STORIES OF GREAT LIVES

Edited by D.M.PRESCOTT

A Blandford Assembly Book

Stories of Great Lives

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GREAT LIVES

Edited by D. M. Prescott

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PREFACE

I am grateful to the team of authors who have contributed from their scholarship and their experience to this anthology. Some of them have written and published full-length books on the lives which they have here so vividly described for a young age group. In doing so they have conformed to the framework which we have imposed upon them of treating each life in a series of distinct sections which represent different aspects of a person's life. This framework has been selected on purpose in order to meet the continuing request for stories to be read aloud in the school assembly on successive days. It will, I hope, also be an aid to a wider readership in highlighting the elements of greatness of the lives selected, and in providing inspiration for the modern boy and girl.

The names of the individual contributors are given in the list of contents and again at the end of the appropriate chapter.

D.M.P.

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SHEPHERD TO KING

Reigned 1000–960 B.C.

1 David – the boy who cared

David was a shepherd boy. But he was not most people's idea of a shepherd. They think of him sitting peacefully on a grassy bank, watching the sheep as they quietly graze. But David's life was not like that at all. It was hard and dangerous – and exciting.

There was so much to do for the sheep, to begin with. He had to find good grazing for them in places where there was not much grass, and good drinking water where there were few pools or streams. Then he had to take them to the food and water over difficult country, often through dangerous mountain passes where he had to watch all the time that no lamb was left behind and no ewe slipped over the edge of a precipice. And when they were in open country, he still had to keep watch every moment. If the shepherds of those days saw a sheep straying, they had learnt to throw stones so accurately that they could make one land just in front of the wandering sheep and turn it back to safety.

And all the time there was danger about. Deadly snakes lived in the grass and among the rocks, and there were wild animals ready to pounce on a straying lamb – wolves, lions and bears. There were wild men too, robbers who raided the flock. At night David and his fellow shepherds would lead the sheep into a fold, counting each one as it passed under the club or rod they held – 'rodding the sheep', as it was called. When they were all safely inside, the shepherd would lie

down across the doorway and sleep there all night so that no man or beast could get in.

Sometimes David had to defend his charges in a fight. In his later years, when he was talking to Saul, the king of his country, Israel, he told him the sort of thing which could happen. 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father,' he told him, 'and when a lion or even a bear came and seized a sheep from the flock, I would be after him, I would strike him, and rescue it from his mouth; if he turned against me, I would catch him by the chin and kill him with a blow. Your servant has killed both lions and bears.'

But it was not all hard work and fighting. When things were quiet, he could sit and play tunes on his shepherd's pipe, or make up songs to play on the little harp or lyre which he had made for himself out of wood, with strings of twisted grass or sheep's guts. He would make up poems too; for David was a poet as well as a musician.

Then, maybe, he would get up and practise his slinging. The sling was the weapon which the shepherds used; and a very dangerous one it was. It was a band of leather, woven rushes or hair, broader in the middle and with a loop at either end. Into it the shepherd put a smooth round sling stone, and then he whirled it round and round till at last he let one loop go, and the stone flew out, to hit the target with great force and deadly accuracy. Kings had bands of trained slingers in their armies, some of whom could use left or right hand equally well.

It was a full and busy and often dangerous life which David the shepherd boy led. But he was happy, because he loved his sheep and found that nothing was too much trouble to keep them well and comfortable. David was truly a boy who cared.

2 David – the boy who cared for a king

One day when David the shepherd boy was herding his father's sheep, he saw a man coming running towards him. David

ran to meet him, and the messenger said, 'Come quick – your father wants you back at the farm right away.'

'Wants me?' said David. He was astonished. Nobody ever wanted him at home; his seven brothers did all that was needed there. His job was just to look after the sheep. But the messenger said, 'Yes, come along – I'll tell you all about it as we go.'

David waited just long enough to put a herdsman in charge of the sheep – he cared for them so much that he would never have left them alone. Then he and the messenger set out quickly for the home farm.

'Now tell me,' said David as they hurried along. 'What is all this about?'

'Well,' said the man, 'Samuel the seer came to visit your father.' David knew all about Samuel the seer, the great prophet who said that he could hear the Voice of God telling him what to do. It was a great occasion if he came to anyone's house.

'What did he come for?' David asked.

'Nobody quite knows,' said the messenger. 'He told your father that there was to be a sacrifice and a feast. So they got it all ready; and then Samuel asked to meet the boys. In they all came, Eliab and Abinadab and the rest, and the old man looked at each one of them as if he were looking for something – I was watching and I saw. When he had seen them all, he said to your father, 'Are all your sons here?'

'So of course your father told him about you, and that you were out with the flock. And then the seer said, "Send and fetch him. We must not sit down to our feast until he is here." Then your father sent me to fetch you as quickly as possible; and we must hurry – the meal smells so good, and your brothers are so hungry!'

On they went, till at last they reached the farm, and David stood before Samuel. He stood up tall and straight; his cheeks were red because he had been hurrying, and his eyes were bright with excitement. What was going to happen now?

Then Samuel brought out from under his cloak a ram's horn which had been made into a bottle. It was filled with oil, and Samuel poured it over David's head, while his father and brothers looked on in astonishment. Then they all sat down to the feast.

What did it mean? Only Samuel knew. He had heard the voice of God telling him to do this. Samuel had anointed Saul with the special oil as the first king of Israel – the same thing was done to Queen Elizabeth II when she was crowned. But he had turned out a bad king. He was selfish and greedy and did not always tell the truth. Above all he did not care for his people, and God told Samuel that He was going to choose another king who would care for them. This king he would find among the sons of farmer Jesse of Bethlehem. So he had come to find him. When he had seen Jesse's seven sons, he had known that they were not God's choice. But as soon as David arrived, God said to him, 'Go and anoint him; this is the man.'

After this David went back to the sheep. But Saul the king grew worse and worse. He knew that he was not doing right, and it so worked on his mind that he became very depressed and mentally ill. His courtiers suggested to him that music might help him.

'Find me a man who plays well, and send him to me,' said Saul.

Then one of his young men said that he had noticed David the son of Jesse as a skilful player on the lyre. Saul sent a message to Jesse saying, 'Send me your son David, who is with the flock'. So Jesse sent David off to the king with a present – ten loaves of bread, a bottle of wine and a kid. When the king had one of his mental attacks, David played on his lyre, till the king breathed freely again, and all was well.

Saul loved his young musician, and made him one of his armour-bearers. After that David divided his time between his shepherd's duties at home and the king's court.

And that was how he learnt to care for a man as he had done for his sheep.

3 David – the boy who cared for his nation

David was a shepherd boy who also served Saul, king of Israel, as court musician and armour-bearer. David was the youngest of eight brothers, and the three older ones had joined King Saul's army to help fight their enemies, the Philistines.

One day Jesse, David's father, who was a farmer, said to him, 'Take this roasted grain and these loaves to your brothers in the camp; ask how they are, and bring me news.' So off David went.

He had found his brothers and was talking to them, when he heard a great roaring voice. Looking up, he saw a huge man in full armour come stalking out from the Philistine ranks, who were encamped opposite the Israelites. This giant of a man was 3 metres (10 ft) tall, and wearing a bronze helmet on his head, a bronze breastplate which weighed about 90 kg (200 lb), and bronze greaves on his legs. He was armed with an enormous sword, a javelin and an iron spear whose head weighed 11 kg (25 lb). Ahead of him marched his armour-bearer, carrying his great shield. Altogether he was a terrifying sight.

'Whoever is that?' David asked his brothers.

'He is the Philistine champion,' they told him. 'Every day he comes out and roars out his challenge for someone to come and fight him. The king has offered a rich reward to anyone who will meet him in battle, and his daughter in marriage; but we are all much too afraid to tackle him.'

David was listening to what the giant, whose name was Goliath, was shouting. 'Give me a man,' he was calling out, 'and let us have a fight!' He was taunting the Israelites with their cowardice, and insulting the king's army, calling them 'slaves of Saul'. This made David very angry. He loved his nation, Israel, and he was not going to stand by and see this

great bully insulting it. If no one else would come to the rescue, then he would.

He said what he thought; and his brothers were angry to hear 'young David', as they called him, putting himself forward like this. But someone told King Saul what the boy was saying, and he ordered David to be brought to him.

'Let not my lord's courage fail him,' said David. 'Your servant will go and fight the Philistine.'

Saul was astonished at David's boldness. 'You are only a boy,' he said, 'and he has been a warrior from his youth.'

But David told Saul how he had fought lions and bears to protect his precious flock. 'God,' he said, 'who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.'

'At least let me give you some armour,' said Saul. He dressed David in his own armour; but it was so heavy that he could not move in it. He went back to his own tried weapon, the shepherd's sling, with which he had practised for so many hours that it had become a deadly form of attack and defence. He went out to meet the terrible champion with nothing but that and his shepherd's club. He went down to a nearby stream and carefully chose out five smooth stones from its bed. These he put in his shepherd's bag, and so he went out to meet Goliath.

Out the huge man came, and when he saw that it was only a boy who had come to meet him, he despised him. 'Am I a dog,' he roared, 'that you attack me with a club? Come here, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.'

But David gave him a fearless answer. 'You attack me with sword and spear and javelin, but I attack you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which you have insulted this day.'

The Philistine moved forward to the attack, and David went to meet him. Putting his hand into the bag, he took out a

stone, slipped it into the sling, whirled it round and let one string go. Out flew the stone, straight and true right into the centre of the giant's forehead. David's aim was sure, and down fell the giant with a crash. David went and stood over him, and drawing the giant's own great sword, he cut off his head with it.

David's love of his country had proved stronger than the giant's might.

4 David – the man who could answer hate

The opposite of caring is hate. Almost everyone is tempted to hate at some time. We do such very cruel things to each other. But hate is wrong, and really caring people are brave enough to tackle it and find out how to deal with it.

In David's life there are two stories of how he was twice tempted to hate, and how he managed to answer it. In the first story he won the victory by himself; but in the second he had to have someone else's help.

His first temptation to hate came when after King Saul had treated him so kindly, made him a favourite at his court, listening to his music and giving him high command in the army, he became jealous of this handsome, charming, brilliant young man and tried several times to kill him. David managed to escape, and became the leader of a gang of young men – guerrillas, we should call them today. King Saul was always sending out troops to find them, and they were always having to move on from one hiding place to another.

It must have been a great temptation to David to hate this man who had turned him from a royal favourite to a runaway outlaw, when he himself had always been a loyal and obedient servant of the king. And then there came a day when he could well have taken his revenge. Word reached Saul of where he and his men were hiding, and the king set out with three thousand picked troops to find him. The outlaws sent out their spies, and discovered where the king and his forces were

camping for the night. David and two of his young men set out to find the royal camp.

When they found it, there lay the king asleep, his spear stuck in the ground at his head. Near him lay his commander-in-chief, Abner, and round them the troops were sleeping deeply.

The three guerrillas stood looking down at them; and one of them called Abishai whispered to David, 'God has put your enemy into your hands today; do let me pin him to the ground with his own spear. Just one stroke! I will not need to strike him twice.'

But David resisted the tempting thought. 'The Lord forbid,' he said, 'that I should raise my hand against the Lord's anointed! But take the spear at his head and the jug of water and let us be off!'

The three men stole away with their spoils. Then David climbed a hill near by and called out to the commander-in-chief, 'Abner! Abner! Will you not answer?'

'Who is that calling?' said Abner, starting up from his sleep.

Then David showed him the spear and the water bottle, and told him that he should take better care of his master.

By this time Saul had recognised David's voice, and called out, 'Is that your voice, my son David?'

Then the king and David talked together, and David told Saul that he had never done him any harm. The king was sorry for all that had happened – but not sorry enough to change his ways. And so the war between him and David had to go on.

David's second temptation to hate came at harvest time, when he and his men were camping on land belonging to a rich sheep farmer called Nabal. David's men were very disciplined, and never teased the shepherds or stole anything from them, but rather protected them in their hard and dangerous work.

When the harvest was over, David sent messengers to ask

the farmer for a share in the harvest, reminding him of all that he and his men had done to help, but Nabal was bad-tempered, 'Who is David?' he asked scornfully. 'There are plenty of slaves nowadays all running away from their masters. And I am to take my bread and my wine and the meat I have killed for my own shearers, and give it to men from – I know not where!'

When the messengers brought this churlish reply back to David, he was terribly angry. 'Every man buckle on his sword,' he shouted, and he led them off towards Nabal's farm. As he rode, he was saying, 'God kill David and more than kill him, if I leave the fellow a single male alive by tomorrow morning!'

But Nabal's wife Abigail heard what had happened, and she quickly gathered bread, wine, grapes, figs and other good things from the harvest and loaded them on donkeys. Then she set off to meet David; and when he came up she fell on her knees and begged him to forgive her and her husband, and to accept the present she had brought. She appealed to the best in David, and reminded him that God had called him to a great future. He must not do anything to spoil that.

David knew that she was right, and that his hate had been wrong. 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,' he said, 'for sending you to meet me this day! blessed be your tact, blessed be yourself for saving me this day from the guilt of bloodshed and from avenging myself!'

Then Abigail went back to the farm, and David and his men returned to their camp. But later, when Nabal had died, David sent for Abigail and made her his wife.

5 David – love which was not caring

When Saul, the first king of Israel, was killed in battle with the Philistines, the people of the country asked David to be their king. They knew that as he had cared for his sheep when he was a shepherd boy, so he would care for his people when he

was king. He reigned for forty years, and the way he lived and worked during that time earned him the title of 'shepherd of Israel'.

But no one is all good. One day when King David was walking on the flat roof of his palace, he saw a beautiful women bathing. He fell in love with her, and sent to ask who she was. He found that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of the captains in his army, which was away in camp.

Then David did what any ruler in those days would have done; he sent for her and made her his mistress. He wanted her, and so he took her. Caring did not come into it. But something inside him must have made him feel uneasy, because when Bathsheba sent him a message that she was going to have a baby, he did not say, 'That's splendid – I shall have a son.' He decided that the best thing would be to send for Uriah to come home and let him go to his wife. Then, when the baby came, everyone would think it was his.

So Uriah came back from the battle front. David welcomed him and asked him about the army and how the battle was going. Then he said, 'Now go home and enjoy yourself.' But Uriah slept that night with the other courtiers at the gate of the king's house; he did not go home. The next day David asked him why he had not gone home to his wife. 'The army are all camping in tents,' said Uriah, 'How can I go home and enjoy myself?' David saw that his plan was not working.

So he sent Uriah back to the battle front with a private letter to the commander-in-chief, which said, 'Put Uriah in the front line, where the fight is hardest, and then retire, leaving him in the lurch to be struck down and killed.' This was done, and presently news came that Uriah was dead. His wife mourned for him; and when her mourning was over, David made her his wife and she bore him a son.

Then one day a prophet called Nathan came to see David. He told the king a story. 'There were two men in one town,'

he said, 'a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had many sheep and cattle; the poor man had nothing but a single ewe lamb which he had bought; he fed it, and it grew up with him and his children; it used to eat his own morsels and drink from his cup and nestle in his bosom, just like a daughter.'

'Now a traveller came to visit the rich man, and the rich man spared his own sheep and cattle when he had to make provision for the traveller who had come to visit him; he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for his visitor.'

This story made David, with his love of sheep, furiously angry. 'The man who did that deserves to die!' he said to Nathan. 'He must give back seven lambs, because he spared what belonged to himself!'

'You are the man!' said Nathan. 'Here is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says; "I anointed you king over Israel, I rescued you from the power of Saul, I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; if all that is not enough, I would add as much again. Why have you defied the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have had Uriah put to death by the sword, you have taken his wife to be your wife.'

Then David realised the mean and cruel thing he had done. 'I have sinned against the Lord,' he said to Nathan. It is said that Psalm 51 may be the poem David wrote at that time to show how truly sorry he was.

Then Nathan said, 'The Lord has taken away your sin, you are not to die; but since you scorned the Lord by doing this, the child born to you must die.' And indeed, the little boy did fall ill and died.

David had had to learn the difference between two kinds of love. One, which is sometimes called lust, is what we feel when we want something or someone for ourselves; we are not thinking about the other person, any more than David was thinking about Bathsheba's or Uriah's happiness. We want what we want, and we want it *now*. You cannot build a happy world on that kind of love.

But the other kind of love, which can be called caring, puts the other person's need before our own; and that was the kind of love which David had for his sheep when he risked his life to save them. It was the kind of love he had for his people when he became king, which made them call him 'the shepherd of Israel'. He was their national hero, as he still is today. And he taught his people to care too, so that they have been able to give great gifts to mankind. What the world needs today are people and nations who care for each other; and David the shepherd boy showed the way.

D. M. Prescott

ASOKA

273–232 B.C.

1 One kind of greatness

Have you ever wanted to be top dog? Felt jealous of someone bigger or stronger or cleverer than you? Have you ever thought how wonderful it would be to be a great ruler and to know that everything around you for hundreds of miles (kilometres) belonged to you?

The emperor Asoka was like that. He was the head of a mighty empire, the greatest the world had yet known, which stretched over nearly all the continent which we today call India and Pakistan. He had supreme power, and everyone, from the generals in his army to the poorest peasant on the land, had to do as he said. Anything he wanted he took by force of arms, and his soldiers killed or imprisoned anyone who stood in their way. Asoka could sit on his throne and look far and wide and say to himself, 'All this belongs to me.'

All, that is, except a small piece of territory which belonged to a people called the Kalingas. They lived in the district which we now call Orissa, and they were still independent of his rule. And Asoka could not endure it. Everything must belong to him. He sent his troops and they killed all the men, making the women widows and the children orphans. Many women and children were slaughtered too, and their homes destroyed and their land laid waste. Asoka had conquered that last piece of territory.

But somehow he did not feel comfortable about what he had done. He kept thinking about all the suffering and unhappiness

which he had caused by his conquests, and especially what he had done to the Kalingas. The harder he tried not to think about it, the more it kept coming into his mind. His greatness did not satisfy him any longer, and he found himself longing for something else. But he did not know what it could be.

2 Another kind of greatness

Asoka, great emperor though he was, had had enough of killing and conquering, and he was searching for something new which would really satisfy him. Then one day he met a holy man, a Buddhist monk, and began to talk to him. This monk told the emperor that there was another way of living, the way which the Buddha, the great religious teacher of India, had shown. This teaching has been summed up as:

Avoid all evil
Do all good
Think right thoughts

As Asoka thought over these new ideas, he realised that what had been troubling him was that he knew he had not been living rightly. He had done evil with all his torturing and killing; he had done no good to all his many peoples; and his thoughts had been anything but right. He decided to change his way of living.

He began by doing his best to put right the evil he had done. He did this by sending out messengers to all the peoples to whom he had done harm, especially to the Kalingas, whom he had treated so cruelly, saying how sorry he was. And so that all the people should know it, he had this message carved on rocks or on beautiful stone pillars, and many of these carvings can still be seen to this day. For many years people could not read the writing, but about a hundred years ago they found out the secret of it, and were able to understand what a very great man, in a new way, the emperor Asoka had been.

Then he really began to do good to his people. He made good

roads, so that people could travel easily. Beside these roads he planted trees, and had hostels built along them where travellers could lodge at night. He had wells dug, and arranged for people to have water. For those who were sick he provided medical treatment. And he took special care of the many holy men who travelled across the country telling the people about the teaching of the Buddha; they had no houses to sleep in, and Asoka had shelters carved for them out of the rocks where they could keep warm and dry in the rainy season. He cared for animals too, and put an end to the great royal hunts in which so many of them were killed for sport.

Then the emperor began to spread this new way of living wider and wider. He sent messages of goodwill to other great rulers; and he taught this new thinking to his children so that when they grew up his son Madera travelled with his sister to Sri Lanka to take the new teaching there. On and on these ideas went till two hundred years later they had reached as far as China.

If Asoka had been just another powerful emperor, he would long ago have been forgotten. But because he lived in the caring way which the Buddha taught, he is still remembered by us today.

D. M. Prescott

IRELAND'S GREATEST SON

521–597

1 A Story of St. Columba

He was tall, handsome with thick, curly yellow hair, and his grey eyes sparkled with fun. He loved to sing, to go fishing, to ride fast horses, but most of all to sail his boat in the teeth of a storm. His name was Columba, a prince who was expected to become High King of Ireland. And he was a Christian at a time when most of the Irish were still pagans.

One day when the prince was reading on a hillside a girl ran to him screaming for help. A man with a spear chased her. Columba sprang in front trying to protect her, but the spear passed through his cloak and killed her. 'God will strike you dead too!' shouted Columba. The man was dead before nightfall and the country folk claimed that it was due to the prince's curse.

The murder of this poor girl made him think hard. It was so cruel, so wrong. He saw that most people thought only of becoming rich and powerful themselves, but then they often robbed and enslaved the weak. There *must* be a better way to live!

Columba found a great teacher, Finnian of Clonard, who was training young men from all over Ireland in how to live a better way. Columba decided that instead of becoming High King, he would give away his riches and become a simple student of Finnian. At Clonard the prince took his place among the other students – sailors, carpenters, poets, men from every tribe and class.

Finnian's teaching struck at the root problem. 'Greed creates hate. Hate is Hell. Love is Heaven,' he taught. 'The greatest discovery a man can make is that God loves you and you can live in the light of that love every day of your life.'

The training at Clonard was long, hard and disciplined. It was no place for the half-hearted. But in the end there were hundreds of young Irish on fire for a great idea. They meant to build in Ireland 'colonies of Heaven' where they could show that men can live by giving, instead of grabbing; that they can share what they have and care for their neighbours; that 'Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven' is the right way for people to live.

Of course some folk laughed and said it wouldn't work. But they watched the Clonard 'Brothers' who owned nothing, worked hard growing food to give to the poor, were always ready to help anyone in trouble – and they were happy, gloriously happy.

So impressed was Columba's cousin, King Aed of the North, that he gave him an old fort in the oak forest at Derry. So here Columba and the Brothers founded their first 'colony'.

2 Battle book

In those days trading ships sailed back and forth all the time between Ireland and Britain, and everything which happened in Britain had an effect in Ireland.

Most of the Britons were Christians, but the Picts, who lived in the far north, and the Saxons settled along the east coast were still pagans. In a long war against the pagans the Britons were led to victory by a great Christian general, Arthur. It brought twenty years of peace.

But some Britons hated Christianity and they made a plot with the Picts and Saxons. They all attacked Arthur and at the battle of Camlann they killed him. Once the champion was dead, they set fire to churches, murdered priests or chased them into exile. Christianity was nearly wiped out in Britain.

The pagan priests of Ireland called Druids now saw their chance to get rid of the Irish Christians. They rallied around the High King and set him against Columba by hinting that the Christians might make him King instead.

It was a game of hurley (like hockey) which brought the quarrel to a boil. At the royal palace some boys were playing when one hit another player with his stick and killed him. In terror the boy fled to Columba's church and begged for protection. Under Irish law the boy had a right to a fair trial before a judge. But the King sent soldiers who dragged him from the church and slew him.

Columba accused the King of breaking the law he had sworn to uphold. The King was so angry that Columba had to run for his life, and he went home to his own tribe in the north. 'Now is your chance to smash the Christian tribes!' urged the Druids, and the High King gathered his army and marched against them.

