Stories for the Middle School Assembly

Edited by D.M. Prescott

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School Assembly Books
edited by D. M. Prescott

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Readings for the Senior Assembly
More Readings for the Senior Assembly: Meaning in Life
Poems for the School Assembly

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Infant Teacher's Assembly Book
Infant Teacher's Prayer Book
Stories for Infants at Home and School
More Stories for Infants at Home and School

Stories for the Middle School Assembly

ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY

Compiled and edited by
D. M. PRESCOTT

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COMPILER'S PREFACE

This book is really a collection of pictures. They are pictures of a way of life that works. In our world today there are people all around us whose ways of life don't work; and it is a great relief to have proof that there are other people who do know how to live – for all the stories in the book are about real people. Most of them started life as ordinary people like ourselves; but the way they lived made a difference to the world around them. They counted. And that makes life worth living, because it means that everyone matters, everyone has a special place and a special job to do which he or she can find.

The compiler of the book is grateful to all those who helped in finding the stories, especially to Miss Joyce Carpenter; Mr Eric Fenby; Miss Vera Frampton; Mr Victor J. Green, then Senior County Inspector of Schools for Essex, and his daughter Miss Carol Green; Mr T. C. A. Goldsmith; Mr Russi Lala; Mrs Margaret Mackenzie; Mrs R. E. R. Procter; Dr William L. Reed, Mus.Doc. and Devar Surya Sena.

Mr Green in his foreword offers some ideas as to how the stories might be used as starting-points for extended study, involving several subject areas for individual or group work. The subject index will help in finding just the right story for any occasion.

D. M. P.

FOREWORD

One of the most difficult areas in schools today is that of Religious Education. It is particularly important how this is dealt with in the Middle School. Younger children are able to absorb from stories and from the relationships existing within home and school a great deal about intangible values and attitudes and an awareness of human spiritual, as well as emotional, physical and mental life.

The child at eight or nine years needs to have the opportunity to question and to doubt and it is essential that such doubts are discussed and brought out into the open. For the Middle School age group then, the story needs not to be left to stand on its own but to be used as a focal point to start off a study which can well include other subject areas; History, Geography, Science, Art, Craft and Music.

Not every one of the stories in this book will lead to such an integrated study, but some of them will.

Take, for example, 'The Miracle Ray' on page 45. Here is a fine story in its own right, but it could be used to branch out into a study including other scientific discoveries with some experimentation; an excursion into elementary algebra with the unknown quantity X; some research into other medical inventions and those who first found them, as well as discussion about rewards for giving humanity such an invaluable aid. This last area would include some thought about rewards for helping others and links with young people's own activities which offer help to the community, say to the elderly or handicapped. How should society reward those whose work is difficult to assess in money terms – nurses, doctors, teachers, etc.? Should society allow somebody like Röntgen to die in poverty? Has this happened to other benefactors of humanity?

Another benefactor of a very different kind is found in the story about the Bach family on page 88. Once again we find a man not appreciated or rewarded in his own lifetime, although his work will live for ever. This story would afford an opportunity for a pupil very keen on music to do some research in order to discover other artists who did not find favour in their own time.

The story of Biluma on page 47, is an obvious lead into a study of the Pacific Islands and the historical development of these parts into the modern world. The advantage of using this story as a starting-point is that it is about a person and what happened in the development of personal relationships. This approach makes the child's work very real and personal. From this story, taken from the history of a people living on the other side of the world, the child finds a common interest, for it is in his own experience to find that he has to come to terms with his own feelings of envy, feelings of dislike, experience of injustice, and of learning to forgive and to care.

There are many stories here of sport, personal bravery, and of the influence that one individual can have over many. The index is designed to encourage centre-of-interest studies.

Of course, this book is a store of good stories for the classroom, for assembly or for an individual child to find pleasure in reading; but I would also commend it to teachers as a source book for wider studies by individuals or small groups. This will help to fulfil a teacher's task of including Religious Education in school life and work.

Victor J. Green

Section 1

SHORT STORIES

Building a Football Team

The secret of a famous coach

Knute Rockne was one of the greatest football coaches America has ever had. One day someone asked him why he was so successful in training footballers and building victorious teams. And in reply, he gave the secret of his success.

He said it was a question of what a footballer does with his feelings. They must be right. He will not have enough energy to play well unless they are so. 'In fact,' he said, 'I would go so far as to say that I would not have a man in my team who did not have a genuinely friendly feeling for every other player in it. I have to get the most energy out of a man, and I have discovered that it cannot be done if he hates another man. Hate blocks his energy, and he isn't up to par until he gets rid of it and develops a friendly feeling.'

Beggar or Businessman?

How do we think of people?

A lady was once walking through a railway station when she saw a crippled man sitting on the ground selling pencils. His hat lay beside him, and as the lady passed, she threw a coin into it.

Then, as she walked away, she thought, 'That man was not a beggar – he was a salesman.' So she went back and said to him, 'I have come for my pencil. I treated you like a beggar; but of course you are a businessman.'

Some months later, she was walking through the same station when she saw the cripple again; but this time he was sitting behind a news-stand selling papers. When he saw her, he called out to her. 'I have been looking out for

you,' he said. 'You were the first person to treat me like a businessman; and now, as you see, I *am* a businessman!'

A Goal in Life

What a Rugby player found

Brian Boobbyer, a former Oxford and England Rugby footballer, was giving a religious talk on the BBC, and this is what he said: 'When I first played Rugby, I was constantly getting hurt because I could not tackle properly. I felt that if I tackled hard and low, I would get hurt. So I went in half-hearted and high, and got full of bruises. I remember saying to myself, "I wish I had gone to a school that played Soccer."

'Then one day it happened. I do not remember why, but I do remember when. I did tackle someone hard and low, and down he came. It was a glorious feeling which I never got used to, but never tired of. From that moment I began to enjoy the game, and I never did get hurt.

'I found exactly the same thing in the Christian life. Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And that is the heart of the most difficult and dazzling message on earth. An all-out commitment to follow that road has overcome my fears and given me a goal in life.'

Winston Churchill

Cat lover

Winston Churchill was very fond of cats. The last one he owned had been found wandering in the streets of London. It was given the name of Jock, and not long ago was still living in Churchill's country home at Chartwell in Kent.

Another favourite cat, called Nelson, lived at the Treasury in London. One night in 1940, during the Second World War, there was an air raid, and many bombs fell on London, damaging the Treasury and No. 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official home. It was decided that Churchill, who was then Prime Minister, must immediately move out of London with his staff for safety. The official cars drove out of the city, moving with great difficulty because the streets were so crowded and disorganised after the bombings; but when they had gone about 11 kilometres Churchill suddenly asked, 'Where is Nelson?' But nobody knew.

'We must go back for him,' Churchill declared. 'We can't leave him to be bombed.' And they had to drive all the way back to pick up the Embassy cat. Then they drove on to Chequers, the Prime Minister's country home; and there Nelson lived for the rest of his life. It is said that he spent his time there chasing dogs; so evidently he was a fighting kind of cat.

His Great Chance

A story of Vilem Tausky

Vilem Tausky, the composer, was born in the city of Prerov in Czechoslovakia. From his earliest years he loved music; and when he was about six years old he was taken to the public gardens, where there was a bandstand in which every Sunday a band gave a concert. It seemed to little Vilem the most wonderful music.

After that, every Sunday when the band played Vilem was there drinking it all in. The bandsmen got used to seeing the little boy standing there, all rapt attention. Sunday after Sunday he was there, week by week, month by month, even year by year, till he was ten years old. He

heard some of the music so often that he came to know it quite well.

And then one day the most wonderful thing happened. The bandmaster leaned over and put his baton into the boy's hand.

'Come on,' he said. 'Let's see what you can do.'

And so well did Vilem know the music that he found himself up in the bandstand actually conducting the band. And it was from that day that his musical career really began.

The Kind-hearted Composer

A story of Franz Liszt

A poor girl once had a very great gift for piano playing. She played so well that, greatly daring, she decided that she would give a concert.

But she knew that to cover her expenses she must sell enough tickets to earn a profit. So, to make the concert more attractive, she had the words 'Pupil of Liszt' printed on the posters advertising it.

This was, of course, a very dishonest thing to do, because she had never even met the great composer; and as the time for the concert drew near, she began to feel very uncomfortable. And then, to her horror, she heard that Liszt himself was to be in the audience. What could she do?

After much heart-searching, she decided that the only thing to do was to see the master and tell him the truth. So that was what she did; and he very generously accepted her apology.

Then he said, 'Now play me something, my dear.' So, summoning up all her courage, she did as he asked.

'Yes,' he said, 'you play very well. And now you can

truly say that you are a pupil of Liszt, with a clear conscience.'

She Stood Firm

from Northern Ireland

A number of women in Belfast, Northern Ireland, banded themselves together to fight terrorism. They called themselves 'Women Together', and their aim was to stand firm against the terrorists, and to persuade other people in Northern Ireland to do the same.

One day one of these women met a gunman in the street. He was brandishing his gun and declaring his murderous hatred for the British soldiers. 'I shall shoot the first one I see,' he announced.

The woman was very distressed. There were many soldiers about, and she knew that one might go by at any moment. She spoke to the man, trying to persuade him to put away his gun; but he would not listen to her. 'No – I shall kill the first soldier who comes this way,' he kept threatening.

At last the woman decided on a very brave step. She placed herself directly in front of the gunman. 'If you do shoot,' she told him, 'you will have to kill me first.'

It was a big risk to take; but it worked. The gunman was so impressed by her courage and sincerity that he did put away his gun, and went back home.

The Referee's Secret

It was Cup Final Day, and the Wembley Stadium was like a great bowl filled with fierce excitement. As the time for the teams to go out on to the pitch drew near, messenger boys stood ready to run to the dressing-rooms

and call the players out. Others stood by to summon the officials in charge of the match.

The great moment came, and the boy whose job it was to call the referee ran hurriedly down the passage ways. In his excitement, he forgot to tap at the referee's door, but burst in without knocking, and was about to tell the referee that it was time for him to be lining up. But suddenly he stopped – it seemed to him that the man was not in the room!

Then, as he hesitated, he saw the referee. He was over in the far corner of the room, and he was on his knees, with his eyes closed. The boy realised that he was saying a prayer.

As he looked up, the boy sheepishly told him that the match was due to begin. As he followed the referee along the tunnel leading to the football pitch, the messenger boy was realising that even with a job like refereeing a Cup Final, there was need of help to do the work as well as possible. The boy was very impressed that such an important official, undertaking such a responsible task before this huge crowd, was humble enough to ask for a wisdom greater than his own.

Victor J. Green

Tribute to a Great Footballer

What some young Yugoslavs thought of Bobby Charlton

Some time ago a sports writer called Arthur Hopcraft was paying a visit to Yugoslavia, and went into a beer garden in Ljubljana for a glass of beer and something to eat. He got the beer all right; but when it came to ordering the food, he found that the waiter knew no English, and Hopcraft could not read the menu, or pronounce the names of the dishes on it; so it did not look as if he would get any food.

Then a group of young Yugoslavs saw that he was in difficulties, and came to see what they could do to help. 'Are you English?' they asked him; but when Hopcraft said that he was, it turned out that that was all the English these young men knew. But they found a way to make contact. They looked at him solemnly and said, 'Bobby Charlton, Winston Churchill, Aneurin Bevan.' They evidently meant to say that these were the three greatest Englishmen they knew.

They made faces to show what they thought Churchill and Bevan looked like, and made a sign with their clenched fists to show how much they approved of them; but when they said, 'Bobby Charlton' they poured out a flood of incomprehensible words in praise of him. When they saw that Hopcraft did not understand, they changed to sign language to show how highly they thought of Bobby. They drew diagrams on the table top to show his techniques of play; they made fishtail movements with their hands to demonstrate his swerve; resounding smacks on the table described his shot; and jerks of the head indicated his speed. And finally they all stood together and solemnly nodded their heads to show their deep admiration for this British soccer star. Language was not needed to show how highly they esteemed him as a player and a champion.

The Doctor's Cure

A man once went to his doctor complaining that he felt very ill. 'I have terrible headaches, doctor,' he said, 'and my stomach gets upset, and I can't sleep. Can you help me?'

So the doctor gave him a thorough examination, and took all sorts of tests, and sent him to hospital to be X-rayed. But he could find nothing wrong.

At last he said to the man, 'I can't find anything wrong with your body. I think the trouble must be in your mind. You have something on your mind; and unless you tell me what it is, I can't help you.'

The patient was very distressed to hear this; but he knew that the doctor was right. There was something about which he had felt guilty for a long time. He found it very hard to bring himself to say what this thing was; but at last he said, 'You see, doctor, my brother lives abroad, and when our father died, he left his money to be divided between us both, and I had to do the dividing. The trouble is that I have not been honest about it; I haven't been sending him his fair share, and of course he doesn't know.'

The doctor, who was an old and very wise man, said, 'Then this is the treatment I prescribe for your illness – you must write to your brother and tell him what you have been doing, and ask his forgiveness. And in the letter you must put a cheque for the amount of money of which you have defrauded him. And you must do it *now*.'

So the sick man sat down there and then in the doctor's surgery and wrote his letter to his brother. He also wrote out a cheque to cover the amount of money which he owed him. The doctor watched him and saw him seal up the letter with his cheque in it and stamp it ready for the post. 'I'll come with you to the post box,' said the doctor. He wanted to make sure that the cure was complete.

So the letter went into the letter box; and as it dropped down inside, the man who had written it burst into tears. 'Thank you,' he said. 'I think I'm cured.' And he was.

The Little Girl who Saved the Show

This is the story of an Indian girl, Begum Akhtar, with a beautiful singing voice. She was very popular in her country, and was known as the Queen of Ghazals (which are Indian poems).

Those who heard her sing were always struck by seeing how full of confidence she was when she came on the stage. And this was because of something which happened to her when she was only seven, but already showing signs of becoming a great singer.

There had been a terrible flood in the district of Bihar, and many people were in desperate need of food and clothes and shelter. So Begum Akhtar's family decided to organise a variety concert to raise funds for them. They engaged many artistes, and they all agreed to come and perform; but they were not offered any fee, and when the day of the concert came, not one of them appeared. It was a terrible situation for the family; there was the audience, who had paid for their tickets, waiting for the concert to begin, but there were no performers to entertain them.

Then on to the stage stepped little Begum Akhtar, and began to sing. She sang and sang, and went on singing her heart out for six solid hours. The wonderful thing she had done became known, and people flocked to hear her sing. During her lifetime she sponsored and took part in many other fund-raising programmes, but never one which cost her so much as that great six-hour marathon.

Many of her songs had tunes which she herself had written, and this made them very specially her own. She made a number of records, which are still sold in large numbers in India. She often sang over All-India Radio,

which still honours her memory by regularly broadcasting her music. And when she died, she left behind a memorial in the shape of a women's school for light music which she founded at Lucknow.

Second Fiddle

You have heard the expression 'playing second fiddle'. It usually means that someone has had to take second place, and is not too pleased about it. But this is the story of a boy who did just that, but for an unselfish reason, to help another boy who was in need.

It happened at an annual music and drama camp which was being held in the grounds of a very lovely house in Buckinghamshire. About seventy boys and girls aged between eight and thirteen had arrived by coach and car; and each of them had filled in a form saying what instrument he or she could play. They could all at least play the recorder, and many could play two or three other instruments as well.

When they were all assembled, it was discovered that there was a boy there who was not quite eight; and although he had brought a recorder, it was doubtful whether he even knew which end of it to blow. But of course it was too late now for him to be sent home; so one of the tutors promised to give him a crash course in playing the descant recorder. This was so successful that after a day or two the boy could play 'Pease pudding hot' tolerably well; and it was decided that he should play it as a solo at the camp concert.

But when the boy heard how skilful the other campers were on their instruments, strings, clarinets and oboes, he began to feel downhearted about his own playing. However, an older boy, who was a good violinist, noticed how

unhappy he was; and when he heard the reason, he said, 'I'll accompany you on my violin if you like, and put in chords and linking phrases.'

And so it was settled. When the time came, the eight-year-old boy stepped boldly forward and played his solo, while his friend the violinist stood in the shadows at the back of the stage and played as he had promised; and the duet which resulted sounded very good indeed. But it was all due to the unselfishness of the talented boy who was willing to play second fiddle.

Victor J. Green

Saved by His Trousers

The story of a swimmer

The boy's home was in a seaside town, and he went swimming a good deal. It was one of his main interests; the other was his membership of the local Boy Scout troop.

