, put His finger through it. Out of a fragmented life—my own mother, my adopted family, my adopted relations on both sides, Dick and his family (including his own sisters in England), God has created a single, harmonious mosaic. There is a depth of unity and affection which overrides any fact of blood differences. They are all my family and I, equally, belong to them. Is it not possible that God is longing to create the same sort of miracle on a world scale?

Out of the chaos and fragmentation of my inner self, too, the same mosaic has been created by God's love. Where there was war now there is peace. Where there was fear and insecurity, He has given the certainty of His abiding love and care.

A sense of guilt, far from being a kind of perversion as many would have us believe today, is the gateway to forgiveness, change and new life. But it is meant to be a *gate*, not a *state*. Slavery is the fear and unwillingness to face the truth about yourself, your nation, your world. Freedom comes when you have the faith and courage to do that because you have accepted both your own responsibility and God's power to

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forgive and remake, and to use your sins and sorrows to help remake men and nations. The truth certainly does make you free, as the Bible promises. When I look facts in the face I have God's freedom. When I turn my back on them I am the prisoner of my fears.

As the years move on and my strength and ability to be active decrease, I find that there are many new things I can do to help in the creation of a new world. I can write letters to the media, for instance, or to our leaders, not pointing the finger, but encouraging and maybe seeking to heighten a move in the right direction, even if it does not go all the way. These can encourage and strengthen. Postage and phone calls are becoming more and more expensive, and it is tempting to cut down on them. The challenge to me is not to cut down on the expense, but to step up the content. To be governed by the expense is to contribute to the breakdown of communication.

For me, as I get older, the 'ministry of letters' (and phone calls) can be a life-line. It means so much to my friends all over the world to get letters which, while facing problems realistically, dwell not on them, but on the miracles that are happening daily through the initiative and boldness of ordinary men and women. Many, as old age creeps up on them, are in danger of being isolated and cut off; they live in a narrow little world of their own and are often very lonely. A phone call can be the bridge which keeps them in touch and may help them to see where they are still needed, be they flat-bound, chair-bound or bed-bound.

There once was a Scot who decided to stay at home for his holiday and let his mind wander. My friends little know how often I wander through their homes in my imagination. For me, prayer for them is putting them into God's loving hand. He knows their needs. I do not have to tell Him. But He may need a link, and my love for them and for Him can, I think, provide that link. There is no weariness or sickness so deep

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that you cannot, to some extent at least, move out to other people. In thinking of them, imagining them, thanking for them, your own pains and concerns shrink and drop out of sight. And it does not need to stop at one's friends. Nations and their leaders, my own community and the people who make it up need me too. Whether you are tired, retired or, sometimes, tiresome, even when all physical energy has gone, God still needs you to help Him complete His mosaic.

The creation of the mosaic of life goes on and will go on till death. Only then will we see the creation as it has become, and as God intended it to be. What He has done in my life, surely He longs to do even more fully for our whole, fragmented world. The pieces differ, each from the other; the joins show, but where the cement is real and strong, the very joins help to make up the pattern.

As I end, I wish it were possible to give some idea of the greatness of Frank Buchman. Maybe one day history will assess correctly the outreach of his work. Meanwhile, had it not been for the chain reaction of his personal dedication and world vision, this story could never have been written. I conclude with his own words, 'When man listens, God speaks. When man obeys, God acts. When men change, nations change.'