At Culdremne on Sligo Bay the King found the Christian troops drawn up to defend their homes, and he prepared for battle. Around the royal army the Druids drew a magic circle, telling the soldiers that no enemy could cross it and live. Meanwhile along the Christian battleline was carried a Bible copied by Columba's own hand, as a symbol of the Faith for which they fought. The warriors called it the Cathach – Battle Book – and it still exists in Dublin, Ireland's oldest book.

The battle was short and decisive. Three thousand of the King's men fell and only one Christian died. Perhaps when the royal troops saw that the magic circle did not stop the enemy, they panicked.

The victorious Christians did not take revenge on the High King, but let him continue to reign at his palace. But the people of Ireland no longer looked to him for leadership. They had found new heroes – Columba and the Brothers from Clonard. In Ireland the day of the Druids was over.

But what about Britain? Somehow the Faith must be car-

ried back to the Britons. It would be terribly dangerous, but someone would have to go.

3 Island Soldiers

A message came to Columba from his cousin Connell, King of the Scots, who lived in Britain across the Irish Sea. They still clung to the Christian faith, and so the pagan Picts were trying to drive them into the sea. Would Columba come over and help them?

Here was a chance, though a risky one, to get a foothold back in Britain. Columba jumped at it. He chose twelve men of his own family to go with him. They loaded a boat at Derry with farming tools, some seed, a few books, hauled up the sail and set off on their adventure.

They sailed till they came to a small island off the coast called Iona. It was on the border between the Scots and the Picts where they could meet both peoples. In the summer of AD 563 their boat grounded on the beach. Flowers were in bloom, larks sang in the sky and the island was so beautiful that Columba said 'it lays a blessing on every eye that sees it'. Here they built their monastery, a new 'colony of Heaven'.

The Island Soldiers, as Columba called his men, had come to fight greed and hate, fear and thieving. Columba set off by boat or on foot, travelling the country and making friends with the Picts in their homes. Soon they began calling him 'the kind Columba'.

In one village there was a haunted well and the Picts said its water was poison. Columba made the sign of the Cross over the well, then washed his hands and face and drank some water. The Picts were sure he would drop dead. But he told them, 'Christ is more powerful than devils. This is now a Holy Well and will be a blessing to you all.' And so it was.

A poor Pict farmer called Colman had only five cows. Columba blessed them and told him his herd would grow to a hundred and five. Colman was so poor because he was always

being robbed by pirates who lived on an island near by. They came again while Columba was staying with the farmer. He argued with the pirates that they should give back their loot. He even waded into the sea right to their boat, still arguing. But they would not listen, and sailed away. Columba understood a great deal about weather and as he came ashore he looked at the sky. 'Those rascals won't get to their island,' he said. 'There is going to be a storm.' Sure enough, a fierce squall swept across the sea and the pirate boat went down with all hands.

Colman's herd did grow to a hundred cows, but it never got bigger. The reason was that whenever Colman had more cows than Columba had promised, he gave them away to poor people.

After two years Columba felt it was time to meet the mighty Brude, king of the Picts. After many days' journey he reached the royal fortress only to find the gates barred against him by order of the king. Believing that 'prayer opens doors', he made the sign of the Cross on the gates. The bolts slid back, the gates swung open and Columba walked in.

Was there a Pict on guard whose family had been helped by the kind Columba and who, at the risk of his life, pulled back the bolts? What does it matter whether God touched the bolts or the heart of a guard? It was a miracle.

Very startled, King Brude hurried from his palace to meet this Irishman who came without a sword or an army, yet walked through fortifications as if they were not there. They became great friends, Brude was baptised and opened his whole land to the Christian missionaries.

4 Bad – good – better

The winning of King Brude and his Picts changed the whole situation in Britain. Christian kings and clergy took courage and returned from exile, and their followers came out of

hiding. Soon an army of Christian Britons was on the march which totally defeated the pagans at the battle of Ardderyd.

At this time the king of the Scots died and the new king was Aidan, a famous warrior who had fought at Ardderyd. Columba held a special service of blessing for him at Iona, and he is the first king in British history to have a Christian consecration. Queen Elizabeth is descended from him.

Kenneth, one of Columba's Clonard friends, was preparing dinner one day in his monastery in Ireland when he felt a warning that Columba was in danger. He rushed out of the dining room, one shoe on, one off, shouting, 'We can't have dinner now. Columba is in trouble!' He called all the Brothers to the church to pray.

At that exact moment two hundred miles to the north Columba's ship had been caught in a wild storm and Columba was bailing frantically. But his sailors shouted, 'What you are doing doesn't help. You ought to be praying.' He followed their advice, and soon the storm passed and the ship came safely home.

The Brothers at Raphoe monastery didn't know what to do. It was time to plant the seed for their oat crop, but their only iron ploughshare was broken, and they could not plough the field. No blacksmith could be found to mend it. A young lad begged to be allowed to try, but the older Brothers said he did not know enough to fix it. Then Columba arrived. He took the boy's hands in his own, blessed them for God's work and told him to get on with the job. He mended the ploughshare. And he grew up to be a smith known all over Ireland for the beauty of his work.

Every kind of person came to Iona: kings, rich men, scholars, orphans, thieves, even murderers. All were welcomed and helped. Once a storm-blown stork, who flopped exhausted on the beach, received hospitality. The Abbot asked a Brother to feed and care for the bird for three days. Then, fit again, it rose in the sky and flew towards Ireland.

Erc was a Druid's son who used to sneak across to Iona at night to steal baby seals which the Brothers raised for skins and meat. Two Brothers caught him and dragged him before Columba. 'Why do you steal what isn't yours and break God's law?' thundered the Abbot, and Erc quaked. But he went on, 'If you need anything, why don't you come and ask? We shall see you get what you need.' And he gave Erc a lamb to take home to feed his family.

Two of the Brothers were rivals, each wanting to be thought the best preacher. The Abbot, guessing they were jealous, said, 'Let me see how high each of you can reach above his head.' Then he observed 'One is a little taller, but neither of you can reach that cloud up there. Pray for each other and you will be able to reach far above the clouds.' They understood what he meant, put away their differences and became good friends.

He loved people so much that bad men became good and good men became better. That was Columba's way of changing the world.

5 English dawn

Iona was a busy place with boats coming and going all the time; young men arriving for training; groups of trained Brothers going out to found new 'colonies'; new schools to teach the joy of Iona.

But Columba went sailing no more. At seventy-seven he walked slowly. One day he went up to the barn to see if there was enough grain to last until harvest, and with him went his old friend and servant Diarmit. The heaped piles of grain showed there was still plenty of food, and the Abbot thanked the Brothers for working so well. Then he blessed the barn and said goodbye.

Diarmit was upset because he talked as if he was going to die, but Columba replied, 'Today is the Sabbath and for me it's a day of rest. It's my last day, and Jesus has invited me to go to Him at midnight.'

Leaning on his friend's arm he started back towards his own hut, but halfway he had to rest on a grassy bank. The old white pony which pulled the milk cart came whinnying and nuzzling its nose against him, though Diarmit tried to shoo it away. 'No, no. Let him alone. Somehow God has let him know that I'm going to leave him,' said Columba.

At last he reached his hut, sat down at the table and took up his pen. Every day of his life he copied a part of the Bible; it was the only way in those days that more Bibles could be produced. He wrote busily till he got to the bottom of the page: 'They that seek the Lord shall not lack for any good thing.' He put down his pen, saying, 'Here I must stop.'

At sunset the Brothers came in from the fields and gathered round the Abbot. He sat on the rock which he used for a pillow. It is still at Iona. 'My children,' he said, 'these are my last words. Have real love for each other and peace. God, who comforts good men, will strengthen you and give you not only your needs in this life but good things for ever and ever.'

The bell rang for the midnight service and the old man hurried to the church so fast that the faithful Diarmit lost him in the dark. 'Where are you, father?' he called, groping forward till he found the Abbot stretched out before the altar. Other Brothers hurried up with lamps and they saw that he was dying. Joy beamed in his smile as he looked from face to face. Then raising his hand he made the sign of the Cross for the last time, the victory sign. So passed the pilgrim prince, St. Columba of Iona. It was Sunday, June 9th A.D. 597.

Years passed and Columba's men carried on his work. One day an orphan boy arrived at Iona and the kind Brothers, as they always did, welcomed him, gave him a home and an education. His name was Oswald and he was English, son of the most powerful pagan king in England who had died in battle. For fifteen years Oswald lived as a Brother at Iona and grew into 'a man beloved by God'. Then when he was

thirty, by a strange change of events, he was called back to rule his father's kingdom.

He asked that one of the Iona Brothers come to be his Bishop and help teach his English people the Christian way. Up and down the land King Oswald and Bishop Aidan travelled, giving the same message that Columba had brought to the Picts and Scots. The light from Iona spread like an English dawn and England became a Christian land.

Reginald B. Hale
(Condensed from his *MAGNIFICENT GAEL*)

OMAR

c. 581–644

1 A tough guy

'If the Devil himself saw Omar coming, he would get out of the way.' That is what they used to say in Mecca when Omar was young.

In Arabia those days, there were three things that mattered most for a young man: to be tough, to belong to a powerful family and to be a fine speaker.

Omar was certainly tough. He was taller than all his friends, with a fierce-looking black beard and moustache. The main sport in Mecca was wrestling, and he was good at that. He could ride a horse very well and fight with a sword.

His father left him out in the desert for long periods to look after the horses, and beat him if he made even a small mistake. Omar grew up to be rough with other people, and sometimes very cruel.

Belonging to a strong family was important, because everything in Arabia was run by large groups of families, or tribes. Different tribes controlled different towns and areas of the desert. Sometimes they traded with each other, often they fought each other. Travelling in the desert was not very safe, specially if your enemy had armed men guarding the wells where you and your camels needed to drink.

The Koraish were the tribe who controlled the town of Mecca, and Omar's family were important members of it.

There is one good reason why it mattered to be a fine speaker. Most people could not read or write. At night they

would sit round under the moon and stars listening to a person who could recite long poems about the great heroes and battles of old.

Sometimes there were big debates about public affairs, and the people listening liked to see who was the best speaker.

From generations back Omar's family had had the job of making public speeches on behalf of the tribe, specially when an agreement had to be made with another tribe. They were what we today call diplomats. Omar had been well trained in speaking, and he and some of his family could also read and write, which was not usual in those days.

So he had everything a proud young man needed to get ahead. He was tough and he came from a powerful family, as well as being a fine speaker.

2 A tougher challenge

One day a man called Muhammad stood up in Mecca and said that there was something more important than all these things. People told him to keep quiet, but he wouldn't. He said that the most important thing for everyone was to believe in one God and obey Him. He called this faith Islam, meaning surrender to God. Those who made the surrender were Muslims.

Muhammad went further. He said that he was a special messenger or prophet sent by God.

The leaders of the Koraish tribe were angry, specially when some citizens started to follow Muhammad and pray with him. Most of the Koraish were quite happy bowing before their statues of wood and stone, which left them free to put themselves and their tribe first. The tribe did many cruel things. Baby girls were sometimes killed by their fathers, who felt that boys were more important.

Omar, as we know, had a bad temper and he was angrier than any of the Koraish. He had everything worked out nicely for his future, and he wasn't going to surrender to this one

God or anyone. And if Muhammad was going to carry on talking like this and getting people to follow him, well, Muhammad would have to be killed. Grabbing his sword, Omar set off to do the job himself.

Then something strange happened.

On the way he met a friend and told him what he was going to do. 'All right,' said the friend, 'but did you know that your sister Fatima has become a Muslim?'

'What!' roared Omar. 'I'll go and deal with her first.'

He arrived at Fatima's house and listened behind the door. True enough, there were Fatima and her husband reading aloud some sentences from God's message to Muhammad.

Omar burst in, grabbed his brother-in-law and started to beat him up. His sister tried to drag him off, but he punched her hard in the face.

'Whatever you do,' said Fatima, 'you will never get Islam out of our hearts.'

Omar stopped and looked at his sister as she stood with the blood pouring down her face. Something inside him started to change.

'Show me what you were reading,' he said.

He read, 'Everything in heaven and earth sings the praises of God. He is almighty and knows everything.' Then he came to the verse which says, 'Believe in God and in His Prophet.' And as he read these words, something shifted inside his heart.

'That is what I do now believe,' he said, and he set off to tell Muhammad.

Muhammad and his friends were in a house a little out of the town keeping away from their enemies. When they saw Omar coming, still with his sword in his hand, they were not sure what to think.

But Omar soon told Muhammad that he now wanted to be a Muslim, and everyone shouted out 'Allahu akbar', which means in Arabic 'God is the greatest'.

3 The toughest fight of all

This is how new life began for Omar. He became one of Muhammad's closest companions and was with him through all his battles and advances in the next years.

The Muslims by this time felt strong enough to meet and pray openly in the town, and many people joined them. But the leaders of the Koraish made it difficult for the Muslims to get work and earn their living. They found that it was no use arguing with tough people like Omar; but they imprisoned many weaker Muslims and tortured them, sometimes to death.

Muhammad felt it was not right to let his followers suffer so much. So he led them to another town called Medina where the leaders were friendly. Here they were able to build their own place of worship, a mosque, and work out their new life peacefully together.

But they still had enemies like the Koraish who tried to cut off their supplies of food and goods from outside. So the Muslims had to go out and fight. In their first battle they won a great victory. In the second they lost badly. Then they started winning again.

Omar had a lot to learn in those years. For one thing, his bad temper didn't disappear all at once. At first, if anyone was disloyal to Muhammad, Omar wanted to cut off his head. But Muhammad taught him to be merciful with others, just as God had been merciful to him.

When the Muslims arrived back after one victory on the battlefield, Muhammad said to them, 'We have come from the smaller battle to the bigger battle.' He meant that the toughest fight is against our own selfishness.

All this time God's messages were coming to Muhammad in clear sentences and sometimes whole chapters at once. Sometimes they were written down by someone, but mostly they were learned by heart and repeated. Later on Omar had them

all written down in a complete book, which is called the Koran.

It was a big day when the leader of all the Koraish came to make peace and become a Muslim. Muhammad and his friends returned to Mecca and were welcomed by the people. After all these years of being shut out, it was their home again.

The old statues of wood and stone were smashed and a great mosque was built round the place where they had been. In the centuries to come it would be visited by pilgrims from all over the world. Each year nowadays about a million and a half people come to Mecca and Medina in the special month of pilgrimage.

Medina is where Muhammad is buried. He died ten years after first having to escape there from Mecca.

His friend Abu Bakr was his Caliph or successor, but after only two years he too died.

4 Omar as Caliph

Most people agreed that Omar was the right choice for next Caliph, but some felt that he would be too strict and tough.

What did Omar himself feel? He was scared of the responsibility because Islam was now becoming big. He knew his own nature very well and the nature of his people.

At the beginning of his first speech as Caliph, he said, 'Almighty God, I am harsh. Make me mild. I am weak. Give me strength.'

In the next few years Omar became ruler of nearly all the Middle East, as Europeans now call it. Islam stretched from Egypt in the west to Persia in the east, from Syria in the north to Arabia in the south.

He ruled by example, by being tough with himself. Though he was in charge of the Muslim treasury, he ate plain food and did not make himself rich. Usually he wore patched clothes and was difficult to recognise from other people.

Early one morning a camel-rider approached Medina at

high speed with news from the war. A man he did not know got up from the ground and asked what had happened. 'A victory,' shouted the rider without stopping. The man ran beside the camel asking more questions till they came into the town. There people began to greet the runner as Caliph. The rider was afraid he would be punished for not showing respect. 'You haven't done anything wrong,' said Omar. 'Go on with your news.'

Other rulers in those days tried to impress their subjects by wearing brilliant silk robes and many jewels. They sat on thrones surrounded by servants and slaves.

Once Omar's wife sent a gift to the wife of an emperor. Back came jewels and all sorts of other gifts for her. But Omar only let her keep jewels to the value of what she had sent. She was very angry when he put the rest in the common Muslim treasury.

Omar once wept when he saw a heap of money and jewels captured from an enemy. He was asked why. He answered, 'Where riches appear, envy and jealousy follow.'

There were times when Omar dismissed a great general when he had not been honest about money or taken what did not belong to him. He said it was necessary sometimes to go to war, but Islam was meant to be spread by Muslims living straight.

Often today if you want to go and see an important person, you find someone outside his door who tells you the man is busy and asks you to come back another time. Omar did not have a man at his door, and told his senior officials not to do so either, so that anybody could come in and see them at any time.

Omar would also walk round the town at night with a companion to make sure that all was well with his people. One night he heard a woman crying in her house. Going in, he found her stirring a saucepan with only water in it over a fire of sticks. She didn't recognise him.

'My children are hungry,' she said, 'and I have nothing to give them. I am trying to trick them into thinking there is food in this saucepan till they go to sleep. But they won't go to sleep. Now why doesn't this Caliph of ours do something about us poor people?' And she went on complaining.

'Just a moment,' said Omar. He went off to the Muslim store and came back with butter and flour and other sorts of food. 'Let me do this,' he said, and cooked a meal and fed the children. 'Now I advise you to go and see the Caliph in the morning,' he said to the woman, 'and I am sure he will look after you in future.'

5 A new leadership

It was one thing for Omar to behave like this. It was another thing to teach his generals to do the same.

A Muslim general had defeated the emperor who ruled Syria. This meant that Jerusalem would have to surrender to the Muslims, but its people were afraid of what the general would do to them. So they said they would only sign a treaty with Omar himself, and asked him to come to their city.

Omar set out from Medina for Jerusalem with a servant and just one camel between them. They took it in turns to ride. The day they came to Jerusalem it was Omar's turn to walk. He was in his old clothes as usual, and from a distance you couldn't see which of the two men was the Caliph.

His Muslim officers met him dressed in silk robes. Omar was so angry at this that he threw handfuls of gravel at them.

Then he went into Jerusalem and signed a treaty which gave protection to the people. He let the Jews and Christians worship as they wished. When he was visiting a Christian church, someone suggested that he should say his Muslim prayers there. 'If I did that,' he said, 'the Muslims later on might turn this into a mosque.' He went and prayed outside and later built a mosque somewhere else.

Omar was still a fine speaker. Towards the end of his life

he was making a fine speech in the mosque to a lot of people. To everyone's surprise he stopped in the middle of it, went out, and disappeared.

A little later they found him in the desert outside the town and asked him why he had gone there.

Omar said that he had found himself getting proud in the middle of his speech. He had thought, 'Here am I, the great Omar, the great Caliph, making a great speech to all these people listening to me.' He knew that this was the Devil's voice, and that was why he had rushed out into the desert.

And there in the desert another voice had spoken inside him. It said:

'This is the kind of place where you looked after your father's horses. When you didn't do it properly, he used to beat you. Do you think you're something special? No, you're the same as you were then. Do you think it was because of any great qualities that you became Caliph of Islam? Not a bit of it. It was a trust that God gave you.'

Omar won battles, made laws, worked out treaties and established schools over a large area. He laid foundations for Islam to spread even further in the world. But he is loved and remembered most of all today as a tough man who had learned mercy, and as a great man who cared for the poor.

Peter Everington

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

c. 907–929

His surprising story

1 A dangerous childhood

When we sing the carol 'Good King Wenceslas', we always picture him as an old white-haired man trudging through deep snow, with his page walking in his footsteps and carrying the food and wine for the poor old peasant whom the king had seen from his palace window.

So it comes as a great surprise to find that Wenceslas never lived to be old, but met a cruel death while he was still quite a young man.

He was born into a dangerous world. His country was the land of Bohemia – part of what is now Czechoslovakia – and all round it were fierce tribes which were always fighting with each other and trying to invade Bohemia. There was another fight going on too – the battle between two different ideas. The one was the Christian idea, which taught that God is a loving Father, and that all His children should care for one another. The other was the pagan religion, which said that there were many gods, most of them cruel, and that men were free to do what they chose to each other.

This battle of ideas was even being fought out in Wenceslas' own family. His grandfather Borivoj, king of Bohemia, and his grandmother Ludmilla were both Christians, and they hoped to turn Bohemia into a Christian country. And when Borivoj died, his son Wratislav, who became king, had every intention of carrying on his parents' good work. But he married a lady called Drahomira who belonged to one of the

tribes which were still pagan; and though she said she was a Christian, she did not live that way.

She had two sons, Wenceslas and Boleslav; and when the boys' father died, because Wenceslas was only about twelve, and too young to become king, Drahomira became regent, and the two boys were put into the charge of their grandmother, Ludmilla. But the nobles at the court, many of whom were pagans, were not happy about this. They told Queen Drahomira that if the young prince Wenceslas was allowed to stay with his grandmother, she would turn him into a monk who would not be fit to be a ruler. Then the tribes on either side of the country would come pouring in and take it over.

Drahomira believed what they said, and she banished her mother-in-law from court, and sent her to a distant castle. But she was not content with that, and one day while Ludmilla was praying in the castle chapel, men sent by Queen Drahomira strangled her to death.

Then the nobles tried to get hold of Prince Wenceslas. But he was a Christian. He had learnt to read and write – an unusual thing in those days – and so was able to read the Bible and learn more about the Christian religion. And since he dared not do it openly, he had Christian priests smuggled in at night to teach him still more.

Then came an attack on the country from the Duke of Bavaria. By that time Wenceslas was only thirteen or fourteen; but he put himself at the head of his troops and beat off the invaders. The people rallied to him, and by the time he was about eighteen, he felt able to take over the country and rule as king.

One of the first things he did was to banish his mother from the court, as she had banished his grandmother. 'There is to be no more killing,' he said. Later he allowed her to come back again; but he never allowed her to have any power.

2 A wise ruler – and a treacherous brother

Wenceslas was a good king. He was stern to anyone who did wrong; but he was gentle and merciful to his people. The story of how he and his page Podiven helped a poor old man at Christmas time is typical of the sort of kind action he did. It is said that he bought people who were to be sold as slaves so that he could set them free. He saw that children were well educated, and that his army was properly trained and equipped with uniforms. And he cut down as much as possible the number of death sentences on people who had done wrong, at a time when men were killed for very small offences.

He was very brave too. Soon after he was twenty-one, a neighbouring tribe attacked his country. Instead of fighting a battle, it was arranged that Wenceslas should meet the leader of the invaders in single combat, and whoever won should be recognised as leader of both armies. Wenceslas won, and the enemy tribe had to go home.

He was wise too. One day the king of Saxony appeared at the gates of Prague, Wenceslas' capital, with such a huge army that Wenceslas knew his own men had no chance of defeating them. So he made an agreement to pay the king, whose name was Henry the Fowler, so much tribute money every year; and then he began to make friends with Henry, and so make him an ally instead of an enemy. The people loved their wise young ruler who had brought them peace.

All, that is, except Wenceslas's own younger brother Boleslav. He was very jealous of Wenceslas, and very angry at what he had done to their mother; and he began to stir up trouble among the nobles, many of whom did not like Wenceslas' way of running the country anyway. So they plotted with Boleslav and Queen Drahomira to overthrow Wenceslas, and it was decided to kill him. They knew it could not be done in Prague, where most of the people were Wenceslas' friends; so Boleslav invited his brother to the

castle where he himself lived, to dedicate a new chapel which he had just had built. Afterwards there was to be a feast, and that was when Wenceslas would be killed.