One evening he was walking on the pier when he heard cries for help coming from the sea below. Running to the side of the pier, he saw that a girl swimmer was being carried out to sea by the tide. Without a thought for his own safety, the boy dived down and swam towards her to save her if he could.

When he reached her, she flung her arms round him and clung to him in fright, threatening to drown them both. Gradually he managed to calm her; but then it was his turn to be worried. He found that he could not manage to support her and swim with her towards the shore. The sea was very rough, and a strong tide was running, and even though he was a good swimmer, it was more than he could do. The tide was carrying them farther and farther from the pier, and it seemed they must both drown.

'I must keep my head and think hard,' he told himself. 'There must be something I can do to save us.' And then he remembered what he had been taught in the Scout troop. With great difficulty he managed to struggle out of his trousers, and to tie a knot in each trouser leg. Then he blew air into the trousers, and tied them up at the waist. By this time he had a pair of home-made water-wings. He put them under his armpits, and found that he could now support the girl and himself as well, and keep them afloat. He could even prevent them both from drifting still farther out to sea.

Before long a rowing boat manned by a coastguard reached them, and they were both rescued. The boy's courage in diving into the sea and his resourcefulness in making the water-wings had kept them both afloat until help arrived, and saved their lives. But all he would say afterwards was: 'It was my trousers which saved us. I'm glad I joined the Scouts, or I wouldn't have known that trick.'

It just goes to show that useful knowledge is not wasted – that is, so long as you can keep calm in an emergency and try to remember what you have been taught, as the boy did.

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'Stickability'

Mulready the painter

What is stickability? This story explains it.

'Rat-tat! Rat-tat!' A boy of about eight was knocking very loudly on the door of a house. After a time a woman opened it.

'There's no need to make all that noise,' she said crossly. 'What do you want?'

'Does Mr Banks the sculptor live here?' the boy asked. 'I would like to show him some of my drawings.'

But the woman was angry. 'He won't want to be bothered with a little boy like you,' she said. 'Making all that racket! Go away!' But just then the sculptor himself appeared. He had heard the shouting, and had come to see what was going on.

'What do you want, boy?' he asked.

'Please, sir,' said the boy, 'I want to be a famous artist like you. I want to go and study at the academy of art. Here are some of the drawings I did at school for you to see.'

Mr Banks smiled. 'I can't get you into the academy,' he said. 'But let me see the drawings anyway.' When he had looked at them, he said, 'Time enough for the academy when you are older. You go home now, and work hard at school.' But as the boy, deeply disappointed, was turning away, the artist shouted after him, 'If you like, you can call again in a month's time, when you have made a better drawing of the Apollo.'

The boy went home, and in his spare time, when he was not at school, he worked hard at drawing and sketching. And when at the end of the month he called again on the sculptor, the drawing was certainly better. But once more Mr Banks sent him home again with the advice that he should work and study hard.

At the end of only another week, the boy was on the sculptor's doorstep again. This time his drawing was greatly improved. Mr Banks was much impressed by the young would-be artist's perseverance, and encouraged him. 'Keep it up,' he said, 'and go on working hard, and one day you will distinguish yourself and be a real artist.'

The sculptor's prophecy proved true, for the boy grew up to be the famous painter Mulready. Banks was right

in believing that it is not by luck or by accident that men achieve distinction, but often by sheer hard work. He believed in perseverance, and practised it himself; and that was the kindly advice he always gave to the many young men who hoped to be artists or sculptors, and who called on him for assistance, as Mulready did. His recipe for greatness was 'stickability', keeping on keeping on at it until you succeed.

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Alone in the Jungle

The experience of a girl in Papua–New Guinea

You sometimes meet people who say, if they do something wrong, 'Oh, well, I can't help it – I was unhappy at home, and nobody cared for me, so how can you expect me to behave well?' People like that need to know the story of Somere Jogo of Papua–New Guinea.

She was born in the deep jungles of that land, where people live very simply, satisfying their hunger mostly with fruit and sweet potatoes, and still behaving very much as their ancestors did many years ago, even though the civilisation of the West is changing the way of life for a great number of them.

When Somere was only six, her father was killed in a fight over some land, and her mother disappeared, so that Somere was left all alone in the forest, and had to look after herself and find food and shelter as best she could. Sometimes food was given to her, but often she had to steal it when no one was looking. She became a little wild creature.

Then one day something wonderful happened. She saw a line of children marching; though she did not know it, they were the pupils of a school. As she stood watching

them, suddenly she felt a slap, and a man's voice said, 'Why aren't you marching with the others?' It was the master of the school, and he had mistaken her for one of his pupils. But when he found out his mistake, and discovered that she was quite alone in the world, he took her to his home – and that was how Somere went to school.

She did wonderfully well, and when she was older she became the first from her country to win the Duke of Edinburgh's award. This took her to Africa, where she climbed the great mountains, Kenya and Kilimanjaro. But in her heart she was not satisfied. She felt deep bitterness for her neglected childhood, and for the sad things which had happened to her family.

But then she met some people who told her that bitterness can be cured. 'We know this is true,' they said, 'because it has been cured in our own hearts.' This touched something in Somere's heart, and she decided to give up her bitterness too. She says, 'Now I have found satisfaction, which has given me courage and inner freedom. I don't feel ashamed of the past any more; but I want to live in such a way that many other people who have the same problem which I had may find that same inner freedom.'

Why Couldn't the Team Score?

Goals were just not getting scored in the team in which Naboth and John played, and it was lying low in the league table.

Naboth, the tall centre forward, could not bear the selfish runs and ball-hogging of his right inside, John, though they had been friends and played together for a long time. And John was angry that Naboth was so off form that he seldom drove home the passes which John

occasionally fed to him across the centre of the field. As a result, they saw less and less of each other off the field.

One day Naboth was talking with some friends about the state of the world and all that was wrong with the politicians. One friend suggested that if you wanted to get things right, there was no better place to start than by looking to your own laurels. The football field came immediately to Naboth's mind. Why criticise the politicians for not getting on, if he couldn't get on with his inside right!

So he went round to John's home before a training session and said he was sorry for feeling jealous and critical of the way he played, and other things besides. They were both prepared to make a fresh start and became firm friends once more. And lo and behold! the goals began to find their way into the opponents' nets. That apology was a turning-point in the fortunes of the side and they hit a winning streak, which is there for all to see in the score books to this day.

Section 2

MEDIUM STORIES

He Used all of Everything

The painter J. M. W. Turner

Joseph had always wanted to be an artist. He spent every moment when he was not doing his school work drawing and painting; and secretly he longed to be a real painter some day. But his father had a barber's shop in London, where the family lived; and when Joseph left school, he was expected to work in the shop helping his father, and to learn to become a barber also.

Still, in the moments when he was not busy in the shop, Joseph used to draw little sketches; and one day a customer saw one of these drawings – it was a sketch of a coat of arms – and he was so impressed with it that he persuaded the boy's father to let him have the chance of becoming a professional artist. Rather unwillingly, his father agreed, though it was a hardship for him, since it meant losing the boy's valuable help in the shop.

So off the young man went to try to train as an artist. Of course his father could not afford to give him any money; so to keep himself alive, Joseph had to take any work he could get. In those days well-established artists who had money would often pay young student artists to paint in the sky in their pictures; and that was the kind of work Joseph did. Night after night he would work to earn half-a-crown by washing in the skies in artists' pictures with Indian ink. It was very dull work, and frustrating too, because Joseph knew that he himself was able to paint pictures just as good as theirs. Still, they usually gave him supper at their homes as well, and he appreciated this, as it was often the only good meal he had in the day.

Monotonous as the work was, Joseph still tried to do it carefully and well. In due course he found other work too – illustrating the covers of guide books, almanacs

and cheap books which needed an inexpensive illustration on the cover. Such work was looked down on by successful artists, and only second-rate ones took it on; but again Joseph did his best. Some of those employed in such work would hurry over their paintings, thinking that anything would do for such a cheap market; but Joseph would never slur over his work. His aim was to learn all he could, as well as doing his best. He never left off working at a drawing until he had reached a higher standard in it than in his last effort.

A friend who met him one day sympathised with him. 'What a shame,' he said, 'that you have to do all this hack work to earn money! It must be terribly dull.'

'Not at all,' said Joseph. 'What could be better for me? It is splendid practice.'

So he made the most he could of all the dull jobs, gradually learning to improve his art work until eventually he won recognition and became rich and famous. Near the end of his life he bequeathed a whole gallery of his pictures to the nation; for Joseph was of course J. M. W. Turner, the famous landscape painter.

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A Desperate Decision

How a brave fighter pilot saved a city

Mike Keane was born in New Zealand, and grew to be a tall young man with dark hair and a happy smiling face. He loved aeroplanes, and when he grew up he trained as a pilot, joined the RAF and began flying Phantom fighter-bombers. He got married and had three children; and everything seemed to be going happily for him.

Then one day he set off in his fighter-bomber from the RAF station at Bruggen in West Germany. At first all

went well; then suddenly there was a terrific explosion in the engine. All the fire warning lights went on, and within seconds flames shot out and the 'plane began to burn. Mike found that he could hardly control the engine.

He knew that to save his life and that of his navigator, he ought to land the plane immediately. But below him now there was a big Dutch city called Reermond. His fuel tanks were full, and if he landed there, the plane would probably explode and kill many people. His RAF training had taught him to consider the safety of civilians, but if he did not land the plane he would risk the life of his navigator as well as his own. What was he to do?

He turned to the navigator. 'You bale out,' he said, 'while there's still time.' The man was very unwilling to leave him, but Mike said, 'That's an order from your superior officer. I'll try to fly her away from the town.' So the navigator reluctantly jumped to safety, and Mike flew on alone in the burning plane.

Desperately he steered for the open country beyond the town. Could he make it before the 'plane fell to pieces in the fire? The engine was becoming harder and harder to control, and the heat and flames in the 'plane were increasing. 'This is it,' thought Mike. His mind went to his wife and children, and he prayed that something miraculous might happen so that he could live to see them again.

By this time he had passed the last houses, and open country was below him. He let go of the steering controls, the nose of the 'plane went up, and it began spinning. By this time he was 609 metres above ground, and he decided to try to eject himself from the 'plane. But the canopy had jammed – probably the spinning had caused it to do so. Desperately he tried again, but still it refused to work. But at last, at the third attempt, the canopy became free,

and with barely a second to spare, Mike escaped from the burning 'plane.

Unhurt, he landed in some trees, and farther on the Phantom crashed into a wood and burst into flames. Through Mike's unselfish act of heroism, a town was saved.

Death Coming in the Forest

During the war in the Far East, when the Americans were fighting the Viet Cong, an American helicopter was hit by ground fire and crashed in the thick jungle. Six men were scattered over a mountain side. When one of them, a major, came to his senses, he found himself too badly hurt to move. He could hear the cries of the other injured men, all unable to escape, and in the distance there were rifle shots – the enemy were advancing to the spot where they had heard the aircraft come down. They were moving in to capture the Americans and torture them to death. And there was no hope of rescue.

The major tried to pray for help; but though he had gone to church all his life, he had never really talked to God. But all at once he felt as if someone said to him, 'Just ask and believe.' In a burst of anguish but with a new sense of faith, he cried out, 'Oh, God, please help me!' And still the enemy were coming nearer.

Meanwhile, miles away, another helicopter was flying north when the pilot felt a sudden overpowering urge to turn and go east. 'But why?' he argued with himself. His orders were to fly north. But then, against all military rules, he made a ninety-degree turn and headed east. Then he felt a still stronger urge to fly lower and lower. This was even less sensible; it was against all rules for flying over enemy country. But it was so strong that he obeyed

it, and went down to tree-top level. He knew somehow that he was meant to look for something.

Then suddenly – there it was! He had spotted the remains of a helicopter scattered over the jungle. He had no idea how long it had been there; but he felt he must check up on it. The jungle was so thick that it was impossible to land; so, while he hovered over the tree tops, one of his crew lowered himself down by a winch. When the crewman reached the ground, there were the wounded men. One by one he fastened them to the winch and raised them up into the helicopter. When the last man had been lifted to safety, he secured himself and was pulled up too. Just as he left the ground the enemy arrived and started firing at him. But the pilot saw what was happening, and as soon as the crewman was clear of the trees, he moved the 'chopper' up and off.

Some hours later, in hospital, the major asked to see the chaplain. He was in tears as he told his story. 'Chaplain,' he said, grasping his hand, 'I just wanted you to come and see me and help me to thank God for His goodness. I'm going to serve Him for the rest of my life.'

Retold from Prison to Praise *by Merlin Carothers (Hodder and Stoughton)*

Shoemaker to a Queen

Many years ago there lived in Cornwall a family called Gundry. Their home was by the sea-shore, near the place where, at dead of night, smugglers used to land cargoes of silks, wine and brandy which they had secretly brought over from France to avoid paying duty on them. These goods they sold privately, and so made a good profit. Of course, this was against the law; but it went on, none the less.

The Gundry family joined in this illicit trade, and made their profits. But one day a man called John Wesley came to a near-by town to speak, and crowds of people gathered to hear him. Among them was the son of the Gundry family, whose name was James; and as he listened to John Wesley, something happened inside him. He felt as if his whole life was changed; and he began to want to live differently. He felt he should be honest, for one thing; and he began to feel uncomfortable about his family's share in the smuggling. He told them he felt it ought to stop. But they were furious – they did not want to give up their profits. At the end they were so angry that they said to him, 'You get out – and don't come back!' So he left home, and, not knowing what to do, set out for London. There he was lucky enough to find a friendly cobbler, who took him in and taught him his trade.

The boy took to it, and put his new-found honesty into his workmanship; and in time he was well known for the excellence of the boots and shoes he made. He was so successful that one day there came a royal messenger from Queen Victoria ordering him to come to the palace and make footwear for the royal children. What a triumph for a boy turned out of his home because he had the faith and courage to speak out against dishonesty!

With the Queen's patronage, he prospered more than ever. He married and had a son, to whom he was able to give an excellent education. This son went to college, and in time became a professor. And one day this young man too had a summons to the palace, this time to receive a decoration for his good work from Queen Victoria's son, Edward the Seventh. And when the professor went home to his family in Cornwall, and told them about this visit, he said, 'Do you know, when the king heard my name, he looked at me very hard. Do you think he recognised it as

the same as that of the young man who used to make him and his brothers and sisters their boots and shoes? I am almost sure he did.'

One-legged Actress

The courage of Sarah Bernhardt

Who ever heard of an actress with only one leg? But that was what the French actress Sarah Bernhardt was. She was born in 1844, in the reign of Queen Victoria; she began acting when she was a young girl, and lived to be a very old lady. She played leading parts, usually very dramatic ones, and became famous all over the world.

But her most remarkable quality was the bravery she showed when she was growing old. In her sixties she suffered from a very bad leg, which was swollen and stiff; but though it gave her great pain, she carried on acting. She would not let her public down.

But eventually the leg became gangrenous, and to save her life it had to be amputated. It seemed as if losing a leg must mean the end of Sarah as an actress; but she was determined that this should not be so. She would be carried on to the stage like royalty in a litter, or else be discovered already on stage when the curtain went up. With one leg only, she toured America, giving poetry recitals; but perhaps her bravest action was to entertain the troops in France during the First World War. She appeared in what was called the Théatre aux Armées near the front line, and the soldiers thought her a heroine.

Though her diseased leg was gone, Sarah still suffered from ill health. Often while she was waiting in the wings of the stage to make an entrance, she would begin to shiver with fever, and have to be wrapped in rugs with hot water bottles round her. Finally she grew so ill that she had to go

to bed; but even then she tried to be cheerful and put on a good show. One day a great friend was coming to see her, whom Sarah did not want to depress; so she struggled to get out of bed, insisted on being dressed in a pretty frock, made up her pale cheeks with rouge and put on a blonde wig. Her friend found her sitting at her writing desk looking apparently well and pretty; and the friend went away happy, thinking that Sarah must be getting better.

About this time, Sarah was half-way through making a film; but it was thought that she could not live long enough to finish it, and the producer had another actress who looked rather like Sarah standing by to finish it after she died. This actress would stand far away from the camera, or with her back to it. But Sarah heard about this plan, and with great will power struggled to continue filming. When she was too weak to get out of bed, she ordered the film crew to come and shoot it in her bedroom. A backcloth view of Paris was placed behind her bed, and Sarah spoke her lines while still lying in it. A Paris newspaper said at the time, 'Dying, Sarah Bernhardt acts in a film, and so she went on acting almost until the day she died. She would not give in, for she was determined to triumph over pain and illness.'