Wenceslas came, suspecting nothing; but when it came to the feast and the time when the killing was to be done, nobody wanted to be the first to strike him. So he escaped that day. So the next morning, on his way to the chapel, Boleslav waylaid him with armed men and then struck the first blow at his brother. He missed, and Wenceslas cried out, 'You do wrong to strike me.' But Boleslav called on his followers, and they fell upon Wenceslas and hacked him to death.

His mother Drahomira had taken part in the plan for his murder; but when she saw her elder son's dead body lying there, she was shaken. She hid the body in the church, and fled for her life. Then Boleslav set to work to kill all those who had supported his brother. The page Podiven, who had killed one of his master's murderers, was hanged. And many fled to other countries for safety.

3 A precious memory

But although Wenceslas had died, at the early age of twenty-two, he was not forgotten. Those who had escaped to other countries talked about him, and tried to live as he had lived. The people of his own country talked about him too as a saint and a martyr, and Boleslav found himself forced to do honour to the memory of the brother he had so cruelly betrayed.

He found too that, although he and the nobles who sided with him had been so angry with Wenceslas when he made peace with Henry the Fowler by paying him tribute, Wenceslas' policy had been a wise one. Boleslav tried hard to keep his people independent; but after many vain struggles he had to give in and pay tribute too.

There are many stories still told of how, when his people were in trouble, Wenceslas' spirit appeared to lead and save

them. They have never forgotten him, and the central square in Prague is named after him – Wenceslas Square.

In that square, nine hundred years after he died, was put up a statue of 'good king Wenceslas', which is there to this day. And round the statue are carved the words of the nation's centuries-old prayer: 'Saint Wenceslas, suffer not us nor our children to perish.'

Mary Wilson

(Abridged and adapted from *The Word and the Sword*)

THE FASCINATING LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

1181/2–1226

1 Why are some people poor and some rich?

The shrill sound of bells rang through the streets and valleys of Assisi, a small town in the north of Italy. Loud singing and shouting was heard, and at once all the doors of the houses were shut. Outside the doors stood bowls of food, and here and there someone peeped curiously through his window; but the town was suddenly empty of people. It was the lepers' day. They were all swarming in through the city gates to pick up their month's ration of food and clothing and whatever generous people would give them. There were no hospitals for sick people in those days.

In one of the houses a boy with thick curly hair was leaning out of his window high under the roof. He too was afraid of the lepers. They smelt horribly, they looked ghastly – some had neither nose nor ears. But the boy could not help looking at them. He pitied them, and felt ashamed of being such a coward. So he sat there in his window playing on a flute as if he did not care that they were wandering down there in the street. He had put out some of his own clothes, and plenty of food, and he felt a little better for having done so. They looked up, hearing the flute, and an old man shouted, 'Hi there, Francesco! How are you?' Francis saw the old man smile, and suddenly thought: 'He could be my father.'

That night he could not sleep. Why were some people so poor and some so rich? How was it that he could sit down to a

meal every day while others had to scrape food from bowls or stretch out begging hands whispering. 'For the love of God!' and maybe being ignored? He remembered how he himself had ignored a beggar who came into his father's shop, which sold high class materials. He had been selling a piece of expensive cloth when the beggar came in; he just hadn't looked at him, but had finished the sale. Afterwards he remembered, and rushed out looking for the beggar. He found him in an alley, in tears, gave him all the money he had and asked his forgiveness. The old man had blessed him and said quietly, 'Pax et bonum – peace and all good.' But he had no peace yet. Why was there so much injustice in the world? Was it because nobody cared?

The next day he went for a ride on his horse. It was a lovely morning. The sky was pale blue, thrushes sang in the oak wood, and high in the air warbled that little grey insignificant bird with the most joyful song in the world – the lark. Suddenly his horse stopped, and even took a step backward. In front of him stood that old leper whom he had seen from his window. His stench mingled with the scent of flowers. Francis' first thought was to turn his horse and ride away. The second thought came so strongly that it was almost like a voice: 'I promise you that all which seems bitter to you now shall be like sweet honey for you.' Hardly knowing what he did, Francis jumped off the horse, ran to the sick man, embraced and kissed him and gave him not only money but his own cloak.

How strange! He did not notice any smell now and he was no longer afraid. There was sweetness in the air, and all he could see was the eyes of that man, who could have been his father. They were brown and beautiful.

Afterwards Francis swung himself joyfully on to his horse and rode away singing. Never before had he felt so free. He turned to look at the leper once more; but there was no one in sight. The grass bore no footprints, the forest was silent but for the thrushes. He had gone.

But as Francis rode up the hill, he knew now that his life must be given to serving the sick and the poor, though he did not yet know how.

2 'Throw mud and tomatoes at him!'

'Look, here's the fool, coming up the hill! Look at him, all in rags!' The boys of Assisi swarmed down from the market place, laughing and shouting. 'Now we'll have fun! Here – give me a rotten tomato to throw at him! Throw some mud at him, behaving like a stupid ass!' And Francesco, the rich merchant's son, who used to be the leader of the playboy gang in the city, received a shower of mud and rotten fruit. The boys hid, wondering what would happen. What should Francis do? Run after them? Burst into tears? Swear?

What he did was to go quietly to the well in the market place, where he dipped his face and hands in the fresh water, then turned round and laughed gaily at the boys. Slowly, and rather ashamed now, they came towards him. 'Francis, aren't you angry?' they asked.

'No – why should I be angry? – I'm happy,' he said.

'But what are you doing?' they asked. 'You look so frightful.'

'You see,' Francis explained, 'I am sharing the lives of the poor, so I don't mind what I look like any more. They are my brothers, and that's why I don't have fine clothes any longer.' The boys drew closer. They were curious, and wanted to hear more. But as he started to tell them, he was interrupted by a terrible roar across the market place; and there he was – Francis's father, Pietro Bernardone, the richest merchant in town.

'You just come home with me,' he roared. 'You are putting your family to shame, looking like that.' And he dragged him across the market place, threw him into the cellar of their home and firmly locked the door on him.

So there Francis sat helpless, with all his dreams about him.

But he was not thinking of himself. He was only troubled about the beggars and the lepers – who would help them now? Days and nights passed, until one evening the door was opened, and there stood his mother. 'Come out quickly,' she whispered. 'Dad has gone to France. Run away, son, run away, and do all that God tells you to do. Obey Him.'

Why had Francis left his old playboy life behind? Because he had heard Christ talking to him from an old cross in a half ruined church. He had clearly heard a voice telling him to build up the church; and he had done that. Then he felt that the poor needed someone to care for them; and that was why he had left his home.

But when his father came back from France, he called a bishop to judge his son. Francis was scared, and hid himself deep inside a cave. He did not want to be hurt again. In the cave he started to pray; and suddenly he knew! Even if his own father did not love him, he had a heavenly Father who cared, and he could trust Him. So the next day he turned up at the court of the bishop who was to judge him.

Everyone in Assisi seemed to be there. The court was crowded with people who had come to see this strange trial between father and son. As he came up into the town from his cave, Francis had been singing. Cherry trees were blossoming, thrushes were warbling, and doves followed him from the wood. But his father was furious. 'Give me back what you have taken,' he shouted. 'You are an unfaithful son!' He was bitter because he had trained Francis to be a merchant like himself, and now his son did not obey him any longer.

When Pietro Bernardone had spoken, all the people held their breath. What would Francis say? In the silence, you could hear the lark singing above the fields. Francis took a step forward. 'It is all yours,' he said quietly, and took off his waistcoat of lovely velvet, his shirt, no longer clean and white, and his breeches. There he stood, naked, with everyone gazing at him. He lifted his arms and said clearly. 'Till now, I had a

father called Pietro Bernardone. Now I have only one Father, the one of whom we speak when we pray: "Our Father, who art in heaven" . . .'

The bishop hurried forward with an old cloak to throw over the shoulders of the naked boy. Pietro Bernardone turned away and made his way, grumbling, through the crowd. Slowly the people left the courtyard, talking over the scandal. Some were for and some were against the boy's behaviour. But Francis – what did he do?

First he knelt before the bishop and asked for his blessing. Then, dressed only in that old coat, he took a staff and set out for the unknown future, singing.

If you take a decision which changes your life, people talk about it. Most people long to do the same, but do not dare. Now Francis, this young fellow who lived in Assisi in the thirteenth century, had decided to live contrary to what everyone dreamt of in those days – and perhaps in our own days too.

Don't you want to get rich, to have a lot of things, travel, buy whatever you want? It was the same in his day. But Francis had discovered the poor. He had also found that being rich does not give happiness. He became happy when he started to give. First he gave things: money, clothes. Then he gave himself, his love and care, his whole life.

He had to break with his family and leave the town. But a year later he was back. There he was again, standing in the market place. He was singing, he was preaching, talking about that beautiful Lady Poverty, Sister Purity, the Queen of Wisdom, whom he had met when he decided to follow the Lord.

'What do you make of him?' a man asked a friend called Bernard. 'I would like to do the same as he has. Think of the joy, the freedom he has!'

'I wonder if he is honest. It may be just words,' Bernard said. 'I would like to put him to a test. Let's invite him for

dinner and see how he behaves.' So Francis got an invitation to dinner at the house of Bernard of Quintavalle, one of the rich men in town and a friend of Francis's family. It was a good meal – a roasted deer stuffed with baked sparrows and plenty of spices, with fruit and wine. They all grew sleepy and went to bed.

Now Bernard had put a bed for Francis in his own room. He began to snore, pretending to be asleep, because he was curious to see if Francis said his prayers when he was alone. He heard Francis get out of bed, and, peeping round, saw him on his knees praying. All night he stayed there praying, and every time Bernard looked, there he was on his knees – until the birds started singing, and then he quietly lay down.

Bernard woke him up, 'I want to be like you,' he said. 'I want too to sell all I have and give my life to serve the Lord in whatever way He calls me to do it.'

'Wonderful!' said Francis. 'But let's go and ask the Lord first what is right.' They went to the church, and there they met another friend called Pietro Cattani, who was a lawyer and who during the night had decided that he too wanted to get away from his old way of living, in which only things and money mattered, and follow Francis. The three of them knelt in the church, opened the Bible and read, 'If you want to follow the Lord, go away and sell everything you have . . .' They looked at each other. 'There it is, written down,' they said. 'This is what God wants us to do.' They laughed for joy – and gave the townspeople yet another scandal to gossip about.

That was a sale which nobody forgot! Two rich men sold all they had, gave the money to be divided among the poor, put on plain cloaks, took staves in their hands, and off they set on the road to new adventures, telling people as they went how to start out on a new life. . . .

Not only rich men wanted to change; a jealous and bitter priest, called Silvestro, came along. He was quite poor and

had wanted to become rich, but when he met Francis, Pietro and Bernard he saw all his bitterness standing like a high wall between him and other people, between him and God. So he decided to give it up and went with Francis. Another fellow came one day when Francis had prayed for a young man to join them. It was St. George's Day, and his name was Egidio; he stepped out of the fields in his working clothes and joined the fellowship of barefoot brothers. Already they were five brothers, but soon they were going to grow in number . . .

3 The little swallow who flew away

Clare was going to be married. She belonged to one of the fine families of Assisi, so only a count was good enough for her. In these days the girl who was to be married had nothing to say in the matter. Her parents decided when and to whom, and she had to obey.

Then one day at the dinner table, Clare said, 'I am not going to be married.' A long astonished silence followed. She, the prettiest of girls, with her long thick fair hair, her dark blue eyes! Her father looked stern. 'But you must,' he said as he rose from the table.

Clare looked at her aunt, who sat there smiling at her. After dinner she rushed to her crying, and told this kind aunt the secret of her heart.

'I want to follow Francis,' she sobbed. 'I want to be like him. I am sure God has called me to a different way of living – not this rich life, when so many are poor. I want to serve the sick and the poor. Help me, auntie.'

'Let us go to Francis himself and ask him,' her aunt said; and they decided to creep out late that night and visit him.

Clare had first heard Francis speak when he preached in the church. She was sixteen years old then. At once she knew that she too wanted to know Lady Poverty. Francis was so full of joy, so different from everyone around her. He was clean-living and gay, and he had something which she did not have.

And now here she was going to meet him! She shivered as they went, for it was growing dark and the forest could be dangerous at night. But her aunt was with her. They had brought some food in a basket to give to Francis and the other men with him.

'What will he say?' she asked herself. But just at that moment he was there. He had known she was coming. She looked shyly down at the ground while her aunt told the whole story of the proposed marriage and of Clare's longing to serve the Lord like him.

Francis laughed, and his voice was sweet and gay. 'We must quickly snatch from the arms of the world such a lovely spoil!' he said; and he sounded so happy that Clare lost all her shyness and started laughing too. And so they made their plans. She would run away. He would talk to the bishop and gain his consent. Clare would make preparations to leave her home on the night of Palm Sunday.

When she got home, Clare wept for joy, thanking God on her knees and asking His protection over the plans as well as praying for her family whom she would have to leave.

The days went slowly by, while preparations were made for the wedding. There was the veil; but Clare was thinking of another veil which Francis was going to give her. There was the ring; but Clare was thinking of the other ring which she would be given when she would belong only to Jesus. Food was cooked for the wedding feast, dresses were made – and suddenly it was Palm Sunday, and they all went to the Feast of the Blessing. That was the last time that Clare was to be with her family. As they started to walk to the altar to be blessed by the bishop, she burst into tears and stayed behind in the church. And then, to everyone's surprise, the bishop walked all the way down the church to where Clare was kneeling and gave her his special blessing. As if he knew, she thought, and felt comforted.

But would the old back door keep quiet and not creak as

she crept out that night? What if the dogs started barking, or if there was moonlight? Her aunt had promised to see her down through the forest, but still she was afraid. Halfway down the hill, in the deep darkness and silence, they heard men's voices. Robbers on the prowl? Clare stopped and gripped her aunt's arm. 'Can't you hear them?' she said. 'It's Francis and his brothers. Look, they are coming, with torches and songs!'

What a meeting that was! Clare was the first woman to go the way of poverty in the thirteenth century. While she knelt before Francis, he cut off her beautiful long hair. Then they walked to the little church of the Portiuncula, where she promised to live in poverty, chastity and obedience all her life. Then she was clothed in a long white veil – a different sort of bride – but oh, so happy!

But the following morning her father and brothers were not happy. Their little swallow had escaped over the wall, and they rode down to the monastery where she was. In the church they found Clare, and wanted to take her back home. Then she lifted the veil, and they saw that her hair was cut off. They knew what it meant, and sadly rode home again.

Two years later, Clare's little sister joined her, and all over Italy young girls began to join the new Order of the Poor Clares. They looked after lepers and the sick and poor, they mended the mantles of the Franciscans – the name by which Francis and his brothers were called – and prayed for them. They were showing the world that you could be very happy without having many things.

4 Two madmen in the desert

In the unbearable heat of the desert, two white men were stumbling over the burning sand. They were Francis and one of his friends called Illuminato, and they were going on an incredible journey. They were going to see the Sultan of Turkey!

This was a dangerous venture, for the Turks were willing to pay a very high price for the head of a dead Christian. But God had told Francis to join the Crusaders. Armies from Europe were trying to win back the Holy Land where Jesus had lived and died, from the Muslims, many of them Turks, who had taken it over. The Christians could no longer go to worship at the holy places.

But Francis was not very happy when he joined the crusading army. He had expected that the crusaders would be good men, but he found that many of them led bad lives; and their only idea for the Muslims was to kill them. Francis thought there must be a better way than that to help the Muslims to see things differently; and now here he was with his friend Illuminato struggling through the terrible desert on his way to see the Sultan.

They struggled on through the terrific heat till one day, just before it grew dark, they came upon some Turkish sentries who were guarding the Sultan's camp. Francis began to shout 'Sultan!', hoping to be taken to him at once. But the guards seized the two men, beat them and bound them. Illuminato shivered and was sure that his last moment had come; but Francis was praising the Lord and thanking Him for letting him be beaten, as Jesus was. All the time he kept shouting, 'Sultan! Sultan!', and the guards did not like to kill these two madmen. Crazy people are always treated with respect by Muslims; and the word was sent to the Sultan about their arrival.

'Two Christians have come here?' said the Sultan in great surprise. Then he decided that he would give them a test. 'Put out the long carpet with all the crosses on it,' he said. 'Let us see what they do. The cross is the symbol of their faith.'

So Francis and Illuminato were taken into the big tent where the Sultan was sitting. Francis saw the patterns of the crosses, but he marched over them all the way up to the Sultan's throne.

'Don't you see what you are doing?' the Sultan asked. 'You are treading on a cross.'

'Your Majesty,' answered Francis swiftly, 'there were three crosses on Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. One cross was our Saviour's; but the other crosses' – and he pointed to the carpet – 'well, they belonged to two robbers.'

The Sultan laughed. He liked that answer; and he felt that Francis was courageous and honest. They talked and talked. Now it was Francis' turn to propose a test. He wanted to prove to the Sultan that his God was the greatest; and he said 'Let us make the fire trial. Your priests and I will walk through a fire; and I promise you that my God will protect me from burning to death.'

Francis was absolutely sure of what he said. But the Muslim priests did not fancy the idea, and they began to leave the tent; and the Sultan was obliged to let them go.

The last evening when the Sultan and Francis were together, the Sultan said to him, 'I respect your God.' Francis was the first Christian who had shown respect for the Sultan's own religion. 'But you must understand,' the Sultan went on, 'that I am the leader of my people and I cannot leave them.' Then, it is said, he whispered secretly to Francis that he would like to become a Christian before he died, and he asked if Francis would send a priest to him when he came to die. This Francis promised to do; and there was always a priest ready and waiting in Europe to leave for the Sultan's court if he was sent for.

When they parted, the Sultan gave great gifts to Francis and Illuminato; but they left everything behind. The only thing which Francis brought back with him and cherished was a letter giving him permission to visit Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. And that is why today you will still find Franciscans caring for the places where Jesus was born, lived and died. That is because Francis was daring enough to make the dangerous journey through the desert and meet the enemy as a friend. What an example to us in our world today!

5 A new song

Francis was standing holding a sword. Ever since his boyhood he had dreamed of having a sword, but he had never imagined that it would be such a beautiful one, with a richly jewelled hilt. It belonged to a rich and famous young nobleman, Count Orlando, and he had just given it to Francis as a sign that he was not going to use it any more. He was promising to live in the new way Francis taught, which included a pledge never to carry any weapon and always to share his riches with the poor.

This new way of life which Francis taught, and which he himself had lived ever since he had laid down all he owned before his father, had by this time spread over the whole of Italy, and was later to go to other countries in Europe. On every road and in every town and village you would find the barefoot brothers – Franciscans, as they were called – teaching people how to live at peace with their neighbours.

But it was all terribly hard work; and after the dangerous desert journey to meet the Turkish Sultan and a visit to the Holy Land, Francis fell ill. He was tired out, and his eyes were hurting him. He had to rest. But there was no comfortable place where he could lie. The only shelter he had was a small hut where mice were running over his body all night long. It was very hard to endure, although he loved the little mice; and he asked God to give him patience to put up with them. And it seemed to him that the answer came: 'If you are patient through the night, I will give you a wonderful gift in the morning.'

And at last the morning came. Francis knew that it had come because he could feel the warmth of the sun on his hands, although he could not see anything because of the disease in his eyes. Suddenly into his mind there came a tune with words to it. He called one of his friends, Brother Pacifico, who was a

poet, and he dictated to him what has become known as the Canticle of the Sun:

All-Highest, almighty good Lord,
To You be praise, glory and honour
And every blessing.
To You alone they are due,
And no man is worthy to speak Your Name.

Be praised, my Lord, in all your creatures,
Especially Brother Sun who makes the daytime,
And through him You give us light

And he is beautiful, radiant
With great splendour,
And he is a sign
That tells, all-Highest, of You.

Brother Pacifico was still writing; but now Francis was humming a new tune, which went on praising Sister Moon and the stars, Brother Wind and the air and the clouds, Sister Water and Brother Fire. His hand, feeling around, picked up a clod of warm soil from the ground, and he whispered:

Be praised, my Lord, for our Mother Earth
Who keeps us and feeds us
And brings forth fruits of many kinds
With coloured flowers and fruits as well.

There was a silence. Birds were singing outside, and you could hear the snort of an ox as it dragged a heavy cart up the hill. Francis was thinking of the feud between his friend the Bishop of Assisi and the mayor of the town. They did not want to have anything to do with each other, and the whole town was divided, some siding with the bishop and some with

the mayor. If only there was something he could do! But what could he do, sick as he was? Suddenly he sat up and said eagerly to Brother Pacifico, 'Listen – I am writing a verse specially for the bishop and the mayor. Let's call them together and then sing this whole song for them.'

Of course they had to come. They knew that Francis was dying, and they felt they must listen to his new song. So everyone went to the town hall to hear it; but the bishop and the mayor stood stiffly at opposite ends of the big hall – they did not want to meet each other. And then in came Francis and his friends, singing the Canticle of the Sun as they came.

Everyone clapped and laughed – it was such a joyful song. Then there was a pause, and Francis said, 'And this verse is specially written for my friends:

> Be praised, my Lord, for those who grant pardon
> For love of You,
> And bear sickness and tribulation.
> Blessed are those who bear these things peaceably,
> Because, All-Highest,
> They will be granted a crown by You.'

Can you guess what happened next, and which of the two former enemies came forward first to make friends? We do not know; but we do know that the bishop and the mayor embraced each other with tears in their eyes. Francis took their hands and there was peace again – peace between two foolish men, peace between their two parties, peace in Assisi.

Francis grew worse. The doctor came, and Francis asked him: 'How long will I live?' At first the doctor did not want to answer, but then he said frankly that any day might be the day of parting for Francis. He was only forty-six years old. Then what did he do, he who loved life and the earth and people? He raised his arms and sang, to that new tune: 'Be

praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death, whom no living man can escape.' And as he died, he could still sing.

After his death, people said, although it was already October, a great flock of larks flew overhead singing.

Ingrid Ydén-Sandgren
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SAINT JOAN

1412–1431

1 A country girl in war-time

Can you imagine how it feels to live in a conquered country, with foreign soldiers occupying your town?

When Saint Joan lived, her country – France – was like that. Long before she was born, English armies had invaded it and taken over whole districts.

Worse still, France was divided against itself. Among the nobles and their followers, two parties fought against each other, instead of combining to drive out their national foe. One of these parties, the Burgundians, sometimes sided with the English, and were hated all the more for it.

Twice Burgundian troops raided Joan's home village, Domrémy. Her father, who owned a small farm, saw his cows driven away and his growing crops trampled down. The family themselves – Joan, her parents and three brothers – had to run to safety, and only returned later, to find their goods stolen and their little thatched house burnt. Then they had to start building it all up again.

Year after year this desperate state of affairs lasted. Nobody in France took the lead, to get rid of the English and reconcile the two hostile parties. They had a king, but he seemed too lazy and careless to do it, or even to try.

He was an ugly young man, small and nervous; he was still called the Dauphin, which means 'King's eldest son'. He had never been crowned, though people thought that if he were, he would somehow become stronger and wiser.