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Two Sides of the Haystack

The story of a circus boy

Michael was born in a red and blue painted caravan, for his parents were fairground entertainers. His mother, who called herself Gipsy Rose, told fortunes; his father did a strong man act; and his sister was a trapeze artiste from the age of fourteen.

Michael had hardly any schooling, as his family were constantly on the move, performing with different fairs all over the British Isles.

He admired his sister very much, as he watched her night after night swinging on the trapeze eighty feet above the ground. The highlight of her performance was when she 'looped the loop' – and without a safety net under her. Three times a night she went through her act, daringly gambling with death. Michael thought her very courageous.

That was why she made him laugh by always insisting on sleeping in the lower of the two bunk beds which they had in the crowded caravan. 'I'm frightened that I might fall out of the top one,' she would protest. But he didn't really make fun of her, for he was very fond of his sister.

When Michael was thirteen, he decided that he wanted to train for an act, like the rest of the family. They all got together to decide what he should do. But his sister refused to let him partner her on the trapeze; and secretly Michael was glad. He did not think he had the nerve to be a trapeze artiste.

Finally it was decided that he should be a sword swallower; and his father took him to the caravan of the Spaniard who did that act. He was a thin dark-haired man who took his sword-swallowing very seriously, and he taught Michael very carefully, until finally he was able to join his teacher in his act. He learned fire-eating too, and added that to his performance.

But then, when he was not quite sixteen, a terrible thing happened. His sister was killed while performing her act. A strong gust of wind made her fall from the trapeze to her death. Michael felt as if the bottom had dropped out of his world. He had been so fond of her. Stunned and shocked, he attended her funeral with his parents; and

that night, as they slept in the caravan, he slipped into his clothes. He felt that he could not stay in the fairground any more. He packed a case with some clothes and the knives and swords which belonged to his act, wrote a good-bye note to his parents, and crept out of the caravan and away into the countryside. On and on he ran, with the tears running down his cheeks, till he was exhausted. He found a haystack, and lay down in it to sleep. When he woke, it was daylight.

'I am so miserable,' he thought, 'that the best thing will be to kill myself.' He took out his sharpest rapier, plunged the hilt into the earth, and was just about to run and jump on it when a rough voice said sharply, 'What do you think you're doing?' Startled, he looked round and found beside him an elderly tramp who had been sleeping on the other side of the haystack. He was dressed in several torn pullovers with a woolly cap on his head, and with his shaggy hair, bushy moustache and beard he looked very fierce. But Michael found himself telling the old man about the death of his sister, how much he had loved her and how he felt he couldn't live without her. The tramp listened and nodded sympathetically.

'Have you had anything to eat?' he asked; and Michael realised that he was indeed very hungry. The tramp brought out some bread and cheese and a bottle of cold tea which he shared with the boy. Michael felt much better; and it was then that the tramp said, 'I can understand how you feel, boy, because when I was the same age as you, my mother died. She was all I had in the world, and I too wanted to kill myself. But the doctor said to me, "You know, you'll be seeing your mother again one day," and I decided that if that was so, I had better not kill myself, for my mother wouldn't like that. She would want me to go on living, to be a credit to her.'

Michael looked at the tramp thoughtfully. His sister wouldn't like him to throw away his life either. She had always encouraged him with his act, and expected him to be a big star one day. He shook the tramp's hand.

'Thank you for telling me that,' he said. 'I'll try to be a credit to my sister too.'

Michael went to find work, and soon became a successful entertainer. Was it just luck that the old tramp had been sleeping on the other side of the stack, and so had saved his life, by saying just the right words to him? It seems like one of those miracles which do happen sometimes when God sends exactly the right person to meet someone in desperate need.

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Caught in a Battle

The great conductor Sir John Barbirolli and his orchestra

During the Second World War actors, actresses, singers and musicians felt that they wanted to 'do their bit' to help their country. They decided to put on shows and give concerts and produce plays to entertain the troops, who were fighting so bravely; and they formed themselves into an association called E N S A (Entertainments National Service Association).

Theatres, often only rough wooden buildings, were put up at many army camps all over Britain, and companies of artistes travelled round putting on shows in them. They also went overseas to cheer up the soldiers on the various battle fronts; and this was sometimes quite dangerous, as the following story about one of these artistes will show.

His name was John Barbirolli, and he was the conductor of the famous Hallé Orchestra. In 1944 it was decided that

this orchestra should go out to entertain the British troops in Brussels. They sailed from Southampton, but were delayed for three bitterly cold days by fog. At Brussels a luxurious Mercedes was laid on for the conductor, but Barbirolli refused to use it, and insisted on travelling with his orchestra in a troop carrier. He also refused a room in a grand hotel – no special treatment for him. He was determined to stay with his players.

They went on to Eindhoven in Holland, in snow and icy fog. The orchestra had to eat in a store room with one small stove round which only four or five could gather at a time. They took it in turns to warm themselves and thaw out their fingers so as to be able to play. Their lodgings too were very cold, and Barbirolli was so concerned in case they should be ill that he went out and managed to get extra blankets which he took round himself to the various 'digs'.

Then a terrifying thing happened. The enemy began to attack the Channel ports, their tanks advancing right across the country, with lines of marching infantry. The musicians found themselves on the fringe of a major battle. But they decided not to try to escape, or to take refuge, but to carry on with their programme of two big concerts. They were to perform in a beautiful theatre; but the noise of battle was all around them, and at one point they were even machine-gunned as they entered their coach. Soldiers queueing for the performance were shot at too, and some of them were killed. But still the Hallé Orchestra played on.

At the concert on New Year's Eve it was so cold that the musicians wore woollen Balaclava helmets, and those playing brass instruments had thick woollen gloves as well. They were very short of music sheets; many had no music at all. So Barbirolli orchestrated as he went along,

calling out to the various instruments the parts they were to play. The weary troops sat listening to the music in full battle dress, with Sten guns at the ready on their knees. Directly the main concert was over, another impromptu one began, with the men calling out request numbers for the orchestra to play. At the end the whole audience wanted to climb on to the platform to shake the conductor's hand. They realised his bravery and that of his men, for they had gone on playing with death close at hand, willingly exposing themselves to danger so that the soldiers' spirits might be kept up by their music.

They had originally intended to stay in Eindhoven for only two days, but with the battle raging round them, it was a whole week before the Hallé Orchestra could return to safety once again.

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The Baby and the Buffalo

An American Indian story

About a hundred years ago there was great distress in a village of the Stoney Indians. One of the village babies, little Walking Buffalo, had disappeared. He was a rather special baby, for his mother had died when he was born, and he had been brought up by his two grandmothers; and now, though he was hardly able to walk, he must have toddled away from the village, for there was no sign of him.

The anxious villagers went to their Medicine Man and asked his help. 'I will pray to the Great Spirit,' he promised, 'and ask Him what to do.' He went away to practise his sacred rites, and after a time he came back. 'The Great Spirit says,' he told the people, 'that you must go

to seek him, and follow a star.' He showed them which star to follow, and a party of braves set out. For several days they followed this star, till at last they came upon a herd of buffalo – and there was the little boy, being nursed by a buffalo cow. He was quite safe and happy, and at first he did not want to leave his buffalo family; but at last he was home again with his father and his tribe.

When he grew bigger, Walking Buffalo went to a white man's school in a log cabin; a missionary adopted him, and he learnt white men's ways, though he did not always like them. He saw the first 'iron-horse' railway engine crossing the prairies, saw an Indian uprising, and took part in a cowboy film and the famous Calgary Stampede. He worked as a blacksmith, and with the Canadian Mounted Police, and he had thoughts of becoming a doctor; but at last he grew tired of the white man's way of life, and went back to his tribe to learn from 'nature's university'. 'I didn't get as far as high school,' he used to say, 'but the Great Spirit gave me something I could never have learnt in the classroom – the heart and the will to understand.'

In time Walking Buffalo became first Medicine Man and then Chief of his tribe. He was a man of deep wisdom. Above all, he refused to allow hatred in his heart. 'As an Indian,' he used to say, 'I might have had good reason for hatred (against the white man), but now I know that even I can forgive those who have wronged me. I'll never hate anybody again. Hating hurts me more than it hurts the other fellow.'

He had a great vision for his people. 'We Indians,' he said, 'can still teach others about living in harmony with nature, and nature still means God or Great Spirit or Manitou, depending on what you want to call Him.' He taught his people to live above racial barriers. 'I was born

with a bronze skin,' he said, 'and I like it. Some of my friends were born white or black or yellow. They were not consulted. But that's all right.

'As I understand nature's Ruler, he would not restrict His truth to a few favoured humans, allowing the others to remain in eternal darkness. If the Great Spirit is prepared to reveal secrets of importance to people, He will give all humans in all lands an equal chance of getting that enlightenment.'

And Walking Buffalo lived out what he taught. When he was eighty-eight years old, he set out round the world to be an ambassador from his people for peace, forgiveness and faith in the Great Spirit. Wearing his buffalo-horn headdress, Indian beads, leather clothes and moccasins, he travelled over two hundred and forty thousand kilometres across the continents to give to the world what the Great Spirit had given to him.

Adapted from Himmat, *19 September 1975*

The Father of Modern Horse Riding

Federico Caprilli (1868–1907)

Federico Caprilli has been called the father of modern riding; but the strange thing is that to begin with he did not ride very well himself. Perhaps this was because his body was longer in proportion than his legs, which is not good for riding.

He was born in Leghorn in Italy in 1868, and when he was thirteen he went to an army school, where he learnt to ride. He wanted to take up riding as an army career; but when he went to be examined for entry to the Modena Military School as a cavalry cadet, the examiners did not want to take him because they said he was unfit for riding.

However, he persevered, and he was finally accepted. At the school he was a good gymnast and a skilful fencer, but a poor rider. But he went on trying, and at last, when he was twenty-two, he won his first riding competition. It was for the high jump, and he surprised the onlookers by jumping a fence 1·40 metres high – the usual height was 1·10 to 1·15 metres. After that he went on and on, winning more competitions and riding in steeplechases. After a time he became a riding instructor, and in the end he had his own riding school.

It was then that he began to teach riding in a quite new way. He taught his pupils to love and understand the horses they rode. In earlier days horses were very firmly restrained by curb bits, and their natural movements were restricted. Caprilli rode his horses on the ordinary snaffle, and trained them in a different way. 'Let them go as nature wants,' he would say. 'Do it the natural way. The horse learns by himself to negotiate all obstacles and to overcome all difficulties if the rider does not hinder him. He must work in harmony with his rider, who must be able to show him what he wants, but without hindering the horse's natural movements.'

Caprilli understood how a horse feels when it is being ridden, and what it likes and needs. He used to say to his pupils, 'At all times, but especially with nervous horses, it is useful to relax all the muscles of the body.' He understood, too, what makes some horses difficult to manage. 'When a horse is difficult and restless, bolts or balks,' he would say, 'he is either trying to avoid the pain which the rider is giving him, or else he is afraid of being given pain.' It is no wonder that Caprilli was given bad-tempered horses to train, and that after a month he would bring them back tame and steady.

He allowed jumping competitions; but he said, 'Jump-

ing is just a means of achieving training; and a jumping competition should not be a useless acrobatic show.' He would not permit money prizes to be given for these competitions. When he once won some money himself in the Army Horse Championships, he shared it with his orderly. The reason was, as he kept saying, that his system of riding was not a way to jump higher and higher, but a new horse-training method.

This new and revolutionary method of 'natural' horse training was obviously so much better and more successful than the old one that it has now spread all over the world, and has earned for Federico Caprilli the title of Father of Modern Riding.

Above all, he always wanted his pupils to enjoy their riding lessons. 'Work must be merry to produce good results,' was one of his favourite sayings.

Edith's Wonderful Day

The singer Edith Piaf

People who enjoy cabaret music love to listen to records of the well-known French singer Edith Piaf. But as they hear her singing, they do not know the strange story of her wonderful day.

The beginning of her life was very sad. She was blind, to begin with; and when she was only seven years old her mother ran away and left her. Edith's father, who was called Louis, did not know what to do with his little daughter; so when he heard of a home for poor girls, he placed her there.

Edith was happy in her new home, for she was the youngest there, and so she was treated as the baby of the house, and became everybody's pet. The bigger girls were very kind to her; they made her dresses and gave her

little toys; and they were all very sorry for her because she could not see.

Not very far from the home there is a place called Lisieux where there is a famous church known as the Basilica. To this church people went to pray when they needed help, and if they prayed believing that God would answer their prayers, many wonderful things happened. So one day the lady who ran the home said, 'Why don't we take Edith to Lisieux? Perhaps if we all go there and pray together, she will be cured of her blindness.' The girls were all eager to do this, for they loved little Edith; and as her father was named Louis, they decided to pray that Edith would receive her sight on his special day, the feast of Saint Louis, which is on August 25th. The lady in charge of the home gave them all a day off as a holiday, and, dressed in their best clothes, they set out for the Basilica at Lisieux. There they all prayed hard that Edith might be cured; and they promised that if she was healed, they would raise money for the church as a thank-offering.

The girls went home and waited eagerly for August 25th. When it came they were excited and anxious, and all through the day they kept asking Edith if she could see anything. But her reply was always 'No'. The evening came, and it was Edith's bedtime. But still what they had prayed for had not happened. 'Edith may as well go to bed,' said the lady-in-charge. 'Perhaps the miracle will happen tomorrow.' She went into the sitting-room and said, 'Come along, Edith dear – time for bed.'

Edith was sitting on the piano stool. 'Just a minute, Auntie,' she answered. 'I will come in a moment. But I can see something very pretty.'

'See? What can you see, Edith?' The woman held her breath, hardly daring to hope. The bigger girls crowded round the piano, their excitement growing.

'I can see the keyboard of this piano,' said Edith with a smile.

'You can *see*!' the girls cried joyfully. 'Our prayers have been answered! It's a miracle!' And it had come to pass on the very day on which they had asked for it to happen. They all fell down on their knees, crying for joy.

And so it was that little Edith became the famous French cabaret singer Edith Piaf. She rose from poverty and a humble start in life to fame and riches. But she never forgot the day when her blindness was cured – when the prayers of her friends in the poor girls' home were answered.

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Crippled Explorer

The amazing Isabella Bird

Isabella Bird lived in Scotland in the reign of Queen Victoria. She was born with something wrong with her spine, which made her very quickly tired, and often prevented her from sleeping. She could easily have become an invalid and spent all her life being looked after and feeling sorry for herself.

But instead she decided to become, of all things, an explorer. In the Victorian times in which she lived, no properly brought up girl ever travelled without a father, brother or husband; and here was this tiny little person – less than 1·5 metres in height – almost a cripple, planning to visit countries which many people in those days had never seen. She began by going to Canada, the United States and New Zealand, and then wrote books about the places she had visited. At first her sister travelled with her, but then this sister became ill and had to be left at home,

where she was looked after by a certain Dr Bishop, while Isabella went off again, alone this time, to visit Japan.

After a stay there, she sailed for Hong Kong in a small ship called the *Volga*, in which she had to ride out a violent storm, and landed at Hong Kong to find that city in flames. She had meant to go on from China to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), but at Singapore it was suggested to her that she might wish to explore Malaya, a part of the world of which in those days people did not know very much. There had recently been a war there. But, nothing daunted, Isabella went aboard a little Chinese steamship called the *Rainbow* and sailed for Malacca.

She travelled everywhere in Malaya, sometimes in a gharry, a light cart drawn by ponies, and sometimes riding an elephant. At one place she expected to meet the Resident, the man in charge of the district; but he was away, and she was received by the friends who lived with him – a large ape called Mahmood, a small one called Eblis, and a retriever dog.

From Malaya she went to Egypt and then on to Palestine. There she fell ill with typhoid fever; but that did not stop her from camping alone for four days on Mount Sinai.

When at last she reached Scotland again, she found her sister still ill, and not long afterwards she died. In time Isabella married the Dr Bishop who had looked after her sister for so long. But Dr Bishop died too, and Isabella, now a widow, began to train as a nurse in London.