However, the Dauphin was far away from Joan's home, and her days were not all filled with the horrors of war. She spent her childhood in a natural way, helping her parents in the farm work, and indoors, and playing with other children. Domrémy consisted mainly of houses like theirs, and in the centre stood the church. There was no school; the children learned from their parents, and absorbed the Christian faith from them and the priest. Pictures on walls and windows of the church helped to make his teaching clear.

Joan liked listening to stories of the holy men and women who had served God in times past; she often thought about them. Three seemed to be her special friends: Saint Margaret, Saint Catherine and Saint Michael the archangel.

When Joan was thirteen, as she stood alone one summer day outside the church, she heard a voice saying her name, and knew that God was speaking to her. She felt, not afraid, but happy. More than once after this she heard Him speak, through the voices of these saints who were so real to her, or through her own 'inner voice'. They gave her simple thoughts about her daily living, about helping her mother, and going to church, and she tried to do as they said.

Nothing unusual happened at first, but in her heart Joan cared very deeply about the sufferings of her country and its people.

Someone may say, 'But I thought Saint Joan led an army in battle! You've made her seem just an ordinary girl.'

So she was, yet God had His plan for her life, and it did include battles in plenty.

2 Obedience and certainty

Joan of Arc was an ordinary girl who was ready to hear when God spoke to her, and to obey Him. She was much concerned about her country, France, which was divided against itself and partly occupied by a foreign army. When she was sixteen, God told her that the time had come for her to take up

arms and be a soldier, and she would be shown what to do.

Of course this would mean leaving home. Joan's first battle was with herself. She was unwilling even to think of going away from her parents and brothers, and the life she knew. But she listened; and as she was certain these directions came from God, she decided to obey.

She went first to stay near a castle filled with French troops. Her object was to visit their captain and ask him to arrange for her to see the Dauphin – the actual, but uncrowned king.

The captain, seeing her as only an ordinary village girl, was rude and laughed at her, but Joan persisted. She was so sure of her guidance from God that gradually the captain changed his mind, especially when two of his soldiers backed her up. He began to believe that God had told her to offer help to the Dauphin, and start new moves for saving the country.

After several weeks she left the castle, dressed in a page's black and grey outfit, with her hair cut short. She had the captain's full consent and a letter from him to the Dauphin. Escorted by six soldiers, she rode towards Chinon, where the royal Court was staying. Travelling by night and resting by day, the journey took them eleven days.

Joan was in high spirits because at last she was doing something towards her goal – to save France.

Another test came when they arrived. She sent in the captain's letter, and one from herself – dictated, as she could not write. The Dauphin never received either of them. The crowd of courtiers surrounding him took no notice of the girl when, after a long wait, she went into the great hall. How then was she to know which the Dauphin was, out of the many men present?

Her guidance from God did not fail. She went straight up to the one who really was the man she had come to see.

Ignoring all the unfriendly remarks, the staring and jeering of the courtiers, she knelt down before him and said, 'Most

noble Lord Dauphin, I come from God to help you and your realm.'

Naturally he was surprised, but he took Joan courteously by the hand and told her to stand up. Then he went aside with her, and they had a long talk before he dismissed her, promising to see her the next day.

The first steps had now been taken, and they are always the most difficult. She had not yet come near to fulfilling her life's purpose; but she was on the way.

3 Battle and glory

Joan had managed to gain access to the Dauphin, the uncrowned king who had failed so far to give his people a lead.

Now he and his advisers knew well that the city of Orleans was their key to success. It lay on the north bank of the river Loire, and was in French hands, but if the English took it – as they were trying to do – they could then cross over, spread outwards and gain control of all the land further south. Thus, for the French, holding on to Orleans was vital.

Ten weeks after meeting the Dauphin, Joan left for Orleans with the army. She was on horseback, in command of one of the mounted units. Wearing light steel plate-armour, she carried a white banner strewn with golden lilies, the royal emblem of France.

She was on excellent terms with her men. They respected her, and never swore or made dirty jokes in her presence; they could have been her own brothers.

One evening early in May they entered Orleans. Joan had meant to slip in quietly, avoiding crowds, but the people turned out in thousands to welcome her. They had felt neglected, anxious and depressed; and the coming of 'the Maid', as they called her, brought new hope.

The English army was encamped near by, and had occupied two wooden towers on the south bank of the Loire, opposite the town. The only bridge had been broken. The French

planned to capture those two towers, and a few days later they started at dawn, crossed over in boats, and made a furious attack upon them.

Fighting lasted all day. The English held on stubbornly. About noon an arrow pierced Joan's armour and hit her, passing clean through just below her right collar-bone. She winced, but let the arrow be pulled out, and when her wound had been dressed, went back to the fight.

Still her men could not reach the towers, and at sunset the French commander told Joan they would have to give up. But she would not hear of it, and begged him to let one more attempt be made. She was so earnest that he could not refuse.

She went aside into a vineyard and remained there praying for a few minutes. Then, under her leadership, an astonishing change took place. The Frenchmen, instead of being a number of separate fighters, brave but ineffective, suddenly became a single, united, irresistible force. They swept over the wall and into the towers, while their enemies fled in panic.

Wild rejoicing was seen in Orleans that night: bonfires blazed, bells pealed, people danced. The citizens knew that their town was safe.

By this stroke Joan not only saved Orleans and the south country, she had now gained more authority, and urged the Dauphin to take the step he should have taken much earlier. She at last persuaded him to come to Rheims cathedral, the traditional crowning place of French kings.

There the Archbishop anointed and crowned him in the presence of a great gathering, bishops, nobles, knights and citizens. The Maid herself stood there with her white and gold banner, and when the ceremony was over she knelt in deep gratitude to God. This, she felt, was the day for which she had been born, the day of glory. Yet she claimed none of the glory for herself; it had all been God's doing.

4 The unseen warfare

After that glorious day when the rightful King of France was at last crowned, and national hopes were high, Joan, who had done so much to make it possible, was not allowed to go home as she wished. She remained at the Court, and they did very little that winter, although the national enemy was still in occupation.

When spring came – Joan was now eighteen – the French made a few half-hearted attacks on places held by the enemy, but these all failed. God gave Joan a warning, by the voices of Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, that she was going to be captured before midsummer.

Towards the end of May, in a fight outside a town near Paris, three Burgundians sprang towards Joan, who was mounted, and dragged her off her horse. Her own men could not get near to defend her. She was taken prisoner.

At first she was treated reasonably well, and stayed in the Burgundian commander's home with his family. But the English paid a large sum to have her in their hands, and locked her up in a tower, where she waited through long days of terrible loneliness. She heard nothing of the outer world, and must have wondered why no one came to rescue her.

The news of her capture spread through the country, and soon showed a clear dividing line between those for and those against Joan and everything she stood for. In Orleans and Rheims, for instance, the mass of the people were enthusiastic supporters of the brave girl who had risked her life on their behalf. Some Church leaders took the same view, believing Joan to have been genuinely called by God and directed by Him. Others, whose own lives did not compare well with the pure and unselfish life of the Maid, were jealous of her popularity and filled with hatred. They could not deny that she had power from the unseen world of the spirit, but would

not admit that it came from God; therefore, they declared it must come from the devil.

One bishop in particular was set upon bringing her to disgrace and death. However, the English, although they wanted her out of the way, insisted that she must have a fair trial.

They took her to Rouen, Normandy's capital, where English authorities were still in control. Here, closely guarded night and day, Joan was tried before a Court consisting of Church leaders and learned men, presided over by the bishop who hated her.

Hour by hour, they asked cunning questions meant to trap the simple Maid, with her lack of school education, into admitting that she served the devil. It was not a fair trial at all, but Joan kept her head and prayed for God's help constantly.

All that you could see in that hall was a solitary girl sitting opposite about fifty men with hard, pitiless faces. It was really a clash between unseen forces – those of falsehood and godless self-seeking on one side, and of truth and God-led patriotism on the other.

The struggle between these invisible forces grew more intense as the trial continued.

5 **Marching on**

Probably most of us know how the trial of Joan of Arc ended. We do not need to be told that she was found guilty. They said she was a witch, and must suffer as a heretic, which meant being burned alive as an enemy of the Church. Forthwith the sentence was carried out, in the market place at Rouen.

Perhaps some of us too have heard of the English soldier in the watching crowd. Overcome with shame at the monstrous verdict, he tied together two sticks in the form of a cross, to put in her hand, so that in her last moments she could look upon the emblem that reminded her of Jesus.

If we stop there we can only feel intensely sad; and while no

one can help feeling sad at this cruel end to such a lovely and heroic life, it is hardly fair to Joan to take the story no further, because her greatest triumph is written in the history of the times. The whole situation changed in a few years, owing to changes in those people who felt ashamed, challenged and inspired, because of her.

Briefly, it happened this way. The leaders of the two opposing parties, who during Joan's lifetime would willingly have cut each other's throats, after her death met each other, were reconciled, and signed, and kept, a Treaty of Peace.

The King, who as Dauphin had so disliked shouldering responsibility, began to do his duty. Without fear or favour he chose suitable men for the chief posts in the kingdom. His armies were given up-to-date weapons, and in one pitched battle, which proved to be the very last in that long war, the French, though far outnumbered by the English, were decisively victorious. Strangely enough, they were led by two commanders-in-chief, equal in rank – an amazing example of team work, which would have been unthinkable before.

Joan's body indeed was gone, but her soul was marching on!

Finally, the English gave up all the occupied towns except Calais, and France was a free, united nation. How the Maid would have rejoiced!

Twenty-five years after the trial at Rouen, Joan's mother and brothers asked if her case could be re-tried. So the records were brought out, the trial was read through again, and from the overwhelming evidence given by witnesses who had known her, Joan was re-established as a faithful Christian.

In 1920 the Pope added her name to the list of saints of the Catholic Church.

It may be tempting to dream of ourselves riding in armour like Joan with a lily-strewn banner, amid the cheers of an adoring crowd. But actually, wherever a young person decides to obey God, cost what it may, and to live selflessly for a great

cause and purpose, there the same Spirit which moved Joan is present. In France and many other countries today, it can be said that her soul goes marching on.

M. C. Scott Moncrieff

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1809–1865

1 Abe the rail-splitter

Imagine a great forest of tall trees, and in it a clearing, surrounded by a wooden fence of split logs. In the middle of the clearing is a log cabin. Inside it is rather dark, for evening is falling and the only light is from a roaring log fire. At first all you can see by the light of the fire is a pair of long thin legs, dressed in buckskin trousers, and with heavy country boots at the end of them. Above the crackle of the flames you can hear a voice going steadily on and on. Though he was a big awkward lad of eighteen, there had always been so much work to do at home that he had only managed to put in about a year's schooling altogether, and to the end of his life he found reading aloud easier than reading to himself.

Who was this boy? He was Abraham Lincoln, who became the 16th President of the United States. He was born February 12th, 1809, in the State of Kentucky; at that time this was part of America's western frontier. His father was a hunter, farmer and carpenter. His grandparents had moved west from Pennsylvania and Virginia. Abraham's grandfather had been killed by Indians while working on his farm.

After Abraham was born, the family moved on westward again, always seeking better land, travelling by raft on the rivers, on foot through the woods and by ox cart, till at last they settled in Illinois. There they had to work very hard indeed to cultivate the land and earn their living from it.

Little Abraham, or 'Abe', as he was called, had to go to work in the fields when he was only six.

Neither of his parents were able to read and write; but he was lucky enough to be able to go to school, though he had to walk four miles to get there. He had very few books to read, and those he did have he had to study at home by firelight, lying on the cabin floor. If he wanted to write, there was no paper or ink; he wrote with a piece of charcoal on a wooden shovel.

When he was ten, his own mother died, and he missed her very much, for they had loved each other deeply. His father married again, and Abe was lucky in his stepmother, whom he grew to love as if she were his own. In later years he spoke of her as 'my angel mother'.

By the time he was seventeen, he was 1·9 m (6′ 4″) tall and very strong, and the best axe-man, runner and wrestler in the district. He could easily carry a couple of heavy logs weighing 270 kg (600 lb); and he once cut four hundred fence rails to earn himself a pair of trousers. He was given the nickname 'rail-splitter', which stuck to him even after he went into politics.

2 'Maybe my chance will come'

After a time Abe left the farm and, with another man, started a little shop or store in the small town of Salem in Illinois. He had decided to become a lawyer, and, when he was not serving in the shop, he went on with his studying, reading everything he could lay hands on. He read English grammar, literature, history, science and law. One day he found four law books in a rubbish bin and picked them out. 'I will study and get ready,' he said, 'and maybe my chance will come.'

In the meantime he was giving honest service to his customers, and they came to trust him. One night, at the end of a hard day, he walked several kilometres to pay back to a customer a small sum for which he had been overcharged. He was nicknamed Honest Abe, and the shop became a centre where

people used to drop in to talk politics with Abe and to listen to the funny stories he told. If neighbours had a quarrel, they often came to him to help them settle it.

But after a time the shop failed, and Abe's partner left, leaving him with a debt which it took him fifteen years to pay off. However, he went on with his studies as best he could, and at last received his licence to practise law. He moved to Springfield, which later became the state capital of Illinois, and there he set up a law office with a partner. He became well known in that part of the country.

Lincoln had fallen in love meanwhile with young Ann Rutledge, but she became very ill and tragically died. This was a crushing blow to him, coming as it did a few years after the death of his only sister, Sarah. These two bereavements, following the earlier loss of his mother, when he was a boy, cast a shadow over Lincoln's youth.

When he was twenty-three years old, he decided to go into politics. He ran for the state legislature, but was defeated, though he did very well in the election. Two years later he was elected. But he was such a tall, awkward looking fellow that some people did not think much of him. 'Can't the party find anyone better than that?' said one man as Abe stood up to speak. But after he had spoken, this man said, 'Lincoln knows more than all the other candidates put together.'

Abe knew just how to handle a crowd. He would watch his audience, seeing how they behaved and putting into his speech the funny stories for which he was now famous. One day he saw from the platform that a man was attacking one of his supporters. Without stopping his speech, he at once came down from the platform, still talking and waving his arms as he went, threw the man out of the hall, and then, still speaking, went back to the platform as if nothing had happened.

During this time he met and married Mary Todd. Further sorrow was to come with the death of two of their four sons.

However, Mary and Abe were happy together and Mary was always sure that her husband would be President of the United States one day. It looked as if the chance he had hoped for might indeed come.

It was through friends of his wife that Lincoln became involved in a quarrel with a local newspaper editor. The man had published statements about a political opponent which Lincoln believed were untrue. He told the editor so, and the man challenged him to a duel – one way in which quarrels were settled in those days. The editor chose cutlasses, or short swords, to fight with. The two men met, with their seconds, at dawn in a clearing in the woods, each carrying his weapon. Lincoln, to test his cutlass, cut off the branch of a tree which was growing some ten feet above the ground. He then sat down on a log with a very melancholy expression on his face. The editor, who was a very short man, began to look worried when he saw what Lincoln had been able to do with his cutlass; and it was not long before he called the duel off.

Lincoln served in the state parliament, from 1834 to 1842, and was always known by his nickname of 'Honest Abe'. Then he took up law practice again, and was as honest as ever. He refused to touch any case in which he felt that his client was not right; and once, in the middle of a case, when new evidence turned up that his client was in the wrong, he immediately dropped the case.

3 'If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard'

When Abe Lincoln was twenty-two, he took a trip down the River Mississippi to the city of New Orleans, travelling on what was called a flatboat. And while he was there, he saw a terrible thing; Negro slaves – men and women – being sold in the market place as if they were goods on a stall. It made him feel sick to see it. A friend said, 'The sight put its iron into his soul.' And he made up his mind that he would do some-

thing about it. 'If ever I get a chance to hit that thing,' he said, 'I'll hit it hard.'

Lincoln ran for the national legislature, and was elected to the House of Representatives, the body which governed the whole of America. At first they did not think much of him there. 'Who is that long, lean fellow?' asked a Congressman.

'Oh, some lawyer from the west,' was the answer.

In the House he introduced a Bill to abolish slavery in one district, the District of Columbia, but no notice was taken of it.

While Lincoln was in Congress, the United States acquired a huge new territory in the south west through an unpopular war with Mexico; national feelings ran deep, and public opinion was divided.

Lincoln did not run for a second term in Congress. He refused an offer of the governorship of the Oregon Territory, returning to Springfield, and giving himself up to his law practice and caring for his family. He read and studied, kept in touch with his friends and clients around the State, and studied the way politics were going.

It was the passing of the Kansas–Nebraska Act by Congress in 1854 which brought Lincoln back into the political world. This unwise new law opened the way for the spreading of Negro slavery into new states west of the Mississippi River.

The Republican Party was founded the same year and based its planning on the anti-slavery feelings in the North. Lincoln took an active part in its councils, and was considered as Republican candidate for vice-President in their unsuccessful campaign of 1856.

In 1858, he made a bid for the Senate against Stephen A. Douglas, who had been the backer of the Kansas–Nebraska Law. Lincoln lost the election, but he made a name for himself as 'the best stump-speaker in the West'. He continued to grow in political wisdom.

In the Presidential campaign two years afterwards, the

Republican Party nominated him as its candidate for the Presidency. The opposition was split; the Republicans won, and Abraham Lincoln was elected President of The United States.

When Lincoln became President, Negro slavery and its extension into the 'Western Territory' was a hot political issue, for it continued to thrive in the Southern States where slaves were needed to cultivate cotton and other crops. But in the North, which mostly went in for factories and trading, it was not needed; and there was a struggle between the two sides.

Lincoln's election to the Presidency brought matters to a head. South Carolina went out of the Union altogether, and seven more states followed and made their own union, called the Government of the Confederate States of America.

In 1861 the political situation exploded into a civil war between north and south. It finally came to the point where there were fifteen states of the Confederacy and eighteen of the Union. It became one of the bloodiest civil wars in history. Abraham Lincoln carried the tragedy of the divided nation on his heart. 'If what I feel were distributed to the whole human family,' he wrote, 'there would not be one cheerful face on earth.'

Abraham Lincoln's public life had been built around opposition to slavery ('this monstrous evil' he called it). Yet, as President, his 'object' was to save the Union, and it was not until two years after the war had begun that he was able to issue the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in the Confederate States. He hoped to see the Union re-united, 'with malice toward none, with charity for all' he told the nation a month before the war ended.

Lincoln cared for the soldiers who were fighting the war and he refused, for example, to allow one of his generals to have a young sentry executed who had fallen asleep at his post. He was kind to everyone. When he was told that a

certain man who came to him for help had no friends he said 'Send him to me. I will befriend him.'

Under the heavy burden of the Presidency Abraham remained a humble, human person. He had a great sense of humour and, when someone told him he was 'common-looking' his reply was that the Lord must have liked common-looking people; 'that is why He made so many of them'. He was never too proud to apologise when he was in the wrong. After a disagreement with one of his generals, Lincoln once wrote, 'I wish to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right and I was wrong.'

When President Lincoln's advisers urged him to use more grand language in his speeches, he replied 'If they are simple the people will understand.' And the people did understand and they loved Abraham Lincoln. Once an old man from upper New York State came to see the President. After his visit he said, 'Up there we believe in God and Father Abraham!'

At last after four long years, the war was over. In Washington on Friday April 14th, 1865, President and Mrs. Lincoln went to the theatre with some friends to see a popular play. As they were sitting in their box, a shot rang out. An assassin had got into the theatre and shot the President.

But Lincoln had done what he had to do. The United States of America was united again. The slaves were free. There was rejoicing and relief throughout the country.

The Lincoln Memorial is one of the grandest monuments in the city of Washington, D.C. But Lincoln's real memorial is that he lives in the hearts of the American people, and of people around the world.

Francis Bradley

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

1759–1833

1 What is true courage?

What would you say was true courage? Dashing into a burning house to save a child's life? Jumping into a river to rescue someone from drowning? Or even standing up to a bully?

All such actions would be brave. But there is something which needs even more courage. Suppose you were the most popular boy or girl in the school, and that everyone liked you and thought you were wonderful and wanted to be friends with you. And then suppose that the thought came into your head to do something which would make you unpopular, so that you were laughed at and left alone without friends. Would you dare to do it? And if you did, would that not be the greatest possible kind of courage?

It does exist; and it has a special name. It is called moral courage.

That was the sort of courage William Wilberforce had. If ever there was a successful person, he was that person. He was born the son of a rich Yorkshire business man, and he had always had everything he wanted. He was so charming that he made friends everywhere he went. Lessons came easily to him; and when he grew up, he became a member of parliament when he was only twenty-one. His beautiful speaking and singing voice made people call him 'the nightingale of the House of Commons', and the Prince of Wales said that he would go anywhere to hear him sing. Important people wanted to be his friends; among them was another young

M.P., William Pitt, who soon became the youngest Prime Minister Britain has ever had. Wilberforce was full of fun, and Pitt, who was rather a serious kind of person, used to relax when he was with him and enjoy a practical joke. One morning when Pitt was staying with Wilberforce, he found that Pitt had got up very early and planted the flower beds with pieces of another friend's best hat!

Wilberforce loved being popular. He wrote later, in the language of those days, 'My own distinction was my darling object.' Then something unexpected happened to him. While he was on holiday with a friend he began to study the Bible, and rethink the way he was living. He decided not to live for his own popularity and success any more, but to try to discover what God wanted him to do with his life. He started waking up early in the morning so as to spend the first hour of the day praying and listening to God, and he wrote down in a journal the thoughts which came to him.

He began by changing the way in which he spent his time. No longer did he fill every spare minute with parties, gambling and drinking. He began to care for others instead of thinking all the time about what others thought of him. This of course made him a friendlier person than ever.

But one morning a thought came to him which he did not like at all. He knew that to obey it he would need some of that real courage – moral courage. What that thought was will be told in the next story.

2 A dangerous thought

William Wilberforce was one of the most charming and successful young men in politics in England during the eighteenth century. But one day a thought came to him which he did not like at all. It was to go and visit a certain clergyman, the Reverend John Newton. But Newton was not an ordinary sort of clergyman. Before he had taken holy orders, he had been a sea captain – the captain of a slave ship.

For a long time Wilberforce had been feeling unhappy about the slave trade, which in those days was making so much money for the business men of England. Ships sailed for West Africa from London, Bristol and Liverpool loaded with guns, drink, beads and manufactured goods. When they reached Africa, these goods were given to Arab traders or local chiefs in exchange for African men, women and children. The slaves were packed into shelves below the ship's decks, often without enough room to stand up or lie down. By the time the ships reached the West Indies, after three or four weeks at sea, ten per cent of the slaves had usually died and been thrown overboard, and many others were desperately ill. Many more would die during the brutal 'seasoning' process which was meant to prepare them for their work on the sugar and tobacco plantations. When the slaves had been sold, the British ships loaded up again with sugar, rum, cotton and tobacco, and set sail for home, where they sold their cargo at great profit.

Few people in those days had ever been to the West Indies, or knew what it was like inside a slave ship. But Wilberforce knew that John Newton would tell him the truth. He was a very outspoken man, who made people uncomfortable about the way they were living. But Wilberforce was afraid that if he were known to be visiting Newton, his smart friends would laugh at him and call him a religious fanatic. It took him a whole week to decide to obey the thought he had had to call on him. Twice he went to the door of Newton's house, but each time he was afraid to go in. But at last he found the moral courage to go inside; and he and Newton had a long talk.

The ex-slave ship's captain told the young M.P. how he himself had come to change his way of living when he realised the cruel things which he and his sailors were doing to the helpless slaves. He told Wilberforce much more about the evils of the slave trade; and what he heard gave the young

man courage to decide to join in the battle against this evil thing, which other people in the country were fighting too.

He went and talked it over with his friend William Pitt, the Prime Minister. As the two friends sat talking under a tree, Pitt suggested that Wilberforce should start a debate in Parliament about the evils of the slave trade. Wilberforce had been feeling for some time that this was the battle which God wanted him to take on; so he took his next courageous decision, and introduced into Parliament his first Bill for the doing away with the slave trade, or abolition, as it was called.

3 The great battle

And so the great battle to end the trade in slaves began. The struggle lasted for twenty years, and made Wilberforce many enemies. The rich slave traders and slave owners were determined not to lose their money or their slaves. They bribed the people who chose the M.P.s in some areas to pick men who would vote against abolition. They even bribed Wilberforce's own supporters; once when he was bringing in a Bill in Parliament, twelve of the men who had promised to vote for him were given seats at a theatre so that they went there instead of going to the House of Commons to vote for his Bill; and because they were not there to vote, the Bill was defeated. And many M.P.s stood up for continuing the slave trade because they believed that Britain and the West Indies could not be prosperous without it. The King and the Royal Family agreed with them. Gone were the days when Wilberforce was popular and everyone wanted to be his friend.

With so many M.P.s against them in Parliament, Wilberforce and those who were fighting with him for abolition set to work to wake up the consciences of the people of Britain. They used all sorts of ways to do this. The poet Cowper wrote poems which told of the terrible plight of the slaves. The famous potter Josiah Wedgwood designed a cameo, a little medal made of pottery carved with the figure of a slave

kneeling and pleading to be set free, and those who supported the cause of abolition wore it on their bracelets or had it placed on their snuff boxes. Some people refused to buy sugar from the West Indies because it had been grown by slaves. The campaign was such a success that in 1792 the House of Commons received four hundred and ninety-nine petitions from all over the country asking for the slave trade to be abolished, and only five asking for it to go on. Still, it took fifteen more years of hard work and many disappointments before the trade was at last abolished in 1807.

That was a great victory. But slavery itself still went on. Although British ships no longer brought cargoes of new slaves to the West Indies, all the slaves already there, and their children, continued in bondage. So now the fight began to abolish slavery altogether in all British colonies. This took another twenty-six years. But at last, at midnight on July 31st, 1833, as Wilberforce, now seventy-four, lay dying, the news was brought to him that slavery had become illegal in the British Empire and eight hundred thousand slaves had become free.

Four days later Wilberforce died. His great work was done.

4 Dare to stand alone

How do you find the courage to stand up for what you believe in when your friends disagree with you and your enemies spread lies about you? That was what William Wilberforce had to face when he decided to do what he knew to be right, and to fight in Parliament against the slave trade.

But it was a very hard battle. He was a brilliant young man, and the best friend of the Prime Minister, and everyone expected that he would be given high office in the government; but he never became a cabinet minister. And those who felt that they would lose money if the slave trade were ended did all they could to make him hated. They passed round lies about him, saying that he beat his wife, that he was a traitor in

wartime, that he wanted to get rid of the king, and that he was a pious prig.

But in spite of all these difficulties, Wilberforce kept going. And when he died, he had not only won freedom for the slaves, but he was greatly loved and respected as well.

What gave him his strength and courage? He believed that he was doing what God had told him to do, and that because He wanted the slave trade to end, all the obstacles would be overcome. One day, when after seventeen years of struggle his Bill was defeated yet again, the Clerk of the Commons told him that he really should not expect to carry such an idealistic Bill through Parliament.

'I do expect to carry it,' Wilberforce replied. 'And, what is more, I feel assured I shall carry it speedily.' And he was right, for three years later his fighting spirit won the victory, and the Bill was passed.

Wilberforce's other great strength was that his family and friends were behind him. His wife and children backed him through all his battles, and in what was then the village of Clapham he gathered round him a group of M.P.s and writers who believed as he did and who gave him their fullest support.

What Wilberforce valued most about his friends was what he called their plain speaking. He asked them to tell him honestly when they felt he was wrong, and to help him to do better. And because they were his true friends he knew that they would do as he asked, speaking out of love for him, and not from unkindness. And he too said what he really felt to his friends, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Pitt.

But Wilberforce's high standards of living did not make him a prig or a boring person. He was always interested in other people, and this meant that, by the time he was an old man, he was loved just as he had been when he was a young and popular politician. His secret was that he not only fought for a great cause, but he also did all he could to help everyone he met to find the same trust in God and the willingness to

obey Him which he himself had found. This was what kept him going through all the attacks and disappointments, and this was what gave him the joy and peace of heart which made so many people love him.

5 William the giant-killer

Perhaps you have seen pictures of Jack the giant-killer – a young boy attacking a huge giant and killing him. William Wilberforce was a giant-killer too. The first giant he tackled was a very huge one indeed – nothing less than the evil trade in slaves. It took him all his life to conquer it; but conquer it he did.

But there was another huge giant in England in those days, and he tackled that one too. One day when he was still a young man he wrote in his journal: 'Almighty God has set before me two great objects – the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.' By 'manners' he meant the way people lived. And England in those days was a very terrible place to live in, especially if you happened to be poor. Children had to work to help their parents to keep alive, sometimes starting as young as three years old. And if a man stole a loaf to feed his starving family, he could be hanged or sent to America or Australia to work hard there for the rest of his life.

And most of those who had money led completely selfish lives. They spent their money on cards and gambling, and if, as often happened, two men quarrelled at cards, they would fight a duel in which one of them would be killed. Many of the clergy, who should have been helping people, never troubled to visit those they were supposed to care for, but spent their time on fox hunting and other idle pleasures. People were so unhappy that they often drank themselves to death. It was a very cruel and terrible world.

But Wilberforce and his friends, who had changed people's thinking about the slave trade and made them realise how

cruel and wrong it was, began to do the same thing about the selfish way in which so many English people lived.

Gradually things began to change. The selfish clergy were replaced by honest men who cared for their people. And those who wanted to see things different took courage from what had happened about the slave trade, and began to tackle what was wrong. Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, took up the cause of all the poor children who were overworked in factories and coal mines or sent up chimneys to sweep them. It took a hundred years for all these wrong things to be put right; but it could never have happened at all if William the giant-killer had not sharpened his sword and set out to destroy the evil slave trade.

Another thing which he did was to make people understand that if they think something is wrong, and set out to fight it, they can win. In Britain today we can use our Parliament to see that wrong things are put right. And many people in other parts of the world look to us in Britain to show them how to fight what is wrong in their own countries. And it was William Wilberforce who showed the way, because he was willing to risk being unpopular and criticised and hated in order to carry out what he felt God wanted him to do.

On the day when he made up his mind no longer to live only for himself, he started something which not only changed his own country, but spread to the whole world.

Mary Lean

LORD SHAFTESBURY – THE PEOPLE'S EARL

1809–1885

1 A stolen gold watch

One day in the middle of the last century a horse-drawn cab drew up in front of a tall London house and two men got out. They dumped a wriggling sack on its doorstep and then jumped quickly into the cab and made off.

The house belonged to Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. He was well known for all he had done in Parliament to get laws passed to make a better life for working people, and especially children.

When the strangely moving sack was brought in and opened, it was found to contain a frightened small boy with a gold watch. It was one that had been stolen from Lord Shaftesbury a few days previously.

The little boy was trembling. Would this tall man call in the police or order a beating? The men who had caught him and dumped him there had said nothing. But Shaftesbury knew all about the terrible conditions under which many East London children lived, and that if they had lost their parents, or had been turned out by them, they were often almost forced into a dishonest life, such as joining a gang of pickpockets, in order to live.

He looked at the boy. 'This gold watch was given me when I was about your age by the best friend I ever had,' he told him. 'I am not going to ask how you came by it, but I am going to help you get some schooling and start a new kind of life.' And he was as good as his word.

Lord Shaftesbury not only worked day after day in Parliament to get laws passed to improve the terrible housing and lack of opportunities in the poorer parts of London, he spent a lot of time getting to know the people there. They grew to love and trust him. He became known as 'The People's Earl'. So when he lost his precious gold watch he was able to pass the word to London's underworld about what its loss meant to him. Many of its down-and-outs had been pickpockets themselves, and they quickly tracked down the young thief and found their own way of returning the treasure to its owner.

The watch brought back many memories to Lord Shaftesbury of his neglected childhood. He had not been a poor boy. His parents were, in fact, very rich, but they were so taken up with going to parties and with politics that they took no interest in their little son. The only love that had been given him in his earliest years came from the old housekeeper, Mrs. Millis, whom he called Nanny. But when she died, when he was eight years old, there was no one who cared for him and saw that he was kept warm and had enough to eat. When his parents gave a party, which they often did, in their big rooms downstairs, no one bothered to bring him up a meal. Often he went hungry to bed.

The gold watch had belonged to Mrs. Millis and she had left it to the little boy she had loved. His happiest memories of those early years were of when she used to take him on her knee in front of her cosy sitting-room fire and read him exciting stories out of her old Bible. She had planted then the seeds of a faith which had been a strength to him through all the hard times that followed. Instead of growing up with a chip on his shoulder and blaming everything on his unhappy childhood, he decided, while he was still at school, that he would make it his life's work to help those who were neglected and downtrodden. For that reason he went into Parliament.

He had the cause of the children especially in his heart.

There were thousands of them in need all over the country. Many worked long hours in mines and factories, and there were the homeless, barefoot urchins of the London streets. For years he fought in Parliament against fierce opposition and got laws passed to improve their conditions.

It was, thus, not very surprising that the dwellers in the neglected areas of East London should have been willing to send back Lord Shaftesbury's gold watch as soon as they heard to whom it belonged.

2 A strange expedition

One cold winter's evening in the middle of the last century a dinner party was in progress at the house of the Earl of Shaftesbury in London. The guests were important people in public life and some newspapermen. They had been invited to go with him after the meal on a strange expedition. A young medical student named Barnardo, known to Shaftesbury for his work among neglected children in East London, had told a meeting that hundreds of these youngsters had nowhere to go at night and slept out in the streets. Few people, however, could believe this. The papers declared that Barnardo was just trying to make a sensation.

Lord Shaftesbury, who had fought in and out of Parliament for years to get new laws made and opportunities opened for the underprivileged, knew that Barnardo's story was only too true. He was haunted by the problem of the thousands of uncared-for children, clad in filthy rags, who swarmed in the streets of East London, hovered round the markets to snatch at any cast out food and had nowhere to sleep at night. He believed that if only people in positions of influence could see for themselves what was going on, they would, surely, be stirred to help. So he had invited Barnardo and some of those who disbelieved his story to dinner, and asked the young man to take them all down to the East End afterwards to show them places where youngsters were actually sleeping out.

The party set off, through a bitterly cold winter's night, in several horse-drawn cabs. Barnardo led them to a deserted street market where he knew that boys often slept. A search among the stalls revealed no one. The gentlemen looked bored; it was just what they expected. Then Barnardo noticed a bulge in the tarpaulin roofing above one of the stalls, and he reached up and grabbed an ankle. Soon a startled small boy stood before them. Offered a reward, the boy started to rout out his friends. Heads popped up from every roof. Soon there was a crowd of seventy-two ragged, shivering youngsters gathered round the gentlemen. 'These are only a small handful of the children who will be sleeping out in the cold tonight,' Shaftesbury said.

The boys whose sleep had been disturbed were given a hot meal at an all-night café, which was willingly paid for by the visitors, who went home with plenty to think about.

When Lord Shaftesbury bade goodnight to young Barnardo he begged him to think again about a plan he had formed of going to China as a missionary. 'Could not London be your field of service? You seem to understand these neglected youngsters,' he said. Barnardo stayed. He lived to found Dr. Barnardo's Homes, which have given help and new opportunities to thousands of children for more than a century.

Newspapermen wrote articles about what Lord Shaftesbury's party had seen. They discovered that something like 30,000 children were homeless in London. People were shocked. It then became possible for Shaftesbury to get Parliament to vote money for some long-term plans to help them. Grants were provided by the Government for youngsters who would like to emigrate to Canada and Australia, with help and training given them there when they arrived. To try out another suggestion, Lord Shaftesbury got a crowd of boys together by advertising a feast in a big hall for those who had no homes. A great number of ragged urchins came, and

they sat down to the almost unknown treat of roast beef and plum pudding.

Then Shaftesbury said to them, 'Supposing there were a ship in the Thames large enough to take a thousand boys, would you like to be placed on board and taught trades and trained for the Merchant Navy?'

There were gasps of excitement. Every hand shot up.

The Admiralty provided a ship. The boys who trained in it, and in the famous *Arethusa* which came after it, have numbered thousands, and made good in the Merchant Service for more than a hundred years and through two world wars.

3 Children of the coalmines

Anthony Ashley Cooper, who later became the Earl of Shaftesbury, entered Parliament as a young man with a determination to fight for those who were poor and oppressed. At that time there were hardly any laws regulating the hours of work of people in the factories and mines. Children started work very young and often did a twelve-hour day with only a half-hour break for dinner.

Anthony knew very little about industry. It was a shock to him, therefore, when in 1833 three men representing workers' committees in the industrial north called on him to ask if he would be their champion in Parliament and fight to get a law passed to shorten everyone's working hours to ten a day.

It was a difficult decision. There was a tug of war in his heart. His parents had neglected him in his childhood and made him feel that he did not matter, so he would have liked to get to the top in Parliament just to prove that he could be successful. He was doing well and had a good chance of getting a well-paid government position. He knew that if he accepted the workers' request he would make himself unpopular in his own Party in Parliament which was against Government interference in a man's business. This might lose him his chance of promotion. He knew, too, that his father would be

furious and might withdraw the allowance he made him from the family estates. And yet – there was his resolution, taken many years ago as a schoolboy, that he would do his best to help those in need.

He talked it over with his wife and prayed about it; then he said 'Yes' to the North Country delegates. He made two conditions: that there should be no violence or rioting, and that, at first, the Bill should only apply to child workers. This, he thought, would make it more possible to get the law passed. In fact, shortening the hours for the children would do the same for the older people, too, because the machines of those days would not go on running without the many little jobs the children did.

These children, who were called 'piecers', ducked in and out of the machinery all day, covering often more than twenty miles as they went. By evening they were often too exhausted even to eat. Some, when they drew their wages on Saturday, just filled up with gin, and undermined their health still further.

Perhaps Anthony would have hesitated even longer if he could have foreseen that it would take seventeen years' grim fight in Parliament to get enacted a complete Factories Bill that would really work.

In the meantime, many evils were brought to light and dealt with. The greatest of these was the condition of the children working in the coalfields.

When he persuaded the Government to set up a commission to report on this, he suggested that an artist should go and draw what he saw in the mines. People were horrified when they saw pictures of children on all fours harnesssed to trucks and pulling them through narrow passages underground. In the Scottish mines boys and girls climbed up ladders with sacks of coal on their backs. Occasionally a sack would slip and the child beneath would be knocked off the ladder to his death. Some children started work as young as three years old.

They sat in a dark, underground passage and pulled a string to open a door when a truck came through. It was not a hard job, but the child would be alone in the darkness most of the day, and there would be rats. Boys and girls could be beaten by the men with whom they worked if they were thought to be lazy.

Things were worse than anyone had believed. Anthony was passionately determined that a Bill must go through Parliament to do away for ever with these evils. When it came to the final vote he made the most stirring speech of his life, and the Coal Mines Bill was passed.

It did not guarantee quite all the safeguards he had hoped for, but it meant that no child under ten would ever again be allowed to work underground in the mines, and that conditions of work would be improved and regularly inspected. He received a letter from Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria, saying how grateful he and the Queen were for his efforts and how shocked they had been by the Report.

4 The climbing boys

Of all the unhappy children of the last century for whose welfare Lord Shaftesbury fought, in and out of Parliament, the lot of the little chimney sweeps was, perhaps, the worst. Apprenticed to a sweep from as early, sometimes, as six years old, their job was to climb up inside the tall dark chimneys, sweeping as they went. Sometimes they were choked with soot, sometimes so paralysed with fear that they could not climb higher and were forced up by the master-sweep lighting straw in the grate below or by an older boy coming up behind them and pricking their feet with a pin.

Most of these children were orphans from the workhouses, but some had actually been sold to the sweep by poor parents. It was called 'apprenticeship', but it was little more than slavery. The master-sweep could do what he liked with them. At night often the only place they were given to sleep was

on a pile of soot. Many developed incurable diseases of the lungs from the soot they breathed day and night. And it could happen, on occasion, for a child to die in the chimney on the job.

When Shaftesbury was a young man in Parliament, in 1833, two or three deaths were reported of boys who had been sent up burning chimneys to put out dangerous fires. He was horrified, and joined at once in the fight for laws that would make such things impossible.

For more than a hundred years certain good people had been trying to get Parliament to pass laws to protect the climbing boys. But generally people did not wish to make changes. The jointed sweeping brush had not been invented, and a long-handled brush did not sweep the chimney so clean and made more mess. The boys climbing in the chimneys did it better and there was less risk of the chimney catching fire. So the housewives were determined to stick to the old way, and shut their minds to the idea that this meant cruelty to the boys.

In 1847 The Climbing Boys' Society was formed, with Lord Shaftesbury as its President. They were determined to let the country know of the suffering of the little sweeps so that nobody would have an excuse for disbelieving the true facts. Always Shaftesbury wanted to know the people concerned and to get the facts for himself at first hand. In this he was helped by a master-sweep who had never got over the shock of pulling down the dead body of a seven-year-old boy from a chimney up which he had goaded him.

Through the years, Shaftesbury backed Bills through Parliament that were either thrown out or so cut-up that they only slightly eased the conditions of the climbing boys. It was not until he had been at it fifty years, and many more children had been suffocated or died of disease, that at last a Bill went through both Houses of Parliament that freed the little sweeps from their wretched life.

Lord Shaftesbury lived till he was eighty-five. With his unhappy background as the uncared-for child of rich parents, neglected at home and bullied at a harsh boarding school, he might so easily have grown up cold and bitter and set on grabbing all he could for himself. Instead, he took with him a determination to help those whose lives were hard and for whom people did not seem to care. This applied particularly to the huge army of unprotected children of that time. He did more for their welfare, and for workers in general, say historians, than any other man of his century. At the end of his long life thousands who had drudged in mines and factories or lived starved, deprived lives in the poorer parts of the big cities had been given better conditions and new hope.

His ideal was to see Britain living the values of a Christian country where people really cared about each other's welfare. He believed in appealing to the best in men and women, rather than stirring up bitter feelings. For all this he worked without stint, to his life's end in 1885.

Mary St. J. Fancourt

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

1856–1915

1 Early childhood

Many years after Columbus discovered North America large plantations grew in its Southern States. They produced cotton and corn and tobacco. The world hungered for these crops and the Southern States wanted more hands to plant and pick the crops.

Some men thought that an easy and cheap way to get labour was to capture slaves from West Africa and bring them across the Atlantic to these Southern States. And so the slave trade began.

African slaves were sold by tribal chiefs or caught by heartless ship's captains and brought chained in the galleys of slave ships to America. They were sold and became the possession of their owners. Some owners treated them kindly; others harshly.

On one of the plantations in Virginia stood a log cabin, 4·2 m by 4·9 m (14 ft by 16 ft). This cabin also served as the kitchen for the plantation, and Jane, who was a cook, lived in it. The cabin had no glass windows, but a hole for some air and light. It had a door that did not shut. It was too cold in winter as the air blew in, and too hot in summer.

In this cabin Jane gave birth to a child who was to be known in later years as Booker T. Washington. As George Washington was the Father of America, so Booker T. Washington grew up to be the Father of the Negro people. But he had a long way to go.

'My life,' he wrote, 'had its beginnings in the midst of most miserable, desolate and discouraging surroundings.'

With his stepbrother and sister, Booker slept on a bundle of filthy rags on a dirt floor. As a child he did not attend school, nor did he play any games. All he did was to work – to clean the yard, to fetch the water from the well, and to carry the corn. This is what he said later about his early days:

'I cannot remember a single instance in my early childhood when our entire family sat down to the table together, and God's blessings were asked . . . On the plantation meals were got by the children very much as dumb animals get theirs. It was a piece of bread here and a scrap of meat there . . .

'I had no schooling whatever whilst I was a slave, though I remember on several occasions I went as far as the schoolhouse door with one of my young mistresses to carry her books. The picture of several dozen girls and boys in a schoolroom engaged in study made a deep impression upon me, and I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise.'

Years later Booker not only went to school, but made sure that thousands of black people like himself got the chance to learn.

2 Freedom

About the time Booker was born things were stirring in America. The Southern States which had large plantations wanted slavery to continue. The Northern States wanted slavery to end. The Southern States threatened to separate from the Northern States and wanted to form a separate country. It would have meant the break-up of the United States of America. Abraham Lincoln, when he became the President of the U.S.A., refused to allow the separation and the Southern and the Northern States went to war. Booker was about five years old when war broke out.

Early one morning while the war was on, Booker opened

his eyes in the log cabin and found his mother fervently praying on her knees that the day would come when she and her children would be free. A few years later a white officer came and read to the Negroes on their plantation a proclamation from President Lincoln that all slaves were freed. 'My mother, who was standing by my side, leaned over and kissed her children while tears of joy ran down her cheeks.'

When freedom came and the war ended, Booker, his mother, stepfather and family moved to a place called Malden. Here the stepfather worked in a coalmine. Booker, who was hardly ten years old, was set to work on a furnace in the coal mine. He started work at four in the morning and worked the whole day.

Booker and all Negroes had a great hunger for education. They felt that if they went to school they would be equal to the white man and equally prosperous. There was great excitement one day when a school for Negroes was opened near Malden. Men and women of sixty and seventy rushed to the school to study. But Booker's stepfather would not allow him to study during the day. The money young Booker was earning helped to feed the family.

So great was the demand for studies that a night school opened and Booker was allowed to attend it after his work. 'These night lessons were so welcome that I think I learned at night more than other children during the day,' he said.

One day while at work in the coalmine, Booker overheard two miners talking about a really good school for coloured people in Hampton, Virginia. In the darkness of the mine Booker noiselessly crept as close as he could to the two men who were talking. He overheard them say that for poor Negro students who were clever a part of the cost of their stay and study would be paid. They would also be taught some handicraft. That day Booker decided that he would enter the school come what might.

He secured a packing case, knocked one side out of it,

put some shelves in it and began putting into it every kind of book he could lay his hands on and called it 'my library'.

3 A school of his own

When he had collected a few dollars Booker started walking the many, many miles he had to go to reach the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. One evening he arrived at the town of Richmond exhausted and hungry. He looked at the food that was being eaten by other people, but he had no money. Hungry he went to sleep that night under a sidewalk. When he woke up in the morning he found that he was near to the river and a ship was unloading. He offered the captain his help. After two hours' work the captain gave him some money and he had a good breakfast which he much enjoyed. He worked a while for the captain and after that set out on his travels again.