But her travelling days were not over. She went out to India, where she built a hospital in Kashmir in memory of her husband. It was destroyed by floods, but she rebuilt it again. Though she now had illnesses of the heart and lungs as well as her old back trouble, she still went on with her journeying, and visited Persia, China and Korea. The last country to which she travelled, when she was quite

an old lady, was Morocco, where she visited the great Atlas Mountains. And then, at the age of seventy-two, she died.

The strange thing about Isabella was that she always felt so much more ill when she was at home than she did when she was crossing a desert, climbing a mountain, fording a river or riding an elephant. If she had stayed at home, she would probably have been an invalid all her life. But so long as there were new people and places to visit and books to write about all that she had seen, Isabella Bird was able to forget all those bodily complaints which would have made anyone else a cripple. Someone who wrote of her life sums it all up by saying: 'Never was there a braver woman, or one better able to triumph over handicaps, difficulties and disaster.'

His Great Moment

Denis Law of Manchester United tells his own story

There have been magic moments in my career. I think the greatest single moment was the goal I scored in the 1963 Cup Final. United had been having a poor league season, and our team of talent had shown few signs of clicking together. Some people were surprised we had reached the final at all. On the other hand, Leicester City (who were our opponents) were a closely-knit team with a very good record; the critics thought that their brilliantly solid teamwork would carry them through against the more erratic, if slightly more star-studded United.

My own view was that the first team to score would win the game. Our plan was to try to keep possession of the ball and make Leicester do the running. In the opening stages there was nothing much to choose between us, although our teamwork seemed to be clicking much more

efficiently than it had all season. After twenty-nine minutes Bobby Charlton shot and Gordon Banks of Leicester smothered the ball. As he came forward, our right-half, Pat Crerand, sized up the situation – Banks was going to throw the ball to Leicester's inside-left, Davie Gibson. Pat says, you can tell when a man wants the ball by the way he runs, and even as Banks was drawing back his arm to throw to Gibson, Pat started running in anticipation of an interception. (Lesson 1 – Pat Crerand was alive to everything that was happening – just because the goalkeeper had saved, he did not fall back to see what Leicester would do next.)

Pat moved past one Leicester player and gathered the ball before it could reach Gibson. I could see that Pat was moving forward in the inside-left position, and that he had no chance of scoring. I knew he would have to pass, so I started running forward into the penalty area on his right. (Lesson 2 – position yourself for the pass.) At the same time, Pat told me later, he was thinking to himself that a shot would be hopeless. He spotted me running on his right, and, as the Leicester full-back made to tackle, Pat swung the ball across to me. It came at me about six inches off the ground, travelling harder than I expected. Normally I would have tried a left-foot shot, but the Leicester defenders were crowding me on that side. First I had to stop the ball. A fraction of mistiming here, and it would have bounced away from my feet at the speed it was moving. I pulled it down (Lesson 3 – there was no time to think or have a second chance; this is where the hours of practice pay off), and swung away from the goal, turning in a circle so that I swivelled round again with the ball at my right foot, facing a gap in the defence. As soon as I saw goal, I took a swipe at the ball.

I had no idea where the goalkeeper was, and I couldn't

tell you what part of my foot actually connected with the ball; (but) I scored, and my prophecy came true – the first team to score won the Cup. It all happened a lot faster than the time it has taken to tell about it, and this is the fourth lesson to be learned: when your big chance comes, are you confident that you've done enough work to be able to snatch it, as I was lucky enough to do that day at Wembley? There was no time to start thinking about what to do next – there never is in the penalty area. Instant action is what counts there, and the fact that you have worked and sweated, perfecting your game, to ensure that your actions pay off.

Slightly adapted from Tackle Soccer This Way,
by Denis Law (Stanley Paul and Co. Ltd.)

The Painter Botticelli and his Selfish Neighbour

Botticelli was a famous Italian painter, many of whose beautiful pictures can still be seen in Italy today.

When he was young his home was in a row of houses in a very poor part of the town. They were badly built; the walls were thin, and sounds could easily be heard from one house to another. Botticelli had been commissioned to do an important picture, which needed hard work to complete; so he was very distressed when a weaver moved in next door and set up eight spinning looms and filled the house with weavers. The din of the eight looms all working at once and the tramping of the weavers was terrible; still worse, the looms at work produced a trembling and shaking of Botticelli's house which made him unable to concentrate on his painting. It was so bad that he could not even stay at home.

The people in the houses on either side of this inconsiderate neighbour were also disturbed, and others in the street complained too. So Botticelli, on behalf of his neighbours, visited the weaver and asked him either to reduce the noise or to cut down the hours of work, so that they might have some peace. But the man was angry, and said, 'No! I can and will do whatever I like in my own house!'

Botticelli politely pointed out that a private house should not be used as a factory, and that the weaver was making life unbearable for his neighbours. But the man refused to be reasonable; he was only interested in his looms and making money from them, and was too selfish to care about others. In despair, Botticelli tried to ignore the noise, and get on with his picture. But the shaking of the house was so great that it even made his canvas tremble.

At last he decided that the selfish weaver must be taught a lesson. So he ordered a great pile of boulders to be delivered in a cart at his own house. He dragged them up and placed them on a wall of his house, which was higher than the weaver's, so that they threatened to come tumbling down at the slightest shake and crash through the weaver's roof, breaking his floors and looms and injuring his workmen. When the weaver saw the boulders, he came rushing round to the painter's house, begging him to remove them at once before they damaged his property. 'Why should I remove them?' said Botticelli, looking at the weaver in an unconcerned manner. 'You yourself told me that a man has a right to do just as he likes in his own home. You won't be reasonable so that *I* can do my painting, and you keep up a din and a shaking which disturbs all your neighbours. Why should I consider *you*?'

The weaver went away and thought over what the painter had said. Later, he returned to say, 'You are right – I have been selfish and inconsiderate. I thought I could save money by doing the weaving in my own home instead of in a factory. But now I will move the looms and weavers out – I think I can rent a building for them.'

Botticelli accepted the apology and removed the boulders; and the weaver kept his word and set up a factory in another building. All was peaceful again in the little street, and the neighbours were grateful to Botticelli for teaching the weaver a lesson, while he was able to finish his picture and deliver it on time.

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The Miracle Ray

Wilhelm Röntgen's discovery

Wilhelm Röntgen was a scientist, born in Germany in 1845. He worked for many years lecturing in universities and making scientific experiments.

On February 5th, 1895, he went to his room to make some experiments in light rays, in which he was very interested. He drew the curtains and set up his cathode ray tube, which he wrapped in thin cardboard. A little way away from the experiment were some sheets of paper, which had been covered with a substance which when lit up would glow. This paper he had used for another experiment, and then forgotten it. Now, as he set up his cathode ray tube, he suddenly noticed that a flash of light was making the paper glow. Where could this light ray come from? Since he had blocked off the tube with cardboard, surely no light from that could reach the paper.

He turned off the tube, and the paper at once stopped

glowing. He turned the tube on again, and once more the paper shone. He could see no light coming from the tube itself, only the light on the paper. It was then that he realised with great excitement that there must be a radiation coming from the cathode ray which was invisible to the naked eye, but which could penetrate the cardboard wrapped round the tube. Shaking with excitement, he found that the rays would pass through thicknesses of paper, even through metal.

In mathematics, the letter X is used as a symbol of the unknown; so because Wilhelm didn't know what these magic rays were, he called them X-rays. He realised at once that he had discovered something marvellous which would be a tremendous help to doctors and hospitals as well as to industry. But he knew, too, that he must be very patient. Though he was almost frantic to tell everyone about his discovery, he made himself go on quietly with his experimenting. It would not do to publish his findings until he was a hundred per cent certain. When a friend asked him afterwards, 'Whatever did you think when you first discovered X-rays?', Wilhelm replied, 'I knew that I must not waste time thinking; I just went on experimenting until I was sure.'

At last, after two-and-a-half-months' work, he gave his first public lecture and demonstration of X-rays. From the platform he called for volunteers to come up and be demonstrated on; an eighty-year-old professor came forward to have a perfect photograph taken by the X-rays of the bones in his hands.

Soon the X-rays were being widely used, and they proved of great value in showing up tooth decay and broken bones and diagnosing diseases of the body.

At first the new discovery was known as Röntgen's rays; but it was rather a mouthful to say, and so the simple

phrase X-rays, which Röntgen had first used, was adopted, and that is what we still call them today.

Wilhelm Röntgen was a very generous and a very humble man, who put the welfare of others before his own interests. Through his great discovery he could have become a very rich man; he might have taken out a patent and formed a private company, so that X-rays could only be used by paying money to him or to his firm. But he wanted his discovery to be for the free use of science, medicine and industry, and so he did not patent his invention. He even refused offers of money, and would not accept any special honour. The King of Bavaria offered to confer the title of 'Von' on Wilhelm, so that he could have called himself Wilhelm Von Röntgen; but he would not accept the title, preferring to remain just as he was.

The First World War came towards the end of Wilhelm's lifetime; and when it was over the German people were very poor, because their country was in ruins. Wilhelm Röntgen suffered very much in the last years of his life, through lack of sufficient money to live on; and he died in 1923 in great poverty; yet even in those hard years he would not ask for any special money reward for the discovery of X-rays, or in any way try to make money from his discovery. It was sufficient reward to him to know that his work and experiments would benefit mankind for ever.

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Biluma the Killer

A story from Papua–New Guinea

The people of Papua–New Guinea, which became independent in 1975, have had a strange history. Forty

years ago many of the thousand tribes, speaking seven hundred different languages, were still living in the stone age, and during these last years they have had to grow up into the space age. The story of a man called Biluma shows how this happened.

When he was little, it was the custom for everyone to learn to kill. Children began by killing small animals, then larger ones, until they were big enough to kill men. And in all the villages there was a custom called 'pay-back', which meant that if any man was killed, that person's relatives had to go and find the killer or his family and take revenge.

Biluma's village was particularly keen on killing, because a woman from a near-by village had sent them a message which said, 'If you are not brave enough to kill men, then our women will give you grass skirts to wear like women, and we will not marry your men.' So Biluma began his training in killing with two men, who took him and showed him how to kill his uncle. He was caught by the police and put in prison for two years. But when he came out, he himself began to train others to kill. He led three men to a garden in another village which they surrounded, and murdered a man, his wife and their child. But then Biluma did a very mean thing. He took two of the men down to the coast and reported to the authorities there that it was they who had done the killing. So they were put in prison, and Biluma went free.

Then he went to another village to train two other men to kill. He himself killed a man, and once again he told the authorities that it was his two trainees who had done it; so they too went to jail.

But then one day some strangers came to his village. Biluma and the other villagers were astonished to see that they had no spears, no guns and no police to protect them.

Whoever could they be? These visitors told them that they had learnt to listen to the voice of the Good Spirit in their hearts, and that He had told them to care for people, and not to kill them. This interested Biluma and his friends so much that they followed these visitors down to the coast where they lived, to find out more about them.

There Biluma, who by this time was chief of his tribe, decided that he would listen to the Good Spirit himself, and find out if he could hear Him speaking. The thought which came to him as he listened was to make friends with another man called Ofekure, who had also come down to the coast to find out more about the strangers. Ofekure was the chief of another tribe which had been the main enemies of Biluma's tribe for many years. Ofekure began to listen too, and the two chiefs had the thought to go back to their villages together and tell their people about the new things they had found.

Then the thought began to come to Biluma that he must put things right with the government about the four men who were unjustly in prison. At first he was afraid – would he have to go to prison in their place? But he went and owned up, and found that two of the men had been released already; and as soon as the authorities heard what Biluma had to say, the other two men were at once set free too. Then Biluma waited to be jailed himself; but the government officials said, 'No. We are setting you free because you have been honest.'

And so a new spirit began to come into the stone-age villages of Papua–New Guinea. People learnt to care for each other and forgive each other, and the killing stopped. Many of the tribes, who had always lived in far-away places high up in the mountains, to be safe from their enemies, found the courage to come down to the coast to

live there and learn more about this new and happier way of living. And by 1975 the new way was well-enough established for it to be possible to make the people of Papua–New Guinea independent, as they are today.

From Himmat *magazine*

Section 3

LONG STORIES

Building Understanding Between Countries

America and Japan

Some years ago, an American schoolgirl named Genevieve sat on a swing, idly relaxing while a teacher read aloud. Suddenly she sat up, alert and indignant. The teacher was reading from a magazine article: 'Should Japanese children in California be sent to separate schools?' Why should these children be separated? What had they done?

From that moment Genevieve decided, with the help of God, to do all she could to bring about better feeling and understanding between America and Japan. At that time there was little knowledge about Japan in America, and a lot of prejudice. All sorts of rumours went around, and the Americans either distrusted the Japanese or thought of them as fairy-tale people, with bowing men and dancing geisha girls.

Genevieve would certainly need God's help. She was blind, and without any money or resources except those of the spirit. In those days it was difficult for blind people to learn. There were few books in Braille, and no 'talking books'. But there were good schools for the blind, and Genevieve persevered with her studies.

She wanted to find out what the Japanese were really like. She discovered two Japanese girls living near by, and called on them. They were very pleased to have her for a friend, and told her a lot about Japan. She got in touch with as many Japanese as she could, and found that they were practical and hard-working people.

Soon she resolved to go to Japan. But what would she do there? Perhaps she could be useful in teaching Japanese blind people. Or if not, she could teach English. First she must qualify as a teacher. So she went to college. But

here was a difficulty. She was the only blind person, and none of the work or books were in Braille. It was forbidden for anyone to read aloud in the library.

When the other girls knew she was studying because she wanted to teach in Japan, they decided to help her. Each morning, for three whole years, one of them would knock softly at her door at 5.30 and, as dawn gradually lighted the sky, read the work of the day to her for an hour.

When she had qualified, she began to teach English to Japanese people in New York, and made many friends. Some came to her home, where her mother would cook special Japanese food for them. One family who had returned to Japan invited her to come out and stay with them.

She managed to get the money for the boat fare and booked with a large Japanese steamship company. To her amazement, one day the manager called on her and said he had instructions from his head office to allow her thirty per cent off the fare because of all the kindness she had shown to so many Japanese people in New York! Genevieve could hardly believe it. However could such a large shipping company, carrying cargoes and passengers all over the world, ever have heard of her, or what she had been doing? And fancy their taking all that trouble! She was to find out many times that the Japanese always appreciated anything done for them. Gratitude is one of their strong points.

The stewardess on the boat had been told to take special care of her blind passenger, and thought this meant going everywhere with her, and perhaps even wheeling her in a chair! But Genevieve had always found her own way everywhere, and liked to be independent. Besides, what about all the other passengers the stewardess had to look

after? Quietly, in the special way blind people have, she felt everything in her cabin until she knew where it was, then unpacked. When the stewardess called to take her to the dining-room, she soon discovered that Genevieve didn't need any further help.

And she was able to help everyone else! She was on a cargo ship, and very few of the stewards knew any English, nor did the American passengers speak Japanese. So when they tried to tell the stewards how they liked their eggs cooked, and about their baggage going astray, they couldn't make them understand. Everyone got most worked up.

What an opportunity for building better understanding, thought Genevieve. She could put her ideals into practice at once. She asked the ship's captain if she might meet with the stewards each evening when their work was done and teach them a little English. They were most grateful, and when the passengers discovered what was going on, they began to tell Genevieve all their problems. And she tactfully explained them to the stewards. Soon order was restored and everyone was happy.

As the boat approached Japan, the captain sent for Genevieve. There in his cabin all the stewards were lined up to shake hands with her and thank her. They had baked a special cake for her and on it was written:

> 'To Miss Genevieve Caulfield in appreciation
> for her kind teaching.'

And they gave her a special box to put it in, so that she could take it to Tokyo and share it with her friends there.

Re-told from The Kingdom Within *by Genevieve Caulfield and Edward Fitzgerald (Hodder and Stoughton)*

He Made Others Great

How a famous footballer, Alex James, learnt team-building

It has been said of Alex James, 'He was not simply a great player. He made other players great. He provided the spark which lighted up the genius in the men around him. He gave unity, purpose and drive to a team, and so lifted the whole.' James joined Arsenal in 1930, and in the years which followed he transformed them into the kings of football.

But before he could do that, he himself had to be transformed first. The story is told by Bernard Joy, the famous footballer and sports writer. To begin with, James was only out for himself; he was a goal scorer who loved to be in the limelight. During his first months with the club, when he had the ball, he held it too long, which meant that by the time he passed it his colleague had been picked up by an opponent. The other players began to wonder whether their manager, Herbert Chapman, had been right to sign him on in the first place. Chapman thought for a long time about the make-up of the team, and in particular the forward line. At last he decided that he had no choice, and he made what has been called the boldest decision of his career. He decided to drop James.