When he arrived at the Hampton Institute, he had no money and he was not sure they were going to take him. He offered to clean the rooms for the teacher. He swept the recitation room three times and dusted it four times. Booker was hired! For many years to come he was to work as a janitor, waking up before sunrise to pay for his studies. He impressed everyone by his clean habits and his desire to learn.

Booker was a good student and did well in his exams.

When Booker passed out of school he decided to start a school of his own. He picked a place called Tuskegee in an area where many Negroes lived.

His first task was to find a place to open the school. He had no money. After looking all over the town, he found a rickety old church with a few broken-down huts around it. When it rained, an older student would leave his lessons and hold an umbrella over Booker's head as water poured down. During the cold days, Booker was concerned about the students. He would get up at night and go round the dormitories occupied by the young men. Sometimes he found them huddled round

a fire with the one blanket each he had been able to provide for them. Even so, at Christmas time he encouraged the students to help repair cabins of old people who were unable to look after themselves, so that they could keep warm.

Booker's first students were Negro teachers. Many of them knew very little about reading or writing but somehow had managed to start teaching. They wanted further education. So they came to Booker's school. Some of them were as old as forty years of age. They were eager to learn.

Booker's people had lived in slavery for generations. He wanted to teach them not only how to read and write but also how to live as dignified human beings. He wrote later:

'We wanted to teach the students how to bathe; how to care for their teeth and clothing; we wanted to teach them what to eat and how to eat it properly, and how to care for their rooms. We wanted to give them practical knowledge of one industry so that they would be sure of knowing how to make a living after they left us. We wanted to teach them to study actual things instead of mere books alone.'

Booker was most keen that they learnt arts and crafts, and the first crafts were connected with improving their own school. Within a few weeks all the huts were repaired. The stable became a recitation room and the hen-house a classroom. Each afternoon Booker would lead his students, axe in hand, to clear the forest. There they planted their first crops. His students realised that working with their hands was as important as learning with their heads.

4 Education for everyone

As word of Booker's institute spread across the South hundreds wanted to join it. He needed to construct new buildings. A former slave owner and a former slave (a skilled mechanic) helped Booker to raise money for his school. But most Negroes were too poor to provide the money to construct buildings. So Booker and his friends travelled far up to

New York and Boston to appeal for money from charitable white people. One railroad king gave Booker only two dollars the first time Booker went for help. Ten years later, he gave him $50,000. Booker taught his students how to bake the bricks needed for buildings.

One day an old Negro lady of seventy hobbled on a stick into Booker's room. She was dressed in patched clothes. She handed him six eggs to be used to educate the Negro boys and girls. She told him: 'Mr. Washington, God knows I spent the best days of my life in slavery. God knows I am ignorant and poor, but I know you are trying to make better men and better women of the coloured race. I ain't got no money, but I want you to take these six eggs, what I have been saving up.'

Some years later, in place of that broken-down church and leaking stables and hen-houses, forty buildings stood on the campus of the Tuskegee Institute. They were all built by the students and with donations from charitable people.

Booker was cheered along by his faith in God and in the enthusiasm of his own people. The Negroes wanted to learn not only reading and writing. They loved music and had good voices. They wanted to learn how to play musical instruments. Booker relates the story of an old Negro called Uncle Jake.

Uncle Jake wanted to learn the guitar from a young schoolmaster. The master, thinking that the old man would find it difficult to learn at his age, told him: 'Uncle Jake, I will give you guitar lessons: but I will have to charge you three dollars for the first lesson, two dollars for the second lesson and one dollar for the third lesson. But I will charge you only 25 cents for the last lesson.'

Uncle Jake answered: 'All right, boss, I hires you on them terms. But, boss! I wants you to be sure and give me the last lesson first!'

Booker was as generous to the white man as he was to the

black. He said once that it gave him as much joy to help the white men of the South – which included former slave-owners – as to help the Negroes. He lived at a time when Negroes were still badly treated. They could not enter hotels or ride in the same buses as the white man. Some white men still looked down upon the black men and some black men preached hate of white men. But not Booker. 'Great men,' said Booker, 'cultivate love. Only little men cherish a spirit of hatred.' In a famous speech he said, 'No man, black or white, shall drag me so low as to hate him.'

5 Booker Washington's accomplishment

Thirty years after slavery was abolished, an exhibition of arts and crafts was held in Atlanta, Georgia, deep in the South of the United States. At the opening, assembled on the platform, were the Governors and the leaders of many Southern States. Several of these were former slave owners. There, for the first time in the history of the Negro people, a former slave was asked to speak. A newspaper man present on the occasion wrote:

'There was a remarkable figure; tall, bony, straight as a Sioux chief, high forehead, straight nose, heavy jaws, and strong, determined mouth, with big white teeth, piercing eyes, and a commanding manner. The sinews stood out on his bronzed neck, and his muscular right arm swung high in the air . . . His big feet were planted squarely . . . His voice rang out clear and true . . . Within ten minutes the multitude was in an uproar of enthusiasm – handkerchiefs were waved, canes were flourished, hats were tossed in the air.'

Booker raised his hand, his five fingers outstretched dramatically. 'In all things that are purely social we the Negroes and the whites can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.' As he said these words, the whole audience rose to its feet, madly applauding.

Booker told his own people that if they were useful, they

would be always wanted. He urged the Negroes to plough, to work on the fields, to help in the workshops, to learn the crafts, so that the white man not only needed but respected the black man.

Thousands whom Booker trained at Tuskegee Institute became teachers and priests. Some became scientists and lawyers. From his school came the first well-educated Negroes to go out all over America to teach others. Booker T. Washington helped the American Negro to stand on his feet.

Booker T. Washington was once asked what was the greatest surprise that ever came to him. He replied that it was a letter that came to him one Sunday morning when he was sitting on the verandah of his home at Tuskegee surrounded by his wife and three children. It was a letter from the University of Harvard, the oldest in the United States. They wanted to confer on him a degree as a mark of honour for what he had done for the Negroes and the white people of America. This is how he describes what he felt:

'As I sat upon my verandah, with this letter in my hand, tears came to my eyes. My whole former life – my life as a slave on the plantation, my work in the coalmine, the times when I was without food and clothing, when I made my bed under a sidewalk, my struggles for an education, the trying days I had had at Tuskegee, days when I did not know where to turn for a dollar to continue the work there, the oppression of my race, all these passed before me and nearly overcame me.

'I had never sought or cared for what the world calls fame. I have always looked upon fame as something to be used in accomplishing good.'

R. M. Lala

THE QUEST

The story of Prascovie Lopouloff

1 A brave plan

Prascovie shivered. The cold of a Siberian winter was hard to bear when one's furs were thin and one's clothes old and worn. The loneliness was hard to bear, too, and the howling of wolves at night. But hardest of all was that set, tragic look in her father's eyes and the sadness that never lit into a smile on her mother's face. The family were Russians; Jean Lopouloff, her father, had once been an officer at the Russian court, but he had been unjustly exiled to Siberia. He was eating his heart out in the frozen loneliness, two thousand miles and more from all that had made up his life.

'When can we go back to Russia, mother?' Prascovie used to ask when she was small.

'When the Emperor's pardon comes,' her mother would answer patiently, and her father would sometimes add grimly: 'And that will be never.'

Prascovie was fifteen now. She had long ago ceased asking her question. But she had not ceased thinking about it. Little by little a great plan was taking shape in her mind. At last she broached it to her parents.

'If the Emperor only knew, I am sure he would grant his pardon to father,' she said. 'But who will tell him? No one knows and no one cares but us. So I will go to him, mother, and I will tell him. Then he will know that father is innocent, and he will pardon him, and we can all go back and be happy again.'

Her mother smiled hopelessly. 'A lovely thought, child, but quite impossible, of course.'

Her father was shorter. 'Ridiculous,' he said, briefly. 'Why, it's a matter of two thousand miles and more. Besides, we've no money for hiring a sledge.'

'A sledge doesn't matter,' said Prascovie, eagerly. 'I should walk.'

'And even if you reached the capital,' went on her father, brushing aside what Prascovie suggested, 'how could you ever win audience with His Imperial Majesty? Ridiculous!'

But Prascovie was so persistent that at last she won a reluctant consent. Perhaps her parents were desperate; perhaps they thought they would see her back after a few miles' journey. At any rate, they gave her what little money they could afford; the kindlier folk among the neighbours, admiring the spirit of the girl, added a few more coins; and, sped by many blessings, Prascovie set out.

2 A terrible journey

She thought the first day of her journey would never end. As sunset drew near she wondered much where she would find shelter for the night. Knocking at last on the door of a poor hut, she was welcomed kindly by some peasant folk, and next morning she started off, refreshed. Her face was set westward across the vast wastes of Siberia, which few ever ventured to cross without guides and escorts. Night by night she slept at the huts of the peasants, always insisting on paying for shelter and food by doing some washing or mending for the household that had sheltered her.

The short Siberian summer ended, and the fierce winter was at hand. 'I cannot travel alone through the snow drifts.' Prascovie realised. But she did not give up her quest. She went to the proprietress of an inn.

'If you please,' she said, 'may I stay here for a few weeks! I only want the simplest food and a roof over my head. I can

pay for my lodging.' She felt for her purse; it was gone! The proprietress was a kindly woman, and saw that the child's surprise and distress was genuine. She took Prascovie in, kept her for many weeks, befriended her, taught her to read and write, and helped her to earn enough money to pay for a passage on a cargo boat that would help her on the next stage of her journey.

Prascovie started off again in the spring with renewed hope. It was pleasant to be spending a quiet day or two moving slowly along the river, and the lift would make her journey much shorter. But disaster was at hand. The boat capsized, and Prascovie found herself struggling in the still icily cold water. She was rescued, but she had caught a chill, and soon the stranger-girl was taken to the good sisters in a convent near the scene of the accident, to be nursed through an acute attack of pneumonia.

Little by little Prascovie recovered, but it was a long, slow business. That summer passed, and another winter came and went, while a pale and weakly Prascovie was cared for by the sisters. They heard her story in due course, and learned to love the child, as well as to admire her grit and courage. When at last she seemed strong enough to start on her way again, the mother superior sent for her. 'My child,' she said, 'I have good news for you. We have been able to arrange for a ticket to be bought for you, so that you may travel direct to St. Petersburg. How you will fare there I cannot tell. May the good God be your helper then, as He has been up till now.'

3 Success at last

So Prascovie came at last to the great city. The first part of her scheme had been accomplished; now she had to compass the second and win audience with the Emperor. She did not know how to begin to do this.

'To win audience!' someone said, answering her timid enquiry. 'It is well-nigh impossible. Still, there is one way.

One who sets out his petition in writing and hands it to a senator may, if he is lucky, be a step on the way.'

'How glad I am the kind lady at the inn taught me to write!' thought Prascovie. She wrote out her petition, and then stood near the entrance of the Senator's Palace, holding it out. But no one took any notice of her. She stood there day after day. One man did give the pathetic figure five roubles, but no one would stop to read the petition.

One evening she was trudging back to her poor lodging when a statue of Peter the Great, the famous and loved emperor of a past day, caught her eye. She stopped to look at it. 'He would have read my petition,' she thought, half dazed with weakness and hunger. Then a queer notion came into her head. 'I must give my petition to someone,' she said, weakly. 'I will give it to Peter the Great,' She tiptoed up, trying to push the worn roll of writing into the bronze hand.

Someone touched her on the shoulder. 'My mistress wishes to speak to you,' said the servant of a grand lady who had been passing and had noticed Prascovie's attempt. The girl followed the servant and curtseyed to the lady.

'Why are you doing that, child!'

'Madam,' said Prascovie, 'I cannot reach the Emperor. I cannot even reach the hand of this bronze emperor. I am trusting God; He can make the Emperor come to me if I cannot reach to him.'

'What do you mean?' asked the lady. She took Prascovie home with her. Prascovie told her the whole story of her father, the officer unjustly exiled, and her own deep hopes of winning pardon and happiness again for him. She told something, too, of her amazing journey. The great lady said little, but she thought much, and she made a plan.

She was a member of the Court, was this lady. The next day she told this story there, and it was repeated to the Emperor himself, Tsar Alexander the First.

'There can be only one ending to such a tale,' said the Em-

peror. So his messengers were sent to bring tired, brave Prascovie to the Imperial Palace, and she found herself face to face with the Emperor. He talked to her gently, listened to all she had to say, and then himself handed her the important-looking document that an attendant held in readiness.

'It is your father's pardon,' said the Emperor. 'His post at court here is waiting for him. I have already sent word to him that he may return at once.'

So Prascovie had proved again that determination and courage, and a great love, can achieve the impossible.

This is a true story. It is sad to know that Prascovie died just before her father and mother reached St. Petersburg.

Lilian E. Cox
(extracted from *Gallant Women*
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the National Christian Education Council)

ELIZABETH FRY

1780–1845

1 Those young Gurneys

One spring day in the late 1700s, the Norwich coach was toiling up the road, as it neared the end of its journey. Suddenly the travellers saw what looked like a red ribbon stretched across the road in front of them. As they drew nearer they saw it was a line of seven girls, all dressed in red cloaks, standing with linked arms. 'I'll teach them a lesson,' said the coachman, and whipped up his horses to a gallop. 'Get out of the way,' he shouted. But the girls stood firm. They knew no horse would ever run down a human being, and just as the coach reached them, it creaked to a halt. For a moment horses and girls faced each other, then the girls broke rank and ran off laughing. 'It's those Gurney sisters, drat them!' said the coachman as he started up his horses again.

The seven Gurney girls and their four brothers lived at Earlham Hall, a large house on the outskirts of Norwich. Their father was a banker and had made his money in the wool trade. Their mother had died when Catherine, the eldest child, was sixteen. The stopping of the Norwich coach was only one of the many madcap adventures of this lively family. They were brought up as Quakers, or members of the Society of Friends, a group of Christians who lived very strict and serious lives; but the young Gurneys used to shock the older Quakers by going to dances and parties and wearing bright-coloured clothes. Once they entertained Prince William, a nephew of King George III, whose regiment was stationed in Norwich, by mimicking a Quaker Meeting.

It was these meetings that the young Gurneys found so dull. Every Sunday morning, the whole family went to the Meeting House in Goats Lane, Norwich, where they would sit in silence, sometimes for over two hours, until someone felt moved by God to speak. 'Goats this morning was very dis', was often written in their journals. 'Dis' was short for disgusting.

Betsy, the fourth child, was rather delicate and often had the good fortune not to be well enough to go to 'Goats', but she missed a good deal of the fun too. When she could join in the dances and music, no one enjoyed them more than she did. But because of her poor health, she spent much of her time alone and she was more thoughtful than the others. Deep down she found she was not entirely satisfied with all the pleasures of Earlham.

One Sunday morning, when she was eighteen, she decided that she would go to the Meeting, especially as William Savery, a leading Quaker from America, was to be there and perhaps might be interesting. Betsy had on new boots, purple laced with scarlet, and disapproving looks passed between the stricter Quakers. There was silence for a large part of the Meeting, until at last a firm, clear voice broke the stillness. It was different from the usual drone. William Savery felt that God was telling him to say something. Betsy forgot her new boots and for the first time in her life began to believe that there was a God, who lived and spoke and who was interested in her. It was the start of a mighty change.

It all happened very gradually. Betsy went on dancing, flirting a little and for a time enjoying all the excitement of a London season. But she never lost the longing for a life of service to God and to other people. Back at Earlham she began to notice the ragged children around her, who never had the chance to learn to read or write, and she started a school for them in the laundry at Earlham. 'Betsy's imps' her family called them. She had to fight a long and hard battle

with herself, as she dreaded the idea of becoming too serious. But after a while there simply was not time for all the old parties, and she no longer wanted to flirt or attract the young men with her daring clothes.

Then she made the big decision to wear the Quaker costume – a simple dress with a white collar and a white muslin cap. Her sisters were horrified, but one young man thought her more attractive than ever. Joseph Fry, the son of a wealthy family of tea merchants, was a strict Quaker himself, and he took notice of Betsy's change.

2 Monsieur Grellet is shocked

'I have seen many kinds of evil,' said the stranger, 'but never anything so terrible as this. That is why I have come straight from Newgate prison to ask for help.'

It was thirteen years ago since Betsy Gurney first put on the Quaker dress, and now she was Elizabeth Fry, the wife of Joseph Fry, the banker, the mother of eight children and the mistress of a town house and a country house. The family were spending the winter in London in their home in the city, and now, quite unexpectedly, this visitor had arrived. He was Stephen Grellet, a French Quaker, who had been living in America; and he had come to London to search for the poor, the sick, the lonely and all who needed help most. His wanderings took him to Newgate jail, where he was shocked by the way the prisoners were living. And the women's quarters were worst of all.

The women were all herded together like animals in a cage. Some might have committed murder, others had done nothing worse than steal a crust of bread for their children and others had not yet been tried, so might not have broken the law at all. But all were treated alike. A sickening smell filled the air, and though it was mid-winter, many slept on the bare floor or on a little dirty straw. Several of the women had their children with them, often born in the prison. If any visitor

came near the bars, the prisoners pressed forward, begging for money which they could spend on drink and so perhaps get drunk enough to forget their misery. They fought each other to get near the front, biting, scratching, punching and screaming like wild creatures. The men who were supposed to look after them did not dare go behind the bars unless they had a strong fellow-warder with them. The worst place of all was the infirmary where the sick women and babies were put. They were left, cold and hungry, on the bare floor with very little to cover them.

When Elizabeth heard about all this she acted quickly. Her Quaker cap and dress meant more than a change of costume. When she had put it on at the age of nineteen she had decided to spend the rest of her life serving God and other people. Now she bought yards of flannel and called together other young Quaker wives to come and sew. The very next day she and her friend Anna Buxton went to the prison infirmary, and after an hour or two every baby was wrapped in a warm garment and all the women were lying on beds of thick, clean straw. A few days later warm clothes and hot soup were brought in for them. Best of all, they had the feeling that there was someone who cared.

Elizabeth went home that night, happy to think that those women and children were more comfortable; but she did not know that she was beginning to make history.

3 The crazy adventure

It was a cold January day and Elizabeth Fry was standing outside the women's prison at Newgate, talking to two of the warders. The noise was deafening. Some of the women were drunk, some were fighting, some were screaming with laughter and others were crying. All were dirty and untidy.

'You couldn't go in there, lady,' said one of the warders. 'They'd tear off everything you have. The prison governor has a guard when he goes in.' 'Oh, but I have a letter here from

the governor,' said Elizabeth, 'to say that I may visit the prisoners.' 'The governor must be crazy,' said the other warder. 'We don't want to see you torn to bits, Madam.' 'I am not afraid,' said Elizabeth. 'God will keep me safe, and I want to speak with these ladies.' 'Ladies!' said the warder. 'Just look at them!'

At last they agreed to let Elizabeth in. 'But you must leave your watch with us,' they said, looking at the chain that showed up bright against her Quaker dress. 'I always take my watch with me, wherever I go,' was the answer. The warders looked at each other. This lady was plainly mad, and it would not be their fault if she got hurt or robbed. At last they unlocked the gates and Elizabeth went in.

For a moment all the women stood still. They were too surprised to move. And then they surged round her. But nobody touched her. There was something about the way she stood there in her plain dress and cap that stopped them from wanting to harm her. Then she picked up one of the babies and held the filthy little thing in her arms. 'I am anxious about these little children,' she said, 'because I am a mother myself and I want these babies to grow up to a better life than the one I see here. How do you think we can help them?' It was the only way to win their friendship. They found a chair for her and then they began to tell her what they felt, their sadness, their bitterness, their hopelessness. Elizabeth sat and listened for a long time, and then they began making plans – not the plans of the prison committee, nor the governor's plans, not even her plans, but their own thoughts and ideas for the children. Most of the trouble was that they had nothing to do. Of course what was needed was a school.

The next time Elizabeth visited the prison, the mood was very different. The women were waiting for her eagerly. They welcomed her politely. Yes, they had all been thinking about the school. In fact, they had found a teacher, a fellow prisoner called Mary Conner.

The next step was to talk to the governor and other important gentlemen who ran the prison. 'A school in the women's quarters? Impossible!' 'It was,' they said, 'a kind idea, but a hopeless one to try to teach the children of those creatures. Why, they were no better than animals.' But Elizabeth did not give up. Perhaps she remembered how she and her sisters stood their ground and stopped the Norwich coach when they were young girls. Besides, she was now an important lady, wife of Joseph Fry, the city banker, and sister of John and Samuel Gurney, successful business men. They dared not say 'no' to her, so they promised to think about it. When they met again, the gentlemen said the idea of a school was a good one, but the difficulty was that there was no place for them to have it. Elizabeth thought quickly, and said, 'So you think it's a good idea if we could find the right place?' 'Yes, yes,' said the men, 'but there really is no place.' Elizabeth went straight off to the women and told them everything. 'But of course there's a place,' they said. 'There's a room here that is hardly ever used.' The governor and his friends shook their heads, but they couldn't say 'no' now.

And so, the very next day, the school was opened. The women tidied up the children and the schoolroom. Elizabeth and a friend arrived with plenty of school books, and Mary Conner took her place as teacher.

4 The impossible happens

Elizabeth Fry looked through the door of her school and smiled. 'How wonderful that these poor little children in Newgate Jail would learn to read and write instead of running wild about the prison!' she thought. But soon she saw that this was not going to be the end of the story. Some of the older girls and some of the mothers were gathering round the door and looking longingly at the school. 'How we wish we could learn too!' they were saying. 'There's nothing to do in this terrible place. Think if we could read and write and if

only we could sew!' Elizabeth looked at the narrow little school room. The children filled it. There was no room for anyone else. 'But I cannot say "no" to such a good idea,' she thought. 'I must do something for the women too.'

It would mean another long and difficult argument with the prison officers, and she dreaded that. But this time her husband Joseph helped her and the governor seemed far less frightening when they met in the Frys' own home, and when Joseph stood beside her. Again the gentlemen were shocked by her impossible ideas, but they had to admit that the children's school was a success, and that this Mrs. Fry had a wonderful way of getting what she wanted.

So the prison laundry was cleaned and whitewashed and the new school was started there for any woman prisoners who wished to join it. Of course there had to be rules. The school would not work without them. But now the prisoners made their own rules, and they were so keen to be taught that they made sure the rules were kept. There was to be no more begging, stealing or drunkenness. A matron was employed to look after the whole scheme, and the seventy women who belonged to the school were to be divided into groups of about twelve with a monitor or leader, chosen by the women themselves, in each group. They were to learn to read and write and sew. Elizabeth formed a committee of willing helpers among her Quaker friends, who raised money to buy materials; and one of them went every day to the prison and began and ended the day's work with reading from the Bible. After the women had sewn new clothes for themselves and their children, they made patchwork quilts, simple garments and knitted stockings and socks, which were sold. Most of the money they earned was kept and given to them when they were released or sent abroad. But they were allowed to have a little of it at once, and a small shop was opened in the prison where they could buy tea and sugar and a few extra things to eat.

After a few weeks visitors to the prison could hardly believe their eyes. Instead of a crowd of wildly shrieking, ragged creatures, they saw parties of neatly dressed women, sitting round long tables, sewing or knitting and listening to a Quaker lady reading aloud. The news spread all round the country. Letters came from other prisons, some even from the Continent, asking how this miracle had happened. Members of Parliament were asking Elizabeth to come and tell them about her work. Suddenly she found that she was famous.

5 Not 'you' but 'we'

Frederick William IV, King of Prussia, was staying in London for the christening of Queen Victoria's son.

'There are two things I would like to do while I am here,' he said. 'I wish to see Mrs. Fry reading to the women prisoners in Newgate Jail, and I would like to lunch with her in her home.' 'But, Your Majesty,' said a startled courtier, 'surely it cannot be right for so great a king as you to lower yourself by visiting the home of an ordinary business man.' 'I do not think I should be lowering myself by visiting Mrs. Fry,' said the king. 'She has taught me how our poor prisoners in Prussia should be treated. Besides, she is my friend.'

And so it was that King Frederick came to Newgate Jail and heard Elizabeth read the Bible. 'We are greatly honoured to have this great king among us today,' she told the women. 'But remember, we are more honoured to have Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, with us every day.' A little later Joseph and Elizabeth welcomed the king to their home. They presented twenty-five of their grandchildren, besides many of their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. Elizabeth wrote in her Journal, 'I sat by the king, who enjoyed his dinner, perfectly at ease and very happy with us.'

Now she was over sixty, and people still kept asking, 'How did you bring such a marvellous change to the women in Newgate Prison?' It was the fashion for the smart ladies of

London to go and listen to Mrs. Fry reading the Bible to the prisoners. Members of Parliament sent for her to answer their questions, and she was asked to visit prisons all over the British Isles and then in France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Germany. Everywhere she went, people asked her advice.

When she was sixty-five her health was failing, and she knew she had not long to live. Joseph, her husband, would sit by her, sometimes for an hour on end, to help and comfort her when she was in pain. 'And what did you feel about meeting all those grand people?' he said. 'Oh, I was afraid I would get conceited,' said Elizabeth, 'and some of the Quakers were afraid of that too and used to come and warn me. But if the poor women in the prisons and their children could be helped to live better lives, it was worth all the travelling and speaking and answering questions.' 'And what did you say to those kings and governments?' asked Joseph. 'I told them that there should be special prisons for women only with women governors and warders, and that those who kept on committing crimes should be separated from first offenders and those awaiting trial, that useful work should be found for the prisoners to do, and that all of them should be well fed and clothed. But the most important thing was that I always thought of myself as one of them. I never said "You must do this," but always, "we must do it". Yes, that was my secret, not "you" but "we".'

Elizabeth died that autumn, but before that she visited Earlham, the home of her girlhood, once more. There she was Betsy again, the same person as the girl who went to the Quaker Meeting in Goats Lane in purple boots laced with scarlet and who heard William Savery speak and decided to give her life in service to God and other people.

Katharine Thornhill

MAUD WATT OF HUDSON'S BAY

1897

1 An adventurous childhood

Born in Canada, Maud Maloney came tenth in a large family of children. Her father was Irish and her mother a French Canadian. She was brought up in the early part of the nineteenth century on the cold stormy shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, at Mingan, a trading post of the great Hudson's Bay Company. Her father owned a strip of farmland in a little settlement of hunters, fur traders and fishermen. Behind their dwelling was the dark forest, and at the edge of the forest the Indians lived in summer. In the winter they would go off hunting and return in the spring bringing furs to sell at the Hudson's Bay trading post.

It was a hard-working life for everyone, children included. They helped with the haymaking and harvest and even, sometimes, in unloading ships. Maud and her brothers and sisters became skilled at handling boats of all sorts, particularly canoes. One day one of the Indian children was mauled by a bear, so Mr. Maloney decided that all his children must learn to shoot. Maud became a very good shot, a skill that stood her in good stead in her later, adventurous life.

In the home there was never an end to the things that needed to be done. Maud would help her mother and older sisters to spin wool into yarn which they knitted into jerseys, stockings and scarves for the family. There was a special oven for bread-making, and another for smoking fish. In the garden there were beehives. Besides cooking meals for such a large

family, their mother learnt, and taught the children, telegraphy, so that they could earn something extra by operating the set at the Company's office. Each child had to learn to carry out every job properly so that they could be relied on as part of a team.

'Never was there a busier family – never greater love and contentment,' Maud wrote later.

One day, in the year 1906, Mr. Maloney told them that a new young clerk was coming to help at the Hudson's Bay post. His name was Jim Watt. The Maloneys were excited at the thought of a young newcomer. Jim turned out to be a sandy-haired young Scotsman of twenty-two with honest blue eyes. He became a frequent and welcome visitor to the Maloneys' cheerful home. Maud, a lively youngster with merry brown eyes and two long pigtails, enjoyed pulling his leg. Through these years she went to a convent school, by canoe, lodging there through the week.

When she was sixteen Jim asked her father if he could marry her. 'She's much too young,' Mr. Maloney declared. 'And besides, you are only an apprentice clerk. Don't let me hear any more of such rubbish.'

Jim would not be put off, but went away hoping to better himself and return when Maud was a little older.

And that is exactly what he did do. He gained experience trapping with the Indians and working for the Hudson's Bay Company in the far North, and became an expert at judging furs.

When he returned to the Company's city headquarters two years later, they offered to make him manager of a post of his own. It was at Fort Chimo on the frozen shores of Ungava Bay. It would mean catching a boat immediately and setting sail up the wild coast of Labrador before the winter ice made the journey impossible.

Maud, now eighteen, was in Quebec doing a war job, as the First World War had already broken out and it was now 1915.

Jim rushed to Quebec. Would she marry him? Would her father now consent? Could a wedding be arranged in so short a time? Telegrams flew right and left. There were no doubts in Maud's mind. She knew she would go to the ends of the earth with him. So they were married and set off immediately by ship for a life of challenge and adventure in the far, frozen north, a life which would demand all the qualities of reliability and teamwork which Maud had learnt in her busy, happy home.

2 A hundred miles on snow shoes

The Hudson's Bay Company flag flew proudly over the tiny cluster of wooden buildings at Fort Chimo on the coast of Ungava's frozen wastes. It was the fur-trading post where Jim Watt was taking up his new appointment as manager and bringing Maud, his eighteen-year-old bride.

Their only touch with the outside world would be the once-a-year visit of a ship bringing the vitally needed stores for the little settlement. There were neither planes, trains nor wireless. The year was 1915 and the First World War was raging on land and sea. Jim was seriously warned that the relief ship might, thus, be prevented from getting through.

Maud was not put off from accompanying Jim by such warnings. She was a girl who was never daunted by difficulties. In fact, she found the life at Fort Chimo fascinating. The roving Indians who hunted in the area camped near the store for weeks at a time. When they found a welcome and a cup of tea in Maud's hospitable kitchen they soon started dropping in. Her ability to get on with them and to pick up their language was the greatest help to Jim in his work.

Jim had to produce oil, hides, fish and fur from the Indians and Eskimos and get these goods processed and packed. But all the time, at the back of his mind, was the grim thought: What would they do if the ship did not come next summer? Somehow they must find some line of contact with the outside world.

Jim decided to try to establish relay posts with stores along a possible route overland.

When the work started in earnest on the first post Maud and the carpenter's wife, Mrs. Edwards, went along with their husbands and some Indians. Dog teams dragged the heavy equipment. It was a tough journey across more than a hundred miles of frozen rivers and snow-covered land.

Maud had learnt to run with the dog teams in Indian snow shoes which were strung flat, rather like tennis racquets. Being a good shot, she often ranged off apart and brought down birds for the pot.

Jim, in the lead, fell through the ice one day. An Indian, with Maud hanging on to his feet, snaked near enough to the hole to throw a rope, while others built a fire on the bank to avert the very real danger of Jim dying from cold when he was hauled in.

They spent a busy summer setting up the new post, putting up store houses and building a boat. They had not been able to bring much food with them, hoping to live off the land. But game was amazingly scarce that year. The party suffered continual hunger, but Jim felt that the storage post, which they had named Fort Mackenzie, must be established at all costs. He had sent two Indians off to Fort Chimo for fresh supplies weeks ago. But anything might have happened to them on that difficult and dangerous journey.

Then, suddenly, one day, a great shout went up. The stores had arrived! That night parties sat round dozens of little camp fires and joyfully ate their fill. It was a real feast.

Towards midnight there was a sound of deep-throated singing. Old hymn tunes were recognisable. The Cree Indians, who were Christians, wanted to give thanks for the feast. Then followed strange chants from members of other tribes who wanted to join in and express gratitude to the Great Spirit in their own way. For long they sat round in their tribal groups, drinking tea by their flickering camp fires

and lifting up their hearts in song. It was a scene that deeply stirred Maud and Jim.

With renewed strength they got the job finished at Fort Mackenzie and set off home to Fort Chimo. As the snow had now melted, they travelled partly by canoe, facing dangerous rapids and whirlpools. Many times Jim felt thankful to have such a splendidly reliable wife who tackled every difficulty with good heart.

3 A race for life

There came a time for Jim and Maud Watt at their isolated outpost at Fort Chimo in Northern Canada, when they accepted that their worst fears were to be realised – the ship on whose yearly visit they depended for food and supplies was months overdue. It was April, 1918. The First World War was raging in Europe. Anything might have happened to the ship. The nearest inland town was some eight hundred miles away, across uncharted snow-covered land and frozen rivers. They had not only themselves and their two or three white helpers to think of, but the many Indian hunters who depended on the Hudson's Bay Company's store of which Jim was manager.

'The only thing to do is to try to get help by land,' said Jim. 'If you go, I go too,' declared Maud stoutly. Jim argued at first, but perhaps not very hard, as she would be a wonderful team-mate, who could always be relied on, and her warm understanding of the Indian tribesmen would be invaluable. Besides, she was a very good shot when it came to foraging for food.

As they set off in the dark, with the temperature 30° below freezing, their friends hardly expected to see them alive again. Only one white man had completed the journey before, and he had arrived in a dying condition.

They travelled as the Indians did, with all their equipment for the eight-hundred-mile journey packed on to one sledge

with three husky dogs. How thankful they were that, owing to Jim's foresight, a staging post and stores had been set up after the first hundred and twenty miles at Fort Mackenzie! There, an Indian family joined them as travelling companions. They also picked up a canoe, to help them when they came to the unfrozen rivers farther south. But in the meantime it had to be hauled overland by sledge. Week after week they plodded on, sometimes with howling gales, when it was agony to get out of their warm sleeping bags in the morning and face the intense cold.

And hunger always stalked them.

It was a joy, in that silent waste, to run into an Indian encampment. The largest wigwam held four families and was cheerful with a fire in the centre where about ten kettles boiled and fish were broiling on wooden spits. The floors were lined with clean spruce branches and the babies were slung in cradles like little hammocks.

Days of hardship, hunger and peril ensued as they pushed onwards, mostly by canoe now, forcing their way through melting ice.

At last, on April 9th, nearly two months after their journey started, they rounded a bend in the river and saw houses. It was a wonderful moment.

Their clothes were in tatters and they looked like tramps. So they stopped for a grand clean-up and dressed themselves in town clothes which they had brought with them all the way from Fort Chimo.

When Maud was ready, Jim grinned across at the dependable comrade of so many dangers and exclaimed. 'Good heavens, Maudie – and to think you are beautiful too!'

Their arrival out of the unknown caused a sensation. Within a week a ship with supplies was on its way to Fort Chimo.

4 Hunters and beavers

After Jim and Maud Watt had accomplished their fantastic journey across the frozen wastes of northernmost Canada, Jim was promoted to be manager of another Hudson's Bay Trading post, a settlement named Rupert's House.

As time went on, two children were born to them there – Hugo and Jacqueline. But things were not going smoothly at the post. It was losing money. The Indian hunters were bringing in far fewer furs than usual, owing to a shift in the pattern of the animal life of the region. The Company told Jim he must cut down on the credit he gave the hunters at the trading store.

'This is dreadful, Maud,' stormed Jim. 'It means they won't be able to equip themselves properly for their hunting expeditions and that their families will go short of food and necessities.'

The greatest hardship was caused by the sudden almost total disappearance of the beavers. The Indians depended on trading their furs, and, in winter, relied on them as their chief source of food. But now only four skins were brought in during the whole winter instead of the usual hundreds.

Children began to die of undernourishment and many hundreds of families were near to starvation. Maud saved every scrap of food she could for them. Tea leaves were boiled over and over again. They salted fish and tried planting potatoes. But the deaths from hunger continued. One of Maud's most faithful friends among the Indian women lost ten of her twelve children. It was a heartbreaking situation.

Jim tried to get help from the Hudson's Bay Company, but they pointed out that there was a trade depression in the whole country. It seemed that nobody could help these suffering tribes far away in the North.

One day two Indians came to him. They had found a couple of beavers, they said, and wanted to borrow traps or a gun.

Then Jim had an idea. Supposing they could make the region a Beaver Reserve and let the beavers breed? Would it be possible, though, with so many hungry Indians about? He got together their leaders and said he would pay a set sum to any hunter who discovered a beaver couple. The man could then buy food from the store; but he must see that the beavers were not killed. With a box of matches he showed how each pair of beavers, as they had young ones, would multiply, and if only they were left alone for a few years the place would be full of beavers again and their difficulties would be solved. The Indians talked over his plan and agreed.

A few other pairs of beavers were found and were left alone to breed. By the end of the third year there were 200 beavers. Jim had been paying the hunters for them out of his own savings, and now they were gone.

'I wish to heaven that I could go and lay this whole thing personally before the Provincial Government in Quebec,' Jim exclaimed to Maud. 'But I'd get the sack from the Company if I took the time off to do it, and, anyway, the officials who would deal with these things are French-speaking Canadians, and I can't speak French.'

'Well, I can,' retorted Maud, 'And nobody can give me the sack; so when do I start?'

Jim gasped. It would mean a month's journey by sledge in arctic conditions. But if Maud took on anything she could be relied on to carry it through. Their Indian friends were in desperate need and who else could help them?

'All right,' Jim nodded. 'You win.'

5 Maud wins through

When Maud Watt started off on her month-long sledge journey in the Canadian winter to lay before the Provincial Government at Quebec the difficulties that the Indian hunters of their area were facing, she took the two children with her. Jim Watt's hard job as manager of the Hudson's Bay trading post

at Rupert's House made it impossible for them to be left behind with him. A little box-like shelter lined with bearskin was made to fit on to a sledge for Hugo, aged six, and Jacqueline, aged three, to travel in.

So the little party set off, with two sledges, three husky dogs and two Indians as guides. The journey had all the usual hazards of winter travel over the frozen rivers and wastes of land, but the children in their cosy little cocoon stood the journey well. Maud had much on her mind. She would need to persuade the Government to accept their plan for conserving the beaver and thus prevent hundreds of Indians from dying of starvation. But how was she to reach the right men in Government circles?

On arrival, Maud rang up a doctor whom she and Jim had once helped. He willingly gave her introductions. At first the going was hard. 'Don't you see,' pleaded Maud, 'that unless we can make this plan for preserving the beaver official, the Indian tribes in the area who live by trading its fur and eating it for food will just die off? Already people from outside are beginning to hear of our beavers, and if they come poaching we have no legal right to drive them away.'

'That woman has the persuasiveness of the Angel Gabriel,' one official exclaimed, as Jim's plan was finally accepted.

When she returned to Rupert's House, Jim called the Indians together and told them that the Government had declared an area around them of seven thousand square miles as a beaver reserve. Twenty paid beaver watchers were to be appointed to see that no one came poaching. Then, when there were enough beavers to start hunting again, it would be controlled in a fair way.

The Indians stood round grunting with satisfaction. 'Mrs. Watt saw the Big Boss of Game and Fisheries in Quebec,' Jim said. 'She told him you are dependable. So he had this law passed.'

When the numbers of beavers reached four thousand,

quotas were allowed to licensed Indian hunters. As years went on, the scheme was so successful that it was copied by others. A wonderful new prosperity came to the Indians. A hospital and school were built in the territory. But Jim's hard labours had told on him, and in 1944, when 'flu struck, he developed pneumonia and died suddenly. He was laid to rest in a small cemetery among the Indians whom he loved, and with a background of cataract and forest.

Maud was stunned. She went south, but city life was not for her. She must make a living, but how? She remembered how much the Indians had liked her home-made bread. Perhaps she could start a bakery at the Rupert's House settlement? It would take money and materials and a bit of land to build on.

There were many difficulties, but the Indians gave her a heart-warming welcome. At a little ceremony they told her that each hunter had put aside his claim for the sale price of one of his beaver skins and it had been put to a credit account for Maud at the store. The account came to two thousand dollars. It was breath-taking.

Then the Jesuit Fathers offered her land and building materials, and soon the bakery was open and in full swing.

Maud lived and worked there for many years. It was a great joy when the combined efforts of many people gave reality to a dream of hers that a memorial to Jim should take the form of a meeting house for the Indians. It filled a great need, as the tent-dwellers had nowhere where they could get together in the long dark winters. The Indians took a large part in the building work and called it their Long House. Over the door, in big letters, it bears the name of Jim Watt. Many, however, who go in and out think, too, of his wife, Maud, and of all that the two of them did together to make a better life for the folk among whom they lived.

Mary St. J. Fancourt

MAHATMA GANDHI

1869–1948

1 'He loved you as he fought you.'

Three pistol shots rent the air.

A frail 78-year-old man was shot in the chest.

'O God,' he uttered, and fell.

Mahatma Gandhi, the man who shook the greatest Empire of his day and led his nation to freedom, was dead.

The Mahatma ('great soul'), as he was called, was killed by one of his own people.

Tributes poured in from a stunned world – from leaders who fought him like Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Smuts, and from others who followed him.

India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, his eyes filled with tears, broadcast to his nation: 'The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere . . . The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. In a thousand years that light will still be seen . . . and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.'

From South Africa, where Gandhi fought his first battles for coloured people's rights half a century earlier, came this tribute from his main opponent, Field Marshal Smuts: 'A prince among us has passed.' He noted that Gandhi was the most difficult man to fight against, for he loved you as he fought you. When Smuts had Gandhi sentenced to jail, Gandhi decided to do some leather-work. The first pair of sandals he made were designed for Smuts and sent to him. When Gandhi died, Smuts returned the sandals to India, where, he felt, they rightly belonged.

This man who lived dangerously and courageously for fifty years and more was once a timid and a shy boy. He was born on the west coast of India in Porbander. His father was the Prime Minister of a princely state. His mother was a deeply religious lady. At a young age he couldn't bring himself to lie nor cheat. At school he disliked games, but was sensitive if anyone poked fun at him.

Frail and fearful, he was drawn to a powerful and strong boy at school. In his company Gandhi ran into debt, feasting on meat dishes he was forbidden to eat for religious reasons. To pay back the money he borrowed, he stole a gold ornament from his younger brother, sold it and paid off his debt. But he felt terrible about it. He dare not speak to his father, but neither could he dare to live with his conscience. So he wrote a note of his confession and, trembling with fear, handed it to his father. Young Gandhi was prepared for harsh words and a possible beating. Instead, as the father read the note tears trickled down his face. He tore up the note and said nothing. This was Gandhi's first experiment with truth.

On matriculation at 19, he went to England to study law. He was dressed in his turban and native dress, and did not know English manners. He felt so out of place in the ship's dining room that he stayed in his cabin and survived on fruit and sweets for the whole month.

When he landed in England he wondered how he could survive for three years. He thought it would help if he became a 'polished English gentleman'. He bought a top hat and an evening suit from the fashionable Bond Street in London. He started taking lessons in dancing, violin and elocution. At this stage, something in his heart told him he was going about things in the wrong way. It is character, not clothes, that makes a gentleman. He gave up his lessons and simplified his life style.

He passed his law exams easily. He came back to Bombay by ship, eager to report to his mother, but received the sad news that she had died while he was abroad.

2 Fighting injustice

After some time practising as a lawyer in India he received an invitation from an Indian firm to go to South Africa to fight a court case. On landing in Durban he encountered his first experience of colour prejudice. Gandhi's client had booked him a first-class ticket from Durban to Pretoria. A railway official asked him to travel in the van. 'But I have a first-class ticket,' Gandhi protested. 'That does not matter.' A policeman was called for and Gandhi was pushed out. His luggage (which had his overcoat) was taken from him and the train steamed away. It was winter. That night Gandhi spent shivering in an unheated waiting-room.

It would have been easy for him to return to India, but it would have been cowardly. So he took the next train to Pretoria. He had to travel part of the journey by stage-coach. The white man in charge of the coach, who usually sat next to the driver, decided to ask Gandhi to sit next to the driver and comfortably settled inside with the white passengers.

At about three in the afternoon, the leader wanted to sit next to the driver for fresh air. He took a piece of dirty sackcloth, spread it on the footboard and told Gandhi, 'You sit on this. I want to sit near the driver.' In fear and trembling Gandhi replied, 'I will not do so, but I am prepared to sit inside.' As he was struggling with these words, the white man hammered him with blows. He tried to drag Gandhi down from the stage-coach. Gandhi clung to the rails ready to have his wrists broken rather than to submit to this tyrant. Some of the passengers, moved to pity, exclaimed: 'Let him alone. He is right. Let him come and sit with us.'

In that moment of physical danger, when Gandhi refused to yield to evil, the Gandhi who was to make history was born.

When the court case finished, Gandhi was planning to leave for India, but realised that the work must go on to secure the rights of his people. He stayed on to start the Natal Indian

Congress, so that the people of South Africa and the world could also hear of the injustices suffered by his people.

Things were becoming worse. The Transvaal State Government insisted that all Indians must register and carry permits to enter the state, even though they might have lived in South Africa for many years. Under Gandhi's leadership Indians refused to register. They were not afraid of going to jail. This kind of non-violent campaign he called 'Satyagraha', meaning 'the force of truth'.

At a public meeting, two thousand Indians ceremonially burnt their permits. Thousands of Indians left their jobs; women and children risked the cold, and even death, to march and join other Indians in the non-violent agitation. At first Gandhi was imprisoned. But the Government could not imprison twenty thousand Indians. It yielded, and a Relief Bill was passed.

Gandhi's main work in Africa was over. India beckoned him. South Africa had prepared him for his role as India's future liberator.

3 Obeying the Inner Voice

On landing in India Gandhi wanted to know how his people lived and what they thought. He travelled widely and met with the leaders too. The poverty and suffering of his people stirred him.

Gandhi's thought was that for every mouth to feed, God had given two hands. The way to lift people from poverty was work. He founded an Ashram – a place where people live simply. It had only twenty people. He insisted that everyone spin and make homespun cloth to wear themselves and to sell. Gandhi himself spun every day for the rest of his life. As time went on the spinning-wheel brought new life and money into the villages. Eighty per cent of India lived in her villages. Gandhi helped to improve village handicrafts such as pottery. Idle hands found work.

For centuries Hindus were divided into four castes according to their birth. The highest caste was of priests, called 'Brahmins'. Next came the warrior caste, then the traders, and finally the 'Untouchables', who did 'menial work' like sweeping and leather-making. The three higher castes looked down upon the untouchables as unclean. They did not let them use village wells or enter their temples.