At first the gamble came off, and Arsenal did better. But when they were at home to Birmingham, things did not work out so successfully, and Birmingham forced a replay. Then Chapman made a second bold decision. He planned to give James another chance. In the early morning he drove round to his house, strode into his bedroom, where he was still in bed, and said, 'Get up, Alex. You're coming to Highbury for training, because you will be playing in the replay.'

James knew that it was now or never. Chapman noticed that in the car, although he was usually a chatterbox, he was sitting silent and fidgety. He knew that an important crisis lay ahead, both for the club and for himself. He was realising that his manager, instead of ticking him off for his selfish play, was trusting him to do the job he had been given, and that not only his own future, but that of the whole team depended on it. The days of his self-centredness were over, and he became from then on the great team-builder for which he has been honoured ever since.

James, who was born in the mining village of Mossend, near Glasgow, was known in Scotland as the greatest Scottish inside-forward. He was a small man, but he was stockily built, and had very strong legs. He had a trade mark that was all his own, which was known as the 'fluttering foot'. With his body shielding the ball from the man who was tackling him, he would bring a foot, preferably the right one, over the ball, pretending to back-heel. The wag of his hips always sent his opponent the wrong way, while James's foot went back over the ball, and his instep curled round it, pulling it back. It was a trick which never failed, and many other players copied it.

James always wore flapping, baggy shorts which reached to his knees, and which made him easy to pick out on the field. Some people said he did it to show off; others thought it was to enable his colleagues to find him easily. But when he himself was asked why he wore them, all he said was: 'It is to keep my knees warm on a cold day.' He had great courage, and a sense of fun, and rarely lost his temper.

James was with Arsenal for seven years, from 1930 to 1937. And in every one of those years the club won a

major honour. It was only after he had gone that they failed to do so; the team individually played as well as ever, but they lacked the unity and inspiration which James had given them.

But he had taught them many tactics which were copied by a number of British clubs, and which eventually found their way into other countries. For the brilliance of his play, he well deserved the nickname which he was given by the French newspapers when Arsenal played in France. They called one Arsenal player 'Eel', and another 'Fireworks'; but Alex James they called simply 'Miracle'.

The Bird Man

The bird man's home was in a disused windmill on the top of a steep hill called Los Molinos on the Spanish island of Ibiza. Everyone called him the bird man, because that was what he did – he cared for birds. Winter and summer he was dressed in a battered old yellow straw hat and a long shabby overcoat with huge pockets, in which he often carried small birds. Sometimes they were sick birds which he wanted to watch over and keep warm; sometimes he just took them around for company.

His windmill was always full of birds. They lived in home-made wooden cages or perched high up on the rafters. They were pretty birds about the size of thrushes, with black bodies and vivid red markings and yellow bills; and a few had white markings. They came from the coast of North Africa, which is quite near to the island.

Every so often the bird man would go aboard one of the boats in the harbour with their red sails and set forth to North Africa in search of more birds to care for. The sailors on these boats would be taking over cargoes of olive oil or perhaps wine. They knew the old bird man

well, and they liked him; but he puzzled them. 'Why do you never bring back strong healthy birds with you?' they would ask him. 'You could sell them for a good price to tourists in the summer.' But the bird man would shake his head. 'Birds that are strong have no need of me,' he would say. 'They should be free. I rescue young birds which have fallen from their nests, or have injured themselves. These are the little ones which I search out to care for,' and there was a gentle smile on his gaunt face.

Besides loving the birds, the bird man had a respect for all living things. Sometimes he would nurse other animals besides birds back to health and strength. The people on the island spoke of him as a healer, and he cured not only animals, but people too. Those who were worried about their problems would go to him, because they thought he was wise, and he would advise them what to do.

He went to church regularly, and was not afraid to tell people whom he met that he believed in God, Who made all the animals and birds and everything we can see, and Who loves us all.

Usually the bird man was very gentle; but one day he became very angry – and he had good reason to be so. Some boys had caught an octopus down by the harbour, and they were tormenting it with sticks, poking and hitting the poor creature. Suddenly the bird man saw what they were doing, and rushed at them, his face white with rage, and a long iron bar in his hand which he had picked up from among the boats. With this he beat the boys. 'How dare you torment one of God's creatures?' he shouted. 'That octopus has just as much right to live and be kindly treated as you have. Now you can feel how it hurts to be hit as you were hitting that poor creature.'

The boys ran off rubbing their bruises, while the old man gently picked up the octopus and slipped it back into

the sea. But the boys were angry that the old man had spoiled their sport, and they promised each other that they would have their revenge on him. The next day they caught two of the wild cats which roamed the island and took them up to the windmill house while he was not at home. They managed to force open the door, and then they opened all the cages and let the birds out. Of course, the cats at once rushed at them, killing many. A few escaped by flying up to the rafters where the cats could not reach them; but many were taken by surprise, and there were feathers all over the floor, together with broken glass and china where the cats had knocked down and broken household things.

The boys were pleased with their revenge, and decided to hide behind the big gnarled trunk of an olive tree near the mill and watch for the old man to come home. What a shock he was going to have! Serve him right for throwing their octopus back into the sea!

After a while the old bird man came toiling up the steep path, opened his house door and went inside. The boys had expected him to shout in anger, and perhaps come rushing out again in a fury to see who had wrecked his home and killed his birds; but they heard no sound. Puzzled, they crept up to the door, which he had left ajar, and looked inside. The bird man was sitting on a stool, his face in his hands, silently crying. He seemed utterly broken-hearted. 'My poor little ones!' the boys heard him say. 'Who did this to you?' Then abruptly he straightened up and saw the wild cats, glowering at him from the corners of the room. 'Oh, so it was you, was it?' he shouted angrily. He picked up a great axe which he used for wood chopping, and advanced on the cats ready to murder them. 'You devils, you shall pay for this!' he bellowed. The cats cowered in the corners, cringing and

afraid. The old man swung the axe up ready to strike. Then, unexpectedly, his anger melted away. He dropped the axe, and said softly, 'I am ashamed of myself – trying to take revenge on a cat! They were only behaving as all cats do. It is their nature to chase birds.' The boys watched as, shaking his head sadly, he fetched a broom to sweep up the mess in his house.

They were amazed that the old man could be so patient and forgiving. 'I would have murdered those two cats if they had killed my pets,' said one.

'Yes,' said another boy, 'but the bird man loves all creatures, and doesn't want to hurt any of them.' And there was an embarrassed silence. They realised now that they had treated the bird man very badly; and they were really sorry. 'Let's go in and own up,' said the first boy, 'and tell him how sorry we are.' And that was what they did. They offered to help the old man clean up his house, and they said that they would go out with him and find more birds for him to care for.

This story about the bird man went all round the island; and there were many other such stories of the kind things he did. He became someone who not only cared for sick birds and made them better, but who changed people for the better too.

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The Boy With the Thin Leg

A Rugby hero

When Peter Howard was born, he was a fine bouncing baby. There was only one thing wrong with him. One of his legs was bent round in a circle; and when it had been straightened out, this leg was always thinner than the other,

and the doctors said that it would never be really strong. Every night Peter had to have it massaged with oil, and every week he had to go to the doctor to have it treated.

But Peter did not let his leg worry him. His foot turned in, and he was inclined to trip over it, but he rushed madly about, and was always in the thick of whatever was going on, especially if it happened to be a fight. His father and mother did not allow him to feel sorry for himself, and he learnt how to dress himself with an iron on his thin leg, and not to cry when it hurt him, how to make his own bed, tidy his room and fold up his clothes.

He grew up into a scruffy, untidy schoolboy, whose nickname at school was 'Beetroot', because he was always red in the face from dashing about, usually on his way to play some practical joke. The stocking on his thin leg was always coming down, and he dragged the leg when he was tired; but his parents took no notice of it, and neither did Peter.

He began to play Rugby football, and one day on the football field he fell and sprained his thin leg. The doctor who treated it said, 'Well, cricket is a better game for you anyway. Don't play football. You stick to cricket, there's a good boy.' It was from that moment that Peter decided to be a Rugby footballer. His father and his uncle had both played it, and it was the game for him.

When he moved to a bigger school, he went to see the school doctor and persuaded him – Peter was always very good at persuading – to let him leave off his leg-iron and play football seriously. He was soon charging about the field with a rollicking run which made up in speed for what he lost in lameness.

When he was eighteen, he acquired a motor cycle, and set out on it to join his father for a holiday. On the way he

collided with a truck and ended up in a ditch. He assured the truck driver that there was nothing wrong with him, borrowed a bicycle and cycled over 19 kilometres to hospital, where it was discovered that his thin leg was broken in two places. As he came round from the anaesthetic after being operated on, he heard the doctor say, 'I shall have to take this leg off.' This filled Peter with horror, and he pleaded so hard with the doctor that at last he was allowed to keep his leg, so long as he stayed in hospital for four months. He spent those four months with his leg propped up on the window sill; but he did not mind, because the leg was still there.

He spent the time working for an examination, for which his father sent him the necessary books. But two weeks before he had to take the exam, he found that they were the wrong ones, and when at last the right ones came, he had just a week left in which to do the work. 'I think I must have read day and night for that whole week,' he said afterwards. But he passed the exam. When Peter was determined to do something, he did it, no matter what the cost.

He continued to develop his football activities, and when he went up to Oxford University he was looked upon as one of the coming young players. Then there came a day when one of the university team fell ill, and Peter was pulled in at the last moment to take his place. This was just what he had been longing for. He played for the university all that season, until a fortnight before the Oxford and Cambridge match, when he hoped to get his 'blue'. But then suddenly he was dropped from the side, and heard that the captain of the Oxford team thought that his thin leg might snap during the match, and was afraid to risk it.

This was a bitter disappointment to Peter. But later he

was picked again to play for Oxford, and got his 'blue'. Oxford won the 'Varsity match that year.

And so it went on, till he was chosen to play for England against Ireland. And at last this boy with the deformed leg, who had never given in to his handicap, as he so well might have done, was chosen to captain the England side.

The Princess and the Elephants

Princess Elizabeth at Tree Tops

Jim Corbett, the famous big game hunter, was born in India, and grew up to be a magnificent marksman, who specialised in shooting dangerous wild animals; lions and tigers and leopards who had become man-eaters. He would only shoot animals which had killed human beings. One famous leopard which he killed was said to have brought death to a hundred and fifty people, and in another area he shot two lions and a leopard estimated to have killed between them no fewer than eight hundred and thirty-six. So shooting these dangerous beasts was necessary, and Jim kept at it for years, killing a vicious tiger when he was sixty-three.

In later life he left India and settled in Kenya, in Africa. There he started photographing animals instead of killing them, and he often paid visits to Tree Tops, the famous place where there is a large hotel or hut built in and around a huge fig tree, with a balcony from which wild animals can easily be photographed. In front of the building is a big oval clearing in the forest, in which is a miniature lake, and beside it a salt-lick. The animals come out of the trees and down to the floodlit clearing to drink and lick the salt which they need, and tourists come from all over the world to watch and photograph animals of

every kind – elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, buck and many others. It is a truly wonderful sight.

It was at Tree Tops that Jim Corbett had a thrilling experience. One February morning in 1952 he received a telephone message that Princess Elizabeth, as she then was, was coming to Tree Tops with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, and he was invited to join them. The royal party were due to arrive at 2 p.m.

Jim was at Tree Tops by 1.30, and found to his dismay that a large herd of elephants was coming into the clearing. They are not usually seen at Tree Tops at that time of year; but there they were, drifting down through the trees in ones and twos. The last to arrive were three big bulls, one very big one, obviously the master of the herd, and two smaller ones; Jim counted forty-seven in all. Wild elephants can be very dangerous if they get angry; but he was glad to see that this herd was peacefully browsing on the far side of the lake.

But then, when there was only a quarter of an hour left before the royal visitors were due to arrive, the elephants started to edge down towards the salt-lick, and so nearer to Tree Tops. The visitors would already be on the path leading up to it, and Jim began to feel anxious.

Suddenly the big bull became annoyed with the other two smaller ones, and charged them, and all three enraged animals dashed into the forest trumpeting and screaming with rage, and began to circle round the back of Tree Tops, where the path lay which led up to the hut and the steep ladder up which the party must climb to reach safety. Jim found himself hoping that those already on the path would hear the noise and go back to safety.

This is how he tells the rest of the story: 'Crossing the platform, I peered into the forest. From the foot of the ladder the path ran for forty yards in a straight line, then

curved out of sight to the left. Terrifying sounds were to be heard in plenty, but nothing was to be seen on the path, and there was nothing to be done. Presently I caught sight of a man with a rifle at the ready, followed closely by a small trim figure. The party had arrived, and on reaching the bend in the path, from where the elephants on the salt-lick were in full view, came to a halt. No time was to be lost, so, slipping down the ladder, I approached the small figure, which from her photographs I recognised as Princess Elizabeth. Smiling her greeting, and without a moment's hesitation, the Princess walked unhurriedly straight towards the elephants, which were now crowded at the hut end of the salt-lick, and within ten yards of the foot of the ladder. Handing her handbag and camera to me, the Princess climbed the steep ladder followed by the Duke and the rest of the party.

'In the course of a long lifetime, I have seen some courageous acts; but few to compare with what I witnessed on that fifth day of February. The Princess and her companions, who had never previously been on foot in an African forest, had set out that glorious day to go peacefully to Tree Tops, and from the moment they left their cars had been assailed – as they told me later – by the rampaging of angry elephants. In single file, and through dense bush where visibility was limited in places to a yard or two, they went towards these sounds, which grew more awe-inspiring, the nearer they approached them. And then, when they came to the bend in the path, within sight of the elephants, they found that they would have to approach within ten yards of them to reach the safety of the ladder. A minute after climbing the ladder, the Princess was sitting on the balcony, and with steady hands was filming the elephants.'

From Tree Tops *by Jim Corbett (OUP) 1955*

The Boy Who Heard God Speak

The story of Hans Andersen

This is the story of a boy who had a very hard life, but who in the end did a very wonderful thing and became world-famous for doing it. His name was Hans, and he was born in a little village in Denmark. His father was a shoemaker, but not a very good one; and as a result Hans and his family were very poor. To make things worse, when Hans was only eight years old, his father died, and then they were poorer than ever. Hans's mother had a hard time finding enough money for food, and he was often hungry, and had to wear shabby clothes many times patched.

He was a big clumsy fellow, and not very good at lessons, and the other children were unkind and laughed at him. This made him so unhappy that his mother took him away from three schools, so that he did not learn very much. But he could make up wonderful stories. He would throw an old sheet over a bush in the garden to make a tent, and there he would sit and think up fairy stories. His mother took no notice; she just thought he was day-dreaming.

When he was old enough, he went to church for the service of confirmation. His mother cut down an old suit of his father's so that it would fit him, and she actually bought him a pair of real leather boots. Hans was delighted – he had never had real boots before; always until then he had worn wooden shoes, as those were all his mother could afford. The new boots squeaked as Hans walked down the aisle of the church in them to be confirmed; but he did not mind. 'The squeak,' he said, 'made everyone look at my boots and notice them; and I'm sure God noticed them too.' Hans had a firm belief in God, and used often to say that he heard Him speaking to him.

When he was fourteen years old, his mother asked him what he meant to do in life. 'I shall be famous,' Hans replied. 'God has told me so.' This may have sounded conceited; but Hans did not mean it that way. He was simply repeating what he had heard God say. And he asked his mother to let him go to Copenhagen, the capital city of Denmark. All his friends and relations were horrified. How could Hans's mother let a boy so young go to such a big city with no money, with very little education, without even a training for a trade? Surely he would be lost, all alone among strangers! But Hans was not afraid. He just said that God wanted him to go to Copenhagen; He had told him so.

So off he went; and during the first three years there he had a very hard time indeed. He had no money for lodgings, but the people in a boarding house in a very poor part of the town let him sleep in a large cupboard. He had to beg for food to eat. But all the time he was working hard, writing plays and novels and stories and reading them to anyone who would listen. For a short while he tried to be an actor, but without much success.

Then one day a rich man took an interest in some of his writings, and decided to help him. But he said that first Hans must go back to school and finish his education; and he would pay for his schooling. In those days education was not free as it is today.

You can imagine that it was not easy for Hans to go back to school. He was seventeen years old now, and he had to sit in class with little boys, who were only up to his shoulders, but many of whom knew more than he did. His spelling and general composition were very poor, and they thought him a dunce and laughed at him. He told his teacher that he wanted to be a writer; but the teacher was very discouraging. 'You will never succeed as an author,'

he said. But Hans went on believing that God wouldn't let him down, and that if He meant him to be a famous writer, he would become one. He did not enjoy being at school with boys so young, and it was hard work for him to catch them up; but he stuck it out, because he felt it must all be part of God's plan for him.

When at last he could spell and write better, he left school; and then he began to work really hard at his writing. At last, when he was twenty-four, he sold his first novel. This impressed people, and they began to ask where he lived. Someone discovered his fairy stories, and arranged for them to be published; and to his astonishment they were a big success. He could not understand it. 'They are only tales,' he said, 'which I have made up when I was too tired to do my proper writing. I only did it to amuse myself.' But it was these tales which were to make him famous, for Hans, of course, was Hans Christian Andersen, who wrote some of the most beautiful fairy tales in the world. He did indeed become famous, as he had said he would, because he never lost his trust in God, and he refused to be discouraged.

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Faith Rewarded

Bandmaster Marshall of the Salvation Army

This story begins when George Marshall was a young man, tall and good-looking. He was a miner, and a musician. As a miner he was the foreman of a group of men working on a newly-installed mechanical coal cutter in a mine three miles out under the North Sea. As a musician, he played the trombone and was bandmaster of the South Shields Central Corps Salvation Army band.

He was also a composer of band music which was already becoming well known.

George and his wife Jenny lived happily in their little house in South Shields. But one morning, when Jenny saw George off to work, she felt very uneasy, and begged him to take special care. And she was right to be worried; for later in the day there came the news that there had been a terrible accident. A portion of the roof at the coal face had collapsed, and George was buried under the rock. When they dug him out, his back was broken in two places, and the doctors did not think he could possibly live.

But George and Jenny believed in God, and they believed too that He answers prayer. So they began to pray. Jenny, at home, took the tunic George wore as bandmaster and hung it on a chair; then, burying her head in the cloth, she began to pray that her husband would recover and be able to wear his bandsman's uniform again. And after a time she began to feel sure that he would get better.

Meanwhile in hospital, in great pain, George was praying too. It was his music he minded about most; it seemed so terrible never to be able to compose again. And then, as he lay there, he heard a wonderful sound – the music of a brass band marching past the open window of his hospital ward. It was the Salvation Army band of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and it was playing some of George's own music – a march called 'Yellow star and red and blue'. They knew that he was there, and were playing it especially to cheer him up. And as he lay and listened, it seemed to him like a message from God Himself, promising him that he would recover and be able to write more music like that – with Jenny's help.

And that was how it did work out. He got better, though he would never be able to walk again, and would have to

spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. But gradually he began, with Jenny's aid, to get back into life once more. She helped him to sit up, and to learn to type, and to wear his uniform, and in time even to work in his garden, using tools with very long handles, and caring for his roses with a spoon tied to a walking stick. But above all, he was able to write music once more, and even to conduct bands from his wheelchair.

But it was very hard work for him, and even harder work for Jenny. She could never leave him, and she had to do everything for him. One thing George always insisted on – he must look smart. That was Jenny's work; and it took a great deal of time. If a visitor was coming to see him, she had to get up at five o'clock to have him ready in time; and if he was to be got ready for a journey, she had to start preparations at three. But she always turned him out spick and span; and he travelled a good deal and met many important people. One day, at a composers' festival, he met the Duke and Duchess of York, who later became King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

And all the time he was working at his music, writing band pieces and music for hymns and songs. His work became more and more well known, till he was famous in many parts of the world. There is a hospital in Rhodesia, for instance, where all the wards are named after leading musicians; and one of them is called 'Marshall'. George had very wide musical knowledge, and his favourite composer was Beethoven.

Everyone loved George, and he loved people. One day he was talking to a little boy, and gave him a pat on the head. Up ran another small boy, who said, 'Do me as well, sir, please.'

A very wonderful thing happened one day when George was out with Jenny in the park near their home. A man

walked past them with his wife and two children, and as he passed George he stared at him so hard that Jenny turned and looked back at him. She saw the man standing in the middle of the path with tears running down his cheeks.

'Are you Mrs Marshall?' he asked, 'and is that Mr Marshall?' And when they said yes, he said to George, 'You won't recognise me; but I was the boy – I was only sixteen then – who should have gone to couple that hopper in the mine all those years ago; but you did it yourself – and had the accident. If you'd sent me, it is I who would probably be sitting in that wheelchair now.' He was terribly distressed to see the once strong, handsome George so feeble and helpless now.

'It's all right,' said George, taking his hand. 'What you say means that my life has not been wasted.' He felt that out of the evil of his accident had come good for this man and his family.

George wrote all his music to the glory of God, and at the end of every day he offered all that he had done that day to Him. While he was still a young man, he had written, 'Since God has blessed me with some talent for music, I think it is only right that I should give it back to my Maker in the best manner possible.' And that, in spite of his accident, and with Jenny's help, is what he was able to do in the years that were left to him.

Re-told from The Triumph of Faith *by A. R. Wiggins (by permission of The International Headquarters of the Salvation Army).*

What a Sportsman Can Do

Cricketer Conrad Hunte in India

Conrad Hunte, who was the opening bat and Vice-captain of the West Indies Eleven when they became

world champions, is one of the world's great names in cricket.

The story is about what happened when the West Indies were playing India in 1966 to 1967. A small group of people, for reasons best known to themselves, decided to break up the match; and on the second morning of the second Test Match they began. The batsmen were in position at the wickets and the umpires were in their places, when suddenly all hell broke loose, and within fifteen minutes the cricket field was turned into a battlefield. Thousands of people jumped over the fences and squatted on the grass, and when the police tried to force them to their seats, there were no seats for them to go to, because they had been filled up by thousands more people who were pouring into the ground. Through bribery and the black market and general mismanagement, twenty thousand more tickets had been sold than the ground could hold.

Meanwhile, those who had planned the riot were starting to dig up the cricket pitch with sharpened stakes. One of the onlookers in the guest enclosure heard a young man say to him, 'You had better get out of here because we are going to burn the place down.' Then he and others took bottles of petrol out of their pockets and poured it on the stands, and set them on fire. Flames blazed up from three sides of the ground. The two teams retired to the pavilion, bolted the doors and windows and waited to see what would happen next. The police began pouring tear gas into the crowds, and the cricketers got some of it in their eyes, though wet towels helped a bit.

Soon the teams were saying, 'Come on boys, let's get out of here.' And off they went. This was what the attacking gang had meant to happen. But Conrad Hunte had got into the habit of listening to what Mahatma

Gandhi, the great holy man of India, used to call 'the inner voice'; and as he sat quietly listening, the thought came, 'Stay where you are! It is the safest place to be.' Then he looked round the empty pavilion and saw all the players' clothes and luggage lying around; so he decided to put them in a safe place, in case the fire reached the pavilion too. He and two Indians moved all the cricketers' gear to safety, and cleared away all the inflammable stuff near it. It took them two and a half hours. Then they sat on the baggage and waited to see what would happen next.

Conrad Hunte looked up and saw the two national flags, the Indian and the West Indian, fluttering in the breeze above him. He thought, 'Those are symbols of our two nations. I'm not going to let the fire get them. That would mean surrendering to mob rule.' So the two flags were brought down by a plain-clothes policeman and given to Conrad for safety.

By this time the fires were out, but all the buildings were destroyed, except the pavilion where Conrad and his helpers had been. But by now the West Indies team were deciding to go home, and not finish the match. This was just what the wreckers had planned. After that they intended to march all those who had come to see the match, sixty thousand men, women and children, to the cricket ground to demand their money back. Of course, it could not be paid; and then there would have been a real riot with bloodshed and the gang's plan would have come off.

The West Indies captain, Gary Sobers, said, 'I am not playing. I can't risk the danger to our men, and we can't play a hundred per cent in such an atmosphere as we have experienced today. What do you all think?' Most of the team wanted to go home; but some, including Conrad, felt it was right to stay. The definite thought came to him that the decision should be postponed again, so he sug-

gested that they should wait until the following morning, and find out what security plans the Indian Cricket Board had if they did decide to stay and play. No decision was taken that night.

The next morning the Indian Board of Control came with an apology for what had happened, and a plan to bring in helicopters, jeeps, more police and armed patrols to escort their buses to the cricket ground, with various other safety measures, if the West Indians would play. But still they refused. Conrad once more had the thought, 'Put off the decision again.' So he suggested that both teams should have a rest day, while the ground was made ready for play again, and then meet once more and finally decide. This was agreed to.

But next day, when Conrad listened for the inner voice, no thoughts came. He was puzzled. Then he realised he had a grudge against the captain, Gary Sobers, and was feeling resentful towards him. Perhaps this was blocking his thoughts.

So he went to see Gary and apologised for the wrong feelings he had had against him; and then he knew what he must do. He said, 'Gary, I think you hold the key to this problem. You may need to decide on the basis of what will help India most, and not what will save our skins from danger or defeat; your choice will show whether the West Indies are champions in times of difficulty as well as in times of ease, when things are going rough as well as when things are smooth.'

Gary said nothing, and when the team met again the next morning all the old arguments were brought out once more. But presently the Indian captain came and asked for a private word with Sobers. When Gary Sobers rejoined his team, he said, 'The Indian captain has been telling me what Conrad and others have been saying all

along – that the Indian people are not against us. It is a small group of people who, for political reasons, planned the whole thing. If we play, the Indian authorities will give us adequate protection, and the Indian people will be on our side. But if we don't play, the Indian people, not understanding *why* we don't play, may turn against us. Then our lives really will be in danger. The "campaigners" will have won. In spite of what I said yesterday about not playing, in spite of the fear of danger and defeat, I think we ought to play. But each man must decide for himself. If you will come with me on those terms, I will take the field tomorrow. What do you say?'

'Now that you put it that way, skipper, of course we will come with you,' was the united decision of the West Indies players.

So the next day the match began again. For the first half hour, with all the safety precautions working, you could have cut the atmosphere with a sword. But after thirty minutes without disturbance of any kind, everything was back to normal. The West Indies won the match in three days by an innings and forty-five runs; and there was no danger. They owed their safety to the respect and gratitude of the Indian people, who realised how much they had risked in order to play. And they also owed it to Conrad Hunte, who had listened to and obeyed his inner voice.

Robert's Musical Problem

a family story

Robert Binghall came of a musical family; in fact, that was just his trouble. His Welsh grandfather had a fine tenor voice, and his grandmother had a beautiful little upright piano on which she used to play; so Robert's father grew up surrounded by music, and soon learnt to

play first the piano and then the violin. He became so skilled on that instrument that he was always being called on for entertaining at friends' parties and local concerts; and finally he became the village pride and joy by winning a scholarship to a large London music college. There he met and married a fellow student, and they settled down on the outskirts of London. He toured the world playing his violin, and his wife brought up four children and taught music. And of course they both hoped that their children would develop a love of music too, and perhaps a talent for it.

At first all seemed to go as they had hoped. Elizabeth, the eldest, almost as soon as she could sit on a music stool, was perched on several cushions and playing on her grandmother's piano; Stephen could play several instruments, but mainly the flute; and Catherine at ten was the most advanced recorder player in the school, was learning to play the oboe, and looked like developing a lovely voice.

But what about Robert? What was his musical talent? People were always asking that. But the sad truth was that Robert was different in this respect from all the rest of the family. He did not – could not – play any instrument; for Robert was tone-deaf. When he sang, it made grandfather retreat to his room and forget all about his favourite 'mint imperial' sweets, the dog crawl into its basket, and the cats fly in terror up the nearest tree. A tone-deaf son in a brilliant musical family! His father was embarrassed, his mother had to hide her sorrow, his brother and sisters were annoyed.

Of course, Robert's parents tried not to let his lack of musical talent make him miserable, and instead praised his good points. He was captain of his school football team, and came top in maths. He painted well too. But he began

to feel more and more left out of the family's life, especially when they spent an evening all together making music and playing and singing old favourites. He began to play the fool, because of this left-out feeling, and to get into more and more mischief. His family found him very difficult, because he was always playing tricks on them; and yet, oddly enough, it was one of these tricks which turned out to be the saving of the whole difficult situation.

That was the day when Robert hid his grandfather's beloved mint imperials in the dog's basket. That really did upset things! Grandfather was dancing round the room doing a Welsh version of the Highland fling, mother was near tears, Elizabeth was having hysterics, the dog was barking, and Catherine kept saying, 'Will somebody *please* tell me what has happened?' while the cats retreated to the highest branches. Robert was sent upstairs to wait till his father should come home and decide what was to be done with him.

Mr Binghall's judgment, when he heard the story, was that Robert was not to go to the football match on Saturday – this was a great blow, because Robert loved football – but that the money saved on his ticket should be used to buy grandfather a whole bag of mint imperials, and two packets for the dog, who by this time had developed a passion for them.

So when Saturday came, there sat Robert in the sitting-room, at work on a page of mathematical problems, which he had been given at school to work out as a punishment for day-dreaming in class about the match he was having to miss. In the same room Catherine was practising her oboe, with her mother beside her to help and encourage. Presently Catherine started to practise a new piece; but it had a rhythm which she found very difficult.

Robert was working away at his problem, absent-mindedly tapping with his pencil, when suddenly he realised that Catherine had stopped practising and was staring at him.

'But it's amazing!' she said. 'No, don't stop tapping.' And Robert realised that as he concentrated on his figures, he was idly tapping out the rhythm which his sister found so difficult, but which seemed quite easy to him. He found that he could tap out other beats too, equally easily; and before long he was joining in the family's musical evenings on triangle, cymbals or maracas. He learnt to play the drums, and soon had his own set. From that it was only a step to forming his own 'group', and soon, like the rest of the family, he was entertaining friends and giving concerts.

He never really learnt to appreciate music, since he would always be tone-deaf; and his attempts at singing in the bath still sent the cats into hysterics, though the dog could always be placated by a mint imperial. But he no longer felt the odd man out in the family, and as he grew older he realised that his talent on percussion was just as good as the musical gifts of the others in the family. Everyone has his or her particular gift to contribute to the whole; and that is true for all of life, if we will only realise it.

Carol M. Green

Music Which Meant Sacrifice

Frederick Delius and Eric Fenby

Eric Fenby was a young musician who lived in Scarborough, in Yorkshire. Of all the music which he heard or played, he loved best the work of Frederick Delius, and

he bought all of it that he could get. There was one piece, *A Mass of Life*, which he specially longed to have; and when at last he was able to obtain it, he stood spellbound in the little music shop where he had found it, reading it and thinking that never in his life had he come across anything so beautiful. He wrote to Delius telling him how much his music meant to him, and received a kind letter in reply.

So it was with great shock and grief that he read several articles about Delius, and his music, and discovered that he was now blind and paralysed and unable to compose any more. The really tragic thing about it was that the composer's mind was still full of the music he could no longer play or write. There were several works which he had begun before he was taken ill and had not been able to finish. To have something beautiful in you and not to be able to bring it out seemed to Eric Fenby to be unbearable.

If only he could help! Was there *anything* he could do? He kept thinking about it. One stormy day he set out for a walk along the cliffs of Scarborough with his dog Peter, and as he walked, Delius's problem was in his mind all the time. Suddenly the thought came into his head, 'If only I could go and work with him!' No, of course not, he told himself – how could he even think of such a thing? But it kept coming back, and was always with him; he could not escape from it, and at last he wrote to Delius saying that he would be willing to come and live with him for three or four years and do anything he could to help him with his music.

Eric told no one what he had done, but just waited to see what would happen. And in due time a reply came saying that Delius and his wife would be very glad if he would come. 'Come here by all means as soon as you

can,' the letter said, 'and see if you like it before deciding anything. How old are you?

'You know, this is a lovely spot, just a quiet little village, and our house is in a big garden going down to the river; but of course we live very much alone.' Then there were directions about when and how to come.

So here was Eric arriving in the rain at the station of the quiet little French village of Bourron, to be met by Mrs Delius and taken to the composer's house. He felt very strange and not a little frightened, and could not help wondering what he had taken on, and whether he could really do what would be expected of him.