Instead of 'untouchables', Gandhi called them 'Harijans' – 'the people of God'. He organised temple entries for them and the right to draw water from the community village wells. He gave the untouchables a sense of their own dignity. He changed the hearts of the higher caste Hindus, many of whom began to help the untouchables.

Gandhi's fame spread. In 1857 Queen Victoria had become the Empress of India. By 1920 Gandhi was leading the movement for India's independence.

He called on his people to boycott the schools, the courts and jobs under British rule. Thousands left their schools, colleges and jobs. He asked them to stop using British-made cloth so that his own people could find work, and he called for bonfires of the cloth as a sign of defiance. Countless bonfires were lit all over India. Thousands went to prison gaily. The jail lost its terror and became a place of pilgrimage. Gandhi insisted that his people should be non-violent, and all over India they behaved well. Only in one little village a crowd grew violent, chased some policemen and killed them. Immediately, Gandhi called off the whole agitation. He was as keen to teach his people to apply the principle of non-violence as to succeed against the British. Gandhi himself was jailed. He used his time well in writing his autobiography, which he called 'The Story of My Experiment with Truth'. He was 50.

Three years later when he emerged from jail, he found that the two major communities of India, practising the Hindu faith and the Islamic religion (Muslims) were having riots

and even killing each other. Gandhi appealed to them for unity and peace. His appeal failed to calm the riots. He decided to suffer himself and went on a fast unto death, or until the riots stopped. As the days passed he grew weaker and weaker without food, and his life was in danger. Even violent and hate-filled men were ashamed of the hurt they were causing an innocent Gandhi by their conduct. The riots ceased and peace came.

Gandhi was by now the outstanding leader of India. His word was unquestioned. As his life grew more busy, he felt that his energies were being drained. He decided to observe a day of silence, and found that it gave him strength and inspiration. It gave him adequate time to listen to the promptings of his Inner Voice, as he called it. His life's struggle was far far greater than getting the British out of India. His object, he said, was to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth.

4 Salt

For thirty years, Gandhi constantly thought how he could free his country from foreign rule. Once, in 1930, he was seeking furiously day and night what action he should launch. Newsmen had gathered from many parts of the world round his humble Ashram, which was just a group of huts, because everyone wanted to know what he would do next. One week passed, two weeks, and three weeks, four weeks and five weeks, and all that Gandhi could say was: 'I see no light.'

Then one day he had the flash of an inspiration: SALT. His Inner Voice told him to strike at British rule where it hurt the poorest peasant most. The Indian peasant who sweated in the sun and heat of the day needed more salt than the average man. The British not only taxed salt but they prohibited anybody from making it. Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy of India that he would make salt with a handful of his followers and defy British law. Gandhi could have quietly gone to the

sea in a train and made the salt. But no. He wanted to use it to awaken his people.

He decided that he would march for twenty-four days, twelve miles a day, to the sea front. He began with seventy-eight followers. Each day village after village followed him up to the neighbouring village. And on they marched. The people were so excited. They were all asking whether he would be arrested – and when. As he marched, people rushed to the papers every morning for news. On the appointed day, at six o'clock in the morning, Gandhi reached the sea. His followers had grown into several thousand strong. He dipped into the water, returned to the beach, and gathered some salt left by the waves. He had broken British law. Gandhi himself was not touched, but at many points along the coast of India, as Indians gathered the salt, they were beaten with batons and rifle-butts and jailed. Gandhi had taught them neither to cringe from batons nor to attack the oppressors. Force had lost its terror. India was now free in its spirit, and it was only a matter of some years before the British would have to leave India.

The Salt March was over in a few days, but it started a march to freedom that went on till Independence came in 1947.

In all this struggle Gandhi educated his people to love the British people, but to hate British rule. He continued his friendship with the British. Some of the finest Britishers of his time assisted him in his struggle for freedom.

Twice the British Government asked Gandhi to join in discussions in London for Home Rule for India. On both occasions he enjoyed his time in Britain, but nothing came of those two conferences. On the streets of the East End of London, Gandhi became a popular figure. Seeing him dressed in a short loin-cloth, some children ran after him shouting, 'Gandhi, where are your trousers?' He turned, smiling at them, and replied, 'You wear your plus-fours, I wear minus-fours.'

Once he was received at Buckingham Palace by King

George V. A British statesman was angry that a man in a loin-cloth and a shawl wrapped over his body – 'a half-naked fakir' – was coming into the presence of His Britannic Majesty. After the audience Gandhi was asked whether he felt cold at the Palace in his scanty dress. Gandhi laughed and replied: 'No. His Majesty had enough clothes for both of us.'

5 'They would not kill, but care'

In August, 1942, during the Second World War, Gandhi challenged the British Government to 'quit India'. He asked them to leave, or 'I will call upon the people to get you out.' He told his people: 'Now do or die.' The call rang out to over five hundred thousand villages of India. Overnight leaders, including Gandhi, were arrested and taken to far-away jails. People reacted with violence. Trains were derailed, shops burnt, police-stations attacked. With force the revolt was suppressed. While in prison with him, Gandhi's wife Kasturba died. She had been a loyal companion.

In India there are Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims are in the minority. When Gandhi came out of jail he was sad to find that a political party of the Muslims were afraid of being ruled by the Hindus once independence came. Because of this, and much against Gandhi's wishes, the British decided that India would be divided into two countries, India and Pakistan.

There was much hatred between the Muslims and the Hindus, and Gandhi's last months were spent in trying to bring these two communities together.

In August, 1947, when India gained its freedom, the sad little man was not in the capital to celebrate it. He was in a poor district of Calcutta trying to calm passions that had resulted in killings between Hindus and Muslims. He was able to bring peace to Calcutta, and then went to Delhi.

Hindu refugees poured in from Pakistan. They were bitter. All of them had lost their homes and many had lost their loved ones. They cried out for revenge on the Muslims of India.

Gandhi visited refugee camps spreading the gospel of love and peace. 'There is no gain in returning evil for evil,' he told his people.

On January 13th, 1948, he started on a 'fast unto death' to bring his people to their senses. As days passed acute pain was written on his face. Touching scenes were witnessed of Hindus and Muslims embracing each other and promising Gandhi that they would not kill, but care. One hundred of them promised him this, and Gandhi broke his fast.

Some days later on January 30th, as he was walking to his prayer meeting, a man stepped in front of him, bowed low, whipped out a revolver and fired three shots at Gandhi's chest. With God's name on his lips, Gandhi fell.

He paid the price with his blood for the sins of his countrymen. His death stilled their hate-filled hearts and violent hands.

His funeral procession inched its way through a mass of humanity to the banks of the River Yamuna. As the flames of the funeral pyre burst upon the afternoon sky, a cry arose from the crowds.

'Mahatma Gandhi amar ho gaye.'

'Mahatma Gandhi now lives for ever.'

R. M. Lala

DOROTHY KERIN

1889–1963

1 The calling to her mission

For many people 'miracles' are strange, inexplicable events which happened long ago, largely to be discounted since there is little concrete or scientific evidence to support them. Generally these events have a supernatural and religious context.

It is all the more startling then to learn of a miraculous cure, happening in our own century.

The subject of our 'Great Life' in this story experienced a miraculous healing, being immediately cured at the moment she was expected to die. This was in itself totally remarkable, yet in many ways the greater miracle was the work she accomplished in the ensuing fifty years of life that were given to her and the influence of her work since her death in 1963.

Dorothy Kerin was born on November 28th, 1889, and lived a normal family life in London up to the age of twelve with her mother and father, three older brothers and a younger sister. Her family background was religious. She recounted in later years that when she was a child, Jesus came to her and handed her an acorn. Jesus told her to water it with the dew of love and it would grow to a mighty oak. All through her life she loved acorns and oak trees, and if you now go to Burrswood, the great centre of healing in Kent which was her creation, you will find abundant oak trees growing. But more of Burrswood later.

When Dorothy was thirteen, her father died and her own

health began to fail. She was said to be very delicate and was put under the close supervision of a series of doctors. At fifteen she had diphtheria and was at first admitted to an isolation hospital and later spent nine months in a Sanatorium. At the end of this time she was still very ill and suffered successively from pneumonia and pleurisy. At this time her doctors were expecting her to die, but in fact this was only the beginning of long years of confinement to her bed. It was discovered that she had a general tuberculosis.

On December 26th, 1911, she was examined by the two doctors attending her and a diagnosis of peritonitis was pronounced. They considered recovery impossible and for the next two weeks she lay unconscious, deaf and blind, due to the further development of tubercular meningitis.

On February 12th, 1912, the doctors warned her mother that she was not expected to live through the day and death could occur at any moment. For six weeks now she had been kept alive on opium, brandy and starch. Her body, which had not moved for two weeks, was tender and bruised to such an extent that much of it was wrapped in cotton wool.

That evening the doctors left the house convinced that she would be dead by the morning. The family priest had given the last sacrament and her mother sat by her bedside with seven or eight friends.

At about half past nine her breathing stopped and those by the bedside assumed her dead.

Dorothy Kerin says that at this moment her name was called by someone three times. She felt her hands taken by two warm hands and amid a beautiful light a voice said, 'Your sufferings are over, get up and walk.'

One of those present in the room recounted that the moment when they thought she was dead, Dorothy opened her eyes, declared she was well and wanted to get up.

They brought her invalid food, which she rejected, and this girl who had not tasted solid food for six months and

who for the last six weeks had lived on injections of opium and starch, sat down to a meal of cold beef, pickled walnuts and coffee!

She was put back into bed at midnight and slept soundly until 8 o'clock the next morning.

Of course the doctors were called, one of whom thought he had been called to sign the death certificate.

Instead of finding the patient in bed, she ran to the door to meet them. Many doctors came to see the case notes and to examine Dorothy, but all were mystified by this inexplicable recovery. Newspaper reporters came to see her and spread this true story, stranger than fiction, all over the world.

A specialist, Dr. Ash from Portman Square, persuaded the family to let him have her in his care for six weeks to carry out a full investigation and get the girl away from the bustle and confusion of her home, now besieged by reporters, onlookers and well-wishers.

X-rays of her lungs, recently seen in the last stages of consumption, revealed not the old wasted lungs, but a pair of healthy lungs. Other tests and experiments followed, none of which revealed any of the diseases from which she had previously suffered.

Where her body had been discoloured and bruised, there was now no sign to be seen of her long stay, confined to her bed.

In due course doctors came from all over the world to study the case of Dorothy Kerin, but none could account for it in medical or scientific terms.

However, this was not the end of the story, rather it was the beginning.

2 Preparation for her mission

Inevitably when the news of this twentieth century miracle broke, there was a great stir in the journalistic world. The home of Dorothy Kerin was besieged by doctors, doubters,

journalists and curious visitors and the privacy of the household was totally invaded.

When, many years later, the world knew of the work which Dorothy Kerin achieved at Burrswood, of which we shall learn later, a reporter from the *News Chronicle*, which was then called the *Daily Chronicle*, wrote to her reminding her that he had been the first to interview her in February, 1912. He recalled seeing her sitting by the fireside wrapped in two blankets. She had no clothing to fit her, since she had been bedridden for so long, and a dressmaker had had to visit the home in order to measure her for some new dresses. For over a week, she had to be wrapped up in blankets.

However, Dorothy could not be left in this artificial and exciting atmosphere for long. After a move or two to stay for a short while with friends, she was offered a permanent home with Dr. and Mrs. Langford-James at Enfield. Dr. Langford-James was a scholar, and very knowledgeable about the lives and writings of the great saints of the church who had undergone mystical experiences.

For the next fourteen years, Dr. Langford-James was to be Dorothy's spiritual director and adviser while she studied the lives and writings of the mystics The great saints all wrote of their suffering and emphasised the essential qualities that characterise all true mystics – love, humility, obedience.

While not wishing to enter an Order as a nun, Dorothy felt that the time had come for her to make the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, and this she did in 1917.

The following year she moved away from Dr. and Mrs. Langford-James to join her mother and younger brother in Ealing.

Ever since her own cure, Dorothy had been interested in the healing ministry of Christ and was convinced that she had a major part to play in this work. Now the moment had come for her to put her ideas, hopes and experience into practice.

In Ealing she saw a modest house of ten rooms and at once knew that this would become her first Home of Healing. It was available for a rent, but she had no income of her own and there was no money available. Such 'trivialities' did not, and would not in the future, stop Dorothy Kerin. She saw her first home not as a place for acute cases, but a place for sufferers needing love, help, advice and counsel.

As soon as she made her plan known, offers of help came in from all sides; money, loans, furniture and equipment. She took on the house, and in the shortest possible time St. Raphael, as the house was called, took in its first guest.

The Chapel, a room at the top of the house, was the heart of the place, and everywhere Dorothy made the house look beautiful with flowers, pictures, colourful curtains and tasteful furnishings. She was a firm believer in the healing agency of beauty.

St. Raphael opened in 1929 and Dorothy Kerin had begun to realise her mission in life.

3 Fulfilment of her mission

Almost before St. Raphael had opened, it became inadequate to meet the demands from people who wished to be ministered to by Dorothy Kerin in her new-found home of healing.

One day in 1930 while she was walking with Bruno, her red setter, of whom many stories could be told, she felt drawn to look at an old derelict house once owned by the Walpole family. She felt certain that this place, unlikely as it seemed, would be her next home. She was told that the purchase price was £5,000, but she had no money and still owed a debt on St. Raphael. She prayed for help in this venture and three days later received a letter from an unknown person who wrote that she had recently had unexpectedly good dividends from her shares and, hearing of Dorothy Kerin's work, was enclosing a substantial amount of money.

This was all the encouragement Dorothy needed. She saw

the owner of the house, who, on learning about the use to which it was to be put, accepted £3,700. Dorothy had many other gifts and with a £500 loan from the bank, to be repaid in six months, she bought the house and set to work making it suitable for habitation. It is astounding to know that even then, Dorothy was confidently predicting that in due course her home of healing would also extend to *six* other houses adjacent to the one already acquired which she called Chapel House. The debt to be repaid to the bank by December worried her, for she now had no funds available. With complete trust in God, on December 13th she wrote out the cheque for £500 and laid it on the altar of the chapel. She went about singing so much that her mother and her other helpers asked, 'What makes you so happy?' She said, 'I have laid the cheque on the altar and am waiting for the Lord to honour it.'

Within two days she had cheques sent her for £100, £200, £100, £80 and £20 – exactly the amount required.

Chapel House became registered as a Nursing Home, and eminent people in the Church and in medicine became spiritual and medical sponsors; thus Dorothy formed that partnership of religion and medicine that was always to be her policy. It is true to say that her work has had some influence on the attitude of doctors generally to the acceptance of the value of religion in their work.

Dr. Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, demonstrated his attitude to her work by commissioning her, in the name of the church, to go out into the world and proclaim the message entrusted to her by Our Lord, and blessed her in the ministry of her gift of healing through the laying on of hands.

In spite of setbacks she never lost faith and eventually she fulfilled her ambition of extending her work to take in six houses adjoining the first, Chapel House; a period of ten years expansion.

There are many records of cures which took place during these years, attested by witnesses and doctors, but it is not the

cures themselves which were important. As evidenced in Dorothy Kerin's own life, it was not her miraculous cure that was important, dramatic as it was, but what she did with the next fifty years that were given to her as a result.

Dorothy throughout this time was always accompanied by her dog Bruno, who went to church with her so regularly that he was called the 'Brown Verger'. I am sure many of us have experience of the unaccountable sense and sympathy which dogs have, and Bruno was no exception. On one occasion, she had to go away and leave Bruno in the care of one of the Sisters at Chapel House. Faithfully Bruno never left the side of that Sister until one day she said, 'Bruno, she is coming back today.' Half an hour before she returned Bruno was to be seen sitting by the front door with two of his favourite toys, one hanging on each side of his mouth, waiting for her.

The story is also told of Bruno, who had a number of treasured toys, carrying several of his broken ones and laying them on the chancel step of the church, presumably for healing, His faith was rewarded, for they were all returned to him, lovingly repaired by his owner.

The war from 1939–45 was an anxious, dangerous period, but in spite of perilous times, the fabric and the people of Chapel House came through unscathed.

After the war, Dorothy added another property to increase the accommodation for her work. This was a large country house called Speldhurst, in Kent, which in a sense pointed the way to her final Home of Healing at Burrswood.

It was after morning service at a local church at Groombridge that the minister drew her attention to the fact that the old Manor House, or Burrswood, as it had originally been called, was for sale.

Burrswood had been the home of a wealthy family. A stream wound its way through the meadow, and a carriage drive ran through woodland to the large house. It had been occupied by troops during the war, but now there was a tangle

of overgrown weeds and brambles, while the fabric of the house was in considerable disrepair.

As soon as she saw the place, Dorothy said, 'This is the one' and she was able to buy at a relatively low price. There followed months of work on what seemed an impenetrable jungle and a derelict house. The move took place in September, 1948.

Burrswood is now a stately, well-kept place that is a delight to visit. Gardens and green lawns have replaced the jungle, and in the house, now beautifully furnished and decorated, there is an indefinable sense of peace, love, caring and healing. Burrswood has a most beautiful chapel of its own and healing services are held regularly there and in the parish church at Groombridge.

A whole book would be required to record the numerous unaccountable healings effected at Burrswood, but as significant are the many patients who are not cured, but go away from Burrswood much more able to accept their illness and suffer their pain with greater serenity.

Burrswood increased its accommodation gradually and by 1958 all the work connected with Dorothy Kerin was gathered under one roof.

The chapel mentioned before was another of her visions that materialised; the beautiful Church of Christ the Healer was dedicated in 1960.

Dorothy's work was not confined to this country. She made missions to Sweden, France, Ireland, Switzerland and America. Her health was seriously undermined by this exacting work and these journeys were followed by an extremely arduous programme in 1962, which was the Golden Jubilee of her own miraculous healing. She became seriously ill, but far from being less active, she increased her visits and the services at which she attended.

As she prepared to go to the Midnight Service on Christmas Eve, she collapsed, and after that, except for two days in

January, never left her room again. She died on January 26th, 1963, when Burrswood, in common with the rest of England, was covered in deep snow.

Victor J. Green

MA MEE HAD A SECRET

1899–1969

1 She loved her school

Ma Mee was a lucky person. She lived in Burma, a fascinating country tucked away between India and China. She and her mother and father and brothers and sisters lived in a beautiful city called Moulmein, on the banks of a mighty river.

Ma Mee and her six sisters went to a big school. She was so proud of her school that when she was fourteen years old she was very excited when the principal told her that she wanted her to become its headmistress one day, after she had passed all her examinations. She prayed to God and said, 'Lord, if You will let me pass my exams in three years, I will serve You for the rest of my life.' It was a promise she never forgot.

She worked hard, and her prayer was answered. When she was seventeen she went to college, passed all her exams, and came back to teach in the school. And when she was twenty-one, she became the youngest headmistress in Burma.

She was determined to make her school the best in all Burma. So she was very strict with the girls, until one day a rebellion broke out, and they wrote a letter to the newspapers with a long list of their grievances.

Ma Mee was furious. All the papers were full of it. *Her* beloved school to be treated in such a way! She hated those girls! She had done so much for them, and look at the way they had treated her! She boiled, and she just couldn't stop hating them, though she tried.

She was desperate, and she prayed again and again to God, 'Take this hate from me and give me Your love.'

All at once she heard a quiet voice saying to her, 'Why don't you accept it?'

'Yes!' she exclaimed. She opened her heart, and into it came flooding the love of God like a great river, filling her completely. In a moment all the hatred and cold hardness disappeared.

The next day she went into every classroom and apologised to the girls – she, the headmistress! She looked at those girls and she loved them, and told them how sorry she was for the way she had treated them.

'It wasn't that I was right and you were wrong,' she said to them, 'or that you were right and I was wrong. But I didn't have love for you in my heart.'

And that was how Ma Mee discovered the secret of how to love people.

2 She loved her enemies

Ma Mee had learned the secret of how to conquer hate with love. Now she had to learn something else – how to love her enemies.

Many years ago, in the Second World War, the Japanese invaded Burma. Their armies advanced from the south to the far north, from where they planned to invade India. Ma Mee and her family were among those who fled up to the north. The whole family of twenty-two was complete – the old mother and father, all the brothers and sisters, wives and husbands, grandchildren, cousins. All through the three years of the war they kept together and were kept safe.

They did not know what was going to happen to them. They only knew that they must let God tell them what to do and where to go, and then to obey Him; and they knew that they must not hate the Japanese, for had not Jesus said, 'Love your enemies'?

That was not always easy. Through those three years the Japanese soldiers were all around them, sometimes in the same house, suspiciously watching all they did. But they remembered what Jesus said about loving their enemies. Some of the soldiers were good to them. One day one soldier whom they had never seen before was a good angel to them; he left a truck full of food – such things as they had not seen for a long time, like sugar and onions and cooking oil – saying that he would come back the next day and get in exchange some bananas and pineapples. But they never saw him again.

All through those three years God was their Guide, as they went to Him for their orders. When He said 'Stay here,' they stayed. When He said 'Go,' they went where He told them. Sometimes it was the Japanese who moved them on, but they still asked God where to go.

They lived for a while in a big unused cowshed in a village, until God told them to move – and a few days later the cowshed was machine-gunned, and many homes around were destroyed.

Another time God told them to leave the town near where they were, and to go south, a hundred miles away. So they packed all their belongings into two carts. But before they had gone far, transport was provided in a railway truck. Less than a week after they left, the whole town was destroyed, with not one house left standing; and the village where they had lived, close to the town, was so badly hit that not even a bush was left unharmed.

Another time the houses all around them were bombed and burned, and the house where they were was the only one in the area untouched.

Ma Mee knew in her heart that God was looking after her family and herself for a purpose, because He wanted her to help in the building up of the devastated country after the war, by building up the character of its people.

3 She loved her country

Soon after Ma Mee had learned the secret of how to love the girls in her school, God sent her out into the world, and everywhere she went she told people what He had done in her heart.

Though she travelled a great deal, she loved her own country most of all, and was always happy when she was back there again.

While the war was going on in Burma, she was constantly thinking what she could do to help her country recover when the fighting was over. All around her she saw the terrible results of the war, not only in villages and towns in ruins, but in people who had turned against each other, and had learned to hate and steal and fight against each other. She was just one woman. What could one woman do for her country?

One day, while she was thinking about this, God told her that there was one thing she could do, and that was to go and see a certain Burmese general, and to give him His message.

Now this general had at first sided with the Japanese, because he wanted independence from the British for Burma. But when he saw what the Japanese were doing to his country, he went over to the British with his troops and offered to help them instead. Many Burmese thought that he was a traitor and did not trust him; but others loved him – he was their hero.

At first Ma Mee thought that God must have made a mistake when He asked her to go and see this man. But she loved God and she loved her country, and at last she said, 'All right, Lord, I will.'

At that time the war was still raging; but one day, when it was over, a British officer drove her in his jeep the four hundred miles to Rangoon, along the roads pitted with shell holes. She and a friend went to see the general, and to her delight Ma Mee found that his wife had been one of her pupils at school. She gave her message, and that was the beginning of a

real friendship with a man who became the Prime