He was taken to meet his host, and found him sitting upright in his invalid chair, gaunt and deadly pale and hardly able to stretch out his hand to shake Eric's. He greeted the young man kindly, and they talked about Eric's home town, which Delius knew well. But then unfortunately Eric said something about music which upset his host – he disliked talk about music – and while they were having tea Delius would not talk to anyone except his male nurse, who was feeding him, because he could not feed himself. After tea, Eric went for a walk, and prayed that he would succeed in this horribly difficult task which he had set himself. In the evening he and Mrs Delius took the sick man for a walk in his invalid chair; and so ended Eric's first day in his new home.

Then began a very strange life. Often Delius was too ill to talk, and had to be cared for like a baby. The slightest thing upset him, because he was so weak; and all that the people in the house could do then was to take it in turns to read to him. But then he would have better days, and be able to sit in the garden and listen to records of his music; and sometimes other musicians would come to visit him. Eric was kept busy working on various pieces of music;

but there was no thought of Delius being able to make his own music again.

Then one day, when he was feeling a little better than usual, he said to Eric, 'I have an idea in my head – a simple little tune – and I want you to take it down.' Eagerly Eric took pen and paper, and waited. Delius threw back his head and began: 'Ter-te-te-ter – ter-te-ter – hold it! – ter-te-te-ter – ter-ter-ter – ter-ter – hold it!—' On and on it went, but Eric could make nothing of it, until he realised that Delius could hear the tune clearly in his own mind, but could not get it over to him.

At last Delius said, 'Have you got that? Now sing it.' But there was nothing Eric could do. They tried again and again, with Delius getting more and more angry and Eric more and more unhappy, until at last the young man burst out, 'I'm sorry – I can't go on! Please excuse me,' and hurried away to his room. As he went, he heard Delius say to his wife, 'That boy is no good. He is too slow. He can't even take down a simple melody.'

Eric slept very little that night. But next day Delius was very kind to him, and gave him one of his last works to play. 'I want you to tell me just what you think of it,' he said. The trouble was that Eric did not think much of it! But he decided, and Mrs Delius agreed with him, that he must say exactly what he thought of the music, even if it meant that he was sent away, a failure. And that was what he did. And then, to his astonishment, Delius said, 'Look here, Fenby, I've got an idea. You choose out all the good material in that piece of music, develop it, and make a piece of it yourself.'

Delius was taken ill again after saying this; but Eric worked on the piece as Delius had suggested, and when the composer was better again, he was delighted with what Eric had done with his work in the meantime.

'Fenby,' he said, 'I can work with you. You are a natural musician. You have got the sense of my piece in a wonderful way. It seems almost uncanny. You have awakened my interest again, and now that you have shown me what you can do with my material, it has set my mind working to see what I myself can make of it.'

Then the two musicians, the old one and the young one, set to work together, and Delius, with Eric's help, was able to compose again. They produced several large and complicated scores, including *A Song of Summer*. It had been a hard battle for any musician to have to fight – to put himself out of the picture and to try to feel his way into another man's musical mind; but Eric Fenby had done it, and the world has been infinitely the richer musically as a result.

From Delius *by Eric Fenby*
(Faber and Faber Ltd.)

The One-song Man

How the Marseillaise *was written*

This is the story of a man who, nearly two hundred years ago, wrote a song which is still sung all over the world, and which became the national anthem of a great country. He was a Frenchman, and his song made him so famous that he lies buried in Paris near the tomb of the emperor Napoleon. And yet most people have never heard of him, and during his lifetime he gained no honour for his wonderful composition.

It is a strange and rather sad story. His name was Rouget, and he was a captain of engineers in the French army in 1792, when the song was written. Rouget was a small man, and like many small men he felt inferior and wanted to do something to make himself more important.

He began by making his name sound more imposing by adding 'de Lisle' to it, so that today he is known as Rouget de Lisle.

He was fond of writing music, and after the French Revolution in 1789, when France was given her first constitution, he celebrated the occasion by writing a fine *Ode to Liberty*, which the regimental bandmaster set to music for his band to play.

Six months later the King of France declared war on the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Germany. The French felt that they were defending their newly won liberty against the tyrants of the old order, and all the French soldiers were eager for the fight. The two armies lined up on opposite banks of the River Rhine, and everyone was waiting for the battle to begin. In Strasburg, on the French side of the river, regiment after regiment paraded in the streets, and all the people came out to cheer them. Proclamations were read out which said, 'To arms, citizens! The standard of war is raised! The signal is given!' The newspapers, the public speakers, the shouts of the people in the streets, all said the same thing – 'To arms! Let them tremble, those crowned tyrants! Let us march, children of liberty!'

The Mayor of Strasburg joined in it all, hurrying from meeting to meeting and urging the people on. And in the evening, shortly before the troops were due to march against the enemy, he gave a farewell dinner for the officers of the army, to which he invited all the chief people of the city. Everyone was very excited; the officers brandished their swords, people embraced each other in the French fashion, and after the guests had had plenty to drink, there were passionate speeches about victory. 'Let each man do his utmost,' cried the speakers, 'for the king, for the flag and for liberty!'

Sitting beside the mayor was the young officer Rouget de Lisle. The mayor, remembering Rouget's *Ode to Liberty*, turned to him and said, 'Why don't you write a march for the troops who are going to the front? It could be a war song for the Army of the Rhine.'

'I will do what I can,' said Rouget, inspired by the idea.

'Bravo,' said a general, raising his glass. 'If you write your march, send it to me, at the front. A good patriotic marching song is exactly what the army needs just now.' The mayor's wife, who was a trained musician, backed him up, and so did the other guests.

It was late when at last the party was over, and Rouget was back at his quarters. He longed to begin writing his march, and strode up and down searching for the right words and tune. His mind was full of the proclamations, the speeches, the shouting of the people in the streets; and gradually words along the same lines began to form in his head:

Allons, enfants de la Patrie!
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.
Come, children of the Fatherland!
The day of glory has arrived!

Now for a tune. He took up his violin and tried a few notes, and a melody came which wonderfully fitted the words. He could still hear the cries in the streets, and they seemed to blend with his own inspiration as words and music came pouring out. On and on he went; it was as if some power outside himself was inspiring him, and before dawn the great song was finished. The very spirit of the people of France seemed to have found its voice, and to be speaking through him. He fell on his bed utterly exhausted, and slept as he had never slept before.

When he woke in the morning, there on the table lay

the verses and music he had written. He looked at them in amazement – had he really written all that? He took it to a fellow officer and sang it to him, and he approved of it; so Rouget took it to the mayor. He was impressed, and his wife sat down to her harpsichord and wrote an accompaniment. The mayor had a good singing voice, and that night he sang the new song to a group of friends in his sitting-room. Copies were made and sent to the general of the army of the Rhine, and he and his officers liked it too; but for some reason they never thought of passing it on to the soldiers, and it seemed as if that were the end of it.

The battle began, and the French did not have the great victory they had expected. The enemy was able to capture French soil; and all over the country men were enlisting in the army to join in the battle and drive them out. In Marseilles in particular, on the Mediterranean coast, a batallion of five hundred young volunteers was preparing to march to Paris. Before they set out, they were given a banquet; and in the middle of it a young medical student stood up. Everyone expected him to make a speech; but instead he broke into a song which none of them had ever heard before, but which said exactly what they were all feeling. It was like a spark setting a forest on fire. He had to sing the song over and over again, and soon they were all joining in. Passers-by in the streets heard it and began to sing it too, and by the next day everyone was singing it. Copies were quickly made and passed around to all the volunteers; and it became their marching song as they set out for Paris. As they marched into the city, that was the song they sang. Soon all Paris was captured by the *Marseillaise*, the name by which Rouget de Lisle's song was now known, since it was the volunteers from Marseilles who had brought it to Paris.

The French army took it up, and the enemy learnt to

dread the sound of this terrible battle hymn which was putting new heart into the French soldiers. As the years went by, it was sung more and more, until at last it became the French national anthem.

And what about the author all this time? Everyone had forgotten him. He wrote other music, but it never caught on; and his name was not even given on the printed sheets of his one great song. Nowadays we have the law of copyright, which protects authors and musicians and sees that they are justly rewarded for their work; but in those days it did not exist, and they had no way of claiming their rights..

Moreover, Rouget de Lisle did not agree with the way the Revolution was going, and all the killing that was taking place; and when he said so, he was arrested and narrowly escaped having his head chopped off by the terrible guillotine. His uniform was taken away and his pension stopped, and he had to make a living as best he could, sometimes in ways that were not honest, so that he was once even in prison for debt. It was a sad life for the man whose inspired song had done so much to make the French revolution a triumphant success in the end.

It was not till nearly forty years after he wrote it that at last he was remembered, and King Louis Philippe gave him a small pension. But he did not live long to enjoy it, for six years later he died at the age of seventy-six, a lonely and forgotten man.

But his great song lived on, and was sung on all the French battle fronts during the First World War; and in gratitude for it, and for all that it had done during that hard time to build up French courage and morale, the French government issued an order for the body of Captain Rouget de Lisle to be dug up and reburied in the Invalides in Paris, the resting place of the famous dead of

France, near the tomb of Bonaparte. And so at long last the forgotten writer of one of the world's most famous songs was fittingly honoured by his own people.

The Bachs – a Musical Family and their most Famous Son

If you had lived in northern Germany in the eighteenth century and had met someone called Bach (a name which means brook or stream), you could be pretty sure that he would be a musician. There were Bachs everywhere – fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and cousins – and they all loved and played music, as all Bachs had done for as long as anyone in those parts could remember.

It had all begun more than a hundred years before, with a miller called Viet Bach who lived in Hungary. But he was a Protestant, and his neighbours were Catholics, and were so unfriendly that he had to move to Germany and take up his trade there. He was the first of the musical Bachs, and his favourite instrument was the zither, a sort of flat harp or guitar, which he used to take into the mill and play while the corn was being ground. Long afterwards his famous great-great-great-grandson Johann Sebastian Bach used to tell his children about this. 'A pretty noise the pair of them must have made together,' he used to say. 'But it taught him to keep time – and that is how music first came into our family.'

Then there was another Bach who was known as 'Hans the fiddler'. Johann Sebastian had a picture of him which his children loved to look at. Hans was a court jester, and he had the jingling bells and the cock's comb which were the sign of it. He was a middle-aged bearded man, holding a bow in his right hand and a viol in his left, and there was a rhyme which the Bach children always enjoyed hearing:

Here at his fiddling see Hans Bach.
Whatever he plays, he makes you laugh;
For he scrapes away in a style all his own,
And wears a fine beard by which he is known.

Every year it was the custom for all the Bachs to meet for a family gathering. They came together from all the towns in that part of Germany where they lived; they would start the day with a prayer, and then sing a hymn or a chorale; and then, since they were all musicians, they would go on to what they loved most – making music. They would sing their favourite popular songs; and then they would make up their own words and music, extemporising, as it is called, and harmonising as they went along. They called these made-up songs 'quodlibets', which is a Latin word meaning 'just what you like'; and many of them were very funny.

The Bach family laughed a lot, and gossiped about the year's doings, and altogether had a marvellous time. And when little Johann Sebastian came along, of course he went to these family parties too, and how he enjoyed them! He was always telling his own children what fun they had been.

Naturally, everyone took it for granted that Johann Sebastian would be a musician too. As soon as he was old enough, his father began teaching him the violin. And on Sundays he and his brothers and school friends sang in the church choir, and at weddings and funerals and other occasions in the town where they lived. They also had a custom which they called *currenden*. Every three or four months the boys would go round the streets singing, often outside the houses of rich people, who would give them money which they used to keep the choir going, and also to get some pocket money for themselves. Over the New

Year, too, they went round to near-by villages and sang there as well; and the money they collected in that way was used to buy school books.

But these happy days for Johann Sebastian with his parents and his seven brothers and sisters only lasted until he was nine. Then both his father and his mother died, and the home was broken up. Johann Sebastian and his younger brother Johann Jakob, the two youngest boys in the family, went to live with their eldest brother Johann Christoph. (All three brothers were called Johann, so perhaps from now on we can leave it out.)

Sebastian went on with his music, and learnt to play the organ, the harpsichord and the klavier. His brother Christoph taught him; but he was stricter than the boys' father had been, and there was one thing which he did not allow Sebastian to have. This was a book of pieces which Christoph had collected, and Sebastian longed to play them; but Christoph kept them locked up, and would not allow his brother to have them.

However, Sebastian soon found a way to get hold of them. They were kept in a cabinet with doors made of carved grille work; and Sebastian found that at night, when everyone was in bed, he could steal down and slip his small hands through the grille, roll up the book (which had only a paper cover) and pull it out. He had no light, but he could read the manuscript by moonlight, and he began to make a copy of it. But Christoph found out what he was doing, and took away not only the book, but also the copy which Sebastian had been making with such trouble. Sebastian was naturally very disappointed; but in later years he must have forgiven his big brother, for when he began to write music himself, he dedicated one of his first compositions to him, and when Christoph married, Sebastian was godfather to his baby son.

Sebastian and his brothers went on with their education; they had all the usual lessons, and of course as much music as they could. One way in which they educated themselves musically was by going to hear the famous musicians who lived in the towns around them. There were two very famous organists, and they went to hear both of them, though it meant a very long walk – thirty miles for one and sixty for the other. There were no trains or buses in those days, and unless they were lucky enough to get a lift in a farmer's cart, they had to walk there – and back.

There was a story about one of these long walks which Sebastian loved to tell his children in later years. He had gone to hear a famous organist play in Hamburg, and the lovely music had made him forget his sore feet and aching legs after that mighty walk. But when it came to the return journey, that was even worse, for he had no money to buy food and had to set out hungry as well as tired. He came to an inn, but could not go in for a meal – he could only sit down under the open window and smell the odours of the good food being cooked inside. But as he sat there, suddenly a window above him opened and two herrings' heads fell beside him. He picked them up – was there perhaps something left on them to eat? But there was something even better. In each fish's mouth was a coin – a Danish ducat. Someone must have felt sorry for him and chosen this odd way to help him. It was enough to give him a good meal, with something over to take home for future needs.

As Sebastian grew up, he began to compose music himself. But to keep himself alive he had to find work. He became a church organist, first in one town and then in another. Then he took a post as court organist to a duke. He ended up as choirmaster in Leipzig to a choir of fifty-five, who had to provide the music in four main churches and sing at weddings and funerals and special occasions.

And all the time he was writing his wonderful music.

He did not have an easy time of it. In the churches where he was organist, the congregation complained that his music was too difficult to sing. He quarrelled with the duke, who at one time actually shut him up in prison. But nothing could stop his glorious music from pouring out.

He married twice, and had ten children altogether, to whom he was a most loving father. In the evenings he and his wife would put them to bed, and that must have been the time when their father told them the stories of his childhood, and about all the other musical Bachs.

One strange thing was that all this time, although Johann Sebastian was one of the world's greatest masters of music, many people in his own day did not realise it. Beethoven saw something of his greatness; but it was not until the nineteenth century, in the reign of Queen Victoria, that other musicians like Schumann and Mendelssohn recognised his importance. But since then he has always been known as one of the greatest of all composers.

Even to this day, many of our modern musicians are inspired by him. Jazz composers turn to him again and again for inspiration. The jazz pianist Jacques Loussier, the Swingle singers and André Benichou treat him in the modern manner. Benichou plays Bach's music on the electric guitar. The New York Rock 'n Roll Ensemble say that the idea of counterpoint in their playing and the structural patterns in their compositions all come from Bach. And it was said of Fats Waller, 'Right in the midst of his fame . . . he was constantly adding to his large record collection of Bach, who . . . was his number one hero. He was up till all hours of the morning, playing Bach on the organ . . . all alone in the house, playing, listening, marvelling at the genius of the great German.' And so it has gone on, from generation to generation, as each one

discovers anew the glorious music of the greatest member of the Bach family.

Adapted from Johann Sebastian Bach
by Carmen Herman Reingold (Franklin Watts)

The Impossible Voyage of Chay Blyth

Chay Blyth loved sailing and what someone called 'messing about in boats'. He did some very daring things. In the Second World War, in which he was the youngest sergeant in his regiment, he was a paratrooper, and took first a survival course in the burning heat of the desert and then one in the icy cold of the Arctic. After the war he took up sailing, and he and another man rowed across the Atlantic in an open boat in ninety-two days. And then came the greatest adventure of all – the one which was thought to be impossible.

It all began when he was trying to sail single-handed round the world. He got as far as South Africa, but then realised that the journey was too much for him, and it would be dangerous to go on; so he decided to come home, and asked his wife Maureen to come out and help him on the return journey. And it was one day on that homeward trip, when he was grumbling about how difficult it was, that she said laughingly, 'Well, why not sail round the world the other way?'

He paid no attention at the time; but afterwards he thought about it. That was something no one had ever done. People who sailed round the globe had always gone from west to east; they thought that going from east to west was the *wrong* way. And there was a very good reason for that, because the world spins in such a way that winds always blow round it in a westerly direction – in fact, they are called the 'westerlies'. Other west-blowing winds are called the 'trade winds' because they used to

blow traders' sailing ships to foreign lands. But anyone who sailed in the opposite direction, towards the west, would have these westerly winds blowing *against* him all the way. It is true that in the early days of discovery, when people were finding out that the world is round and that you can sail around it, some explorers had gone by that 'wrong way'; but they had always taken their time, and made many stops on the way. But no one had ever sailed round the globe from east to west against the wind non-stop; and that was just what Chay Blyth now decided to do.

Many people thought he was foolish to try anything so hard and full of danger; but others encouraged him, particularly a company called the British Steel Corporation, who decided to make him a special boat built entirely of steel. This they did, and when it was ready, Chay named it *British Steel*, and that was what he always called it, except when things were very difficult at sea, and then he would sometimes shout, 'Come on, *Brit*, show me the way home!' But that was after he had started on the long, lonely voyage which lasted nearly ten months, or 292 days. And all that time he was quite alone.

Not that he was lonely, for he had the radio, and could get in touch with people all over the world, and even sometimes talk to his wife at home, though he could not always get through owing to technical difficulties. Now and again, too, other ships passed him, and then he could chat to them on the radio. But his only visitors were sea birds of many colours, which welcomed a rest on his boat during their long ocean flight. Chay was always sorry when they flew on. There were flying fish too, which landed on deck, and Chay had to save their lives by throwing them back into the sea.

It was a tremendously difficult task which he had set

himself. Because he always had to be on the watch, he could have very little sleep, and when his automatic steering gear broke down, he could have even less. He ran into huge storms, and strange sudden squalls called pamperos. Sometimes there would be wind, rain and lightning all together. At home Chay never worried about lightning; but at sea it was terrifying. He used to find himself praying to God for strength not to be afraid. He often prayed – for the wind to change direction, or to know the right course to steer, or for help in a dangerous situation. And all the time he was conscious of a power watching over him. One day in a gale he was trying to get the mainsail down when it jammed. He simply couldn't shift it. After half an hour of trying, it was still stuck, half up, half down. At last he prayed to God, asking for His strength and assistance – and at the very next try, down it came.

Every day he used to write notes in his log book about what had happened during that day; and that night he wrote: 'No one will ever say to me that there is no God without my remembering all these situations. To atheists I say, "Go sailing single-handed for a few weeks!"'

One wonderful thing happened when he was sailing round Cape Horn, the southernmost tip of South America. A big ship, HMS *Endeavour*, was on the look-out for him there, and he had made radio contact with it; but in all that vast ocean he was not at all sure that they would be able to find him. However, he shaved and put on a clean shirt in readiness. And then suddenly, there was the great ship, with two helicopters from it overhead, having a look at him. Then a boat came alongside. It could stay only a few minutes, but they brought him a bag with fresh bread and fruit and other supplies. It was wonderful for Chay to talk to the sailors, even for those few moments. Then they were gone, and it was all over. But Chay says in the

book describing his adventures, 'That meeting, so close to Cape Horn, will always remain one of the highlights of my life. It wasn't luck – not in the least. It was a situation that could have come about only because God willed it. I felt close to (Him) and very humble.'

There were other pleasant things too. For special occasions like his birthday, Maureen had packed up parcels with presents in them, and extra nice things to eat. And once or twice he was able to receive a packet of letters from his friends and news from Maureen about herself and their little daughter Samantha.

And so at last the great voyage came to an end. Chay Blyth was a famous man, who had done something which no one else had ever done. But now he knew that he must go back to the ordinary everyday world of selfishness and greed; and he did not want to lose the wonderful peace of heart which he had found during those long days at sea. This is a prayer which he wrote at the very end of his voyage: 'Please, God, don't let me get wrapped up in avarice. Help me to salvage part of the way I now feel, to stay humble, honest and with a feeling for others.'

Adapted from The Impossible Voyage *by Chay Blyth (Hodder and Stoughton Limited) 1971* © *Chay Blyth*

The Boy who was Afraid of Water

Thor Heyerdahl of the 'Kon-tiki' *Expedition*

Thor Heyerdahl grew up in Norway, and from the window of his home he could watch ships coming and going in the Oslo fjord, the narrow inlet from the sea. He loved watching them, and used to dream of travelling in one of them to far-away places.

But something happened which took away this wish. He was sliding on a frozen lake one winter day when he

jumped on to a great block of ice which wobbled under him and then overturned, throwing Thor into the icy water. The shock was so great that he was unconscious when they dragged him out. And after that his fear of water was such that he would not go anywhere near it. His father tried everything he could to help him, even paying for him to have very special swimming lessons; but it was no use. The fear was still there.

As Thor grew up, he became very interested in the peoples of the world and where they came from. He travelled far and wide, studying the various races and their customs. And he noticed a curious thing. Out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean there were islands on which there were huge stone human figures as tall as a four-storey house; and the people of the islands said they had been made by men of the old days; and the strange thing was that Thor had seen other huge stone figures just like them among the Indians who lived in the jungles of South America. How had people living six thousand four hundred kilometres apart managed to carve exactly the same types of statues?

Could it possibly be, Thor asked himself, that the South American Indians had crossed the sea long ago and landed on the Pacific islands? But how could they have done it? The only boats the people of South America had, besides little canoes hollowed out of tree trunks, were big rafts made of balsa wood. The balsa trees grow in the forests there, and when logs cut from them are thrown into the water they float, and the Indians lash them together into rafts. But could any of these rafts have sailed all the way from the coast of South America to the Pacific islands?

Thor decided that the only way to discover if this could have happened was to make a raft and try. But many people advised against it. Their chief objection was that

the logs soak up so much water that they would sink after a fortnight or so; and the voyage would take at least four months. Besides, people said, you cannot steer a raft; it would go sideways or backwards or round and round. Huge waves or fierce storms would sink it. You would be all alone in the open sea, and even if you had a radio, no ship or plane would be able to find the tiny raft if you got into trouble, and come to the rescue. And imagine living on the deck of a raft for four long months!

But worse than all these difficulties was Thor's own fear of the water. The raft would lie so low in the sea that he would be close to it all the time. But something happened which showed him the answer to that fear. The Second World War came, and he was obliged to give up his dream of the raft for the present, and join in the fighting. And it was while he was with the Free Norwegian forces in Canada that he and two other men were making their way in a canoe along a wide swift-flowing river, when it was overturned, and Thor found himself struggling in the rushing torrent. His heavy winter uniform and thick army boots were dragging him down, and he was being swept faster and faster towards a precipice. And it was at that moment, with death very near, that he remembered in a flash what his father used to say. He used to tell his son that all around us there is another world, which we cannot see, but which is full of caring. This world is quite different from ours, and we cannot imagine it, but it is very close to us – as close as a cry from the heart, Thor's father used to say.

Thor remembered all this, and in his desperate need he sent out just such a cry for help from his heart to that unseen caring world. And with it there came a sudden burst of will-power. He would fight. He would not yield. As his cry, which was really a prayer, grew surer, warmth

seemed to flood his frozen body. He started to swim upstream with long, strong strokes, while his feet in their waterlogged boots began a steady kicking. As he continued to swim, the warmth turned into a kind of joy, a knowledge that something greater than himself was there inside him.

The river bank was slipping away less quickly now. He was almost keeping pace with the water. Each time he felt that he must stop, that he could not go on, the strange joy came back, and he was able to struggle on. At last, he saw that both the other men with him were safe, and that one of them was holding on to the limb of a tree and leaning out over the water towards him. Though he was exhausted, he still fought on against the current, while his companion kept stretching out his hand. Thor battled on for the last few inches, and at last he felt his rescuer's fingers grasping his own.

He was safe. And more wonderful still, he found that his fear of the water had gone. After the war he was able to go on with his plan to build the raft, knowing that now he would be able to sail in her without fear. He decided to take a crew of six, to keep each other company and take turns at steering; and he found six men who were willing and eager to share the risks with him.

They found the balsa wood and built the raft, lashing the logs together with strong fibre ropes – wire would have cut into the logs – and the raft was loaded with all the supplies they would need for the long voyage. A small bamboo hut was put up on deck as a cabin, and they were ready. But all the time people were foreseeing disaster. An ambassador who came to see the strange craft said to Thor, 'Your father and mother will be very grieved when they hear of your death.'

At last the launching day came, and they were towed out

to sea. They hoisted their sail, with its picture of the old Indian sun-god Kon-tiki, after whom the raft was named, and waited to see what would happen. To their joy, they found that they had no need to worry about their direction – the wind always blew more or less westwards towards the islands they hoped to reach. And they found that no matter how big the waves were, *Kon-tiki* always rode serenely over them, while the sea water drained away between the logs, which were able to soak up more and more water.

After many days of sailing, they began to meet sea birds, and knew that land was near. They sailed past one island, having no means of steering towards it. Then they came to one on which they could land, but the raft was wrecked on a reef. However, the crew were all saved, and after a restful time on the uninhabited island, living on its fruits, they were found by men from another island, on which they were royally entertained, till a ship was sent to bring them and *Kon-tiki* back to America. On the way they called at another Pacific island called Hawaii, where an old chief said to Thor, 'You come to us with good news, for now we know where our fathers came from.'

They had been a hundred days at sea; and during all that time, though the sea had soaked so far into the balsa logs that the raft was floating almost level with the waves, Thor had never been afraid of the water. He had felt that other world, so full of caring, round him all the time.

Further reading The Kon-tiki Expedition *and* Ra *by Thor Heyerdahl (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.)*

Troubadour of East and West

Devar Surya Sena of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)

Surya Sena was born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the last

year of the nineteenth century. As a baby he cried a great deal; but his mother noticed that the moment she took him in her arms and crooned a lullaby, he would quieten down immediately, and even join in the last note in tune. By the time he was three, he could pick up and hum a tune he had heard; and his parents realised that he had been given the gift of music.

He loved to listen to musicians, especially anyone playing the violin. One day he sat listening to a young lady who played it very well. She noticed Surya sitting absorbed, and asked him if he had enjoyed the piece.

'Yes,' he said, 'but I heard a man who played it differently.' So she played it again, and he was able to tell her where the difference was.

'Do you like music?' she asked him. 'Would you like to learn the violin?' And when he said that he would love it, the girl said to his mother, 'Do you know, that boy of yours is intensely musical. It would be a sin if you didn't allow him to be taught.' So his parents found a teacher and bought him a small violin, and he began to learn to play.

He learnt very quickly, and in three months he could play a simple piece. Dressed in a sailor suit, he played it at the end-of-term concert at school, surprisingly well for a nine-year-old. After he had gone off stage, the audience went on clapping. 'They want an encore,' said someone.

'What's that?' asked Surya. He had never heard of such a thing.

'Go and play it again,' said his teacher. So he played his piece once more, and again there was terrific applause.

That night, when his mother came to say goodnight, she said, 'Darling, you had a great reception this evening at the concert; but don't let it make you conceited. Now kneel down and say this prayer after me: "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the glory."'

Surya repeated this prayer after his mother, and he never forgot it. In later years, when he became a professional concert artist, he used to repeat it after every performance he gave.

But hard times were to come to Surya before he could become a successful musician. The first time was when he went to school in England, and the boys used to laugh at him for having a brown skin. In those days there were not many coloured people in England, and he and two others were the only coloured boys in the school. One of them, called Laddie, was Surya's particular friend; and he said to him, 'Surya, you and I must show these white boys that we are not only equal, but superior to them. Firstly, we must learn to play football really well, and we must also learn boxing, so that we can fight anyone who tries any nonsense. Secondly, either you or I must be first every week in class.' Sure enough, according to their pact, Surya and Laddie were always first and second in class; and at the annual prize-giving, Laddie had the form prize and Surya won a prize for French.

The plan worked. The other boys began to respect them, and they all became friends. But then came disaster for Surya. He was taken very ill – so ill that it looked as if he were going to die. One evening his temperature rose so high that the doctor said, 'This is the crisis. If he pulls through it, he will live. But I don't know if he will.' As he lay in his blankets, with an ice-pack on his head, his mother came to him and said, 'Darling, you're very ill. You may die. But if you give your life to God, He may give it back to you.' Surya looked up into the faces of his anxious parents, whom he loved and trusted, and said, 'All right – I give my life to God.' Then he closed his eyes and went to sleep.

The next day he was better. His temperature began to

go down, and the doctor said that he had turned the corner. But the illness had weakened his heart, so that he was never able to play games like other boys. This made him feel very sorry for himself; looking back at that unhappy time in after life, he said, 'I was slow to recognise that an "unseen hand" was shaping me for an unusual destiny, and that God had let me go through anguish and difficulties to strengthen and toughen my character.'

He was able to go on with his music at a new school, and was chosen to sing in the school choir. He soon rose to be the leading treble, as he could read music well and had a true voice. He went on with his violin playing, too, becoming a first-violin in the school orchestra. And he did well at lessons, winning the school literature prize.

Now came the question of what he was to do with his life when he left school and college. His father wanted him to become a lawyer, though his music teachers thought that he should take up music as a career. But Surya's father had always been so good to him that he wanted to do what would please him. So he went into a law office. He worked there for four years, during which time he met and married another musician called Nelun. Of course, he went on with his music all the time.

But then one night as he lay in bed it seemed to him as if he heard a voice speaking to him. 'I want your voice. I want your voice,' it said over and over again. So the next day he went to his father.

'Dad,' he said, 'I have tried for four years to like working at law for your sake. But my heart is not in it. I have had a call to give my life to music. And I know what I want to do with it. I want to collect the hitherto undiscovered folk songs of Ceylon and take them to the West to win respect for our country with the people there.'

His father listened in silence. Then he said, 'I can't say I'm not disappointed. I felt you had a brilliant career ahead of you in law here in Ceylon. But you have your own life to live, and I have no right to tell you what you are to do with it.' And Surya felt an immense admiration and gratitude for such an understanding father.

Then he set out on a voyage of discovery – to search for and record the old folk songs of his native land, passed down through the centuries from generation to generation. He went armed with his violin, a pitch pipe and a manuscript music book, and had someone with him to write down the verses of a song while he himself wrote the tune in his book. There were no tape recorders in those days, and that was the only way to do it.

He found folk song hunting a fascinating sport. He had to visit far-away villages, win the confidence of the villagers and find the old men who could sing the songs they had learnt from their grandfathers. After months of patient searching and travel from province to province, he had a collection of old songs about life in the villages, ploughing, transplanting and harvesting. He also wrote down the songs the Kandyan dancers used to describe the countryside. As he travelled, he found that the people in the churches were eager to have their own Sinhala music for the hymns instead of the Western tunes which were all they had, and these too Surya was able to give them.

After some years of work on his folk song collecting, he was at last ready to do what he had been planning all along, and to introduce the music of the East to the West, thus building bridges between the two halves of the world, which he had felt was what God was calling him to do. So off they went, he and his wife, with Sinhala and Indian instruments (for he had collected Indian songs too), and with costumes and draperies and their great collection of

songs from the sub-continent. They gave an opening recital in a London concert hall which received excellent press notices, and soon invitations began to pour in from music societies and schools and other groups of people. Society hostesses invited them to play at their parties. And they found that this sort of music making was the best way of bringing the races together. Soon Surya and Nelun were playing on the BBC and other radio stations and becoming well known throughout many countries of the

Their concerts were fascinating. Nelun would play on an old Sinhala instrument, and Surya, dressed as a Kandyan chief, would sing the songs of his people and their village life – boatmen's and harvesting songs and others which described the life of the countryside, like the song of the snake, in which he used his hand to show the glide of the cobra and the sudden spreading of its hood. Other songs were the descriptive 'vannamas' of the Kandyan dancers, based on the gait of various animals – the majestic tread of the elephant, the trot and gallop of the horse, the circular glide of the hawk.

Surya sang Negro spirituals too; and often those who heard him had tears in their eyes. Some of them decided to live differently afterwards, with caring instead of hatred in their hearts. Surya realised then that he was doing with his voice what God had called him to do. But after singing he always ended the day with the prayer which his mother had taught him – 'Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the glory.'

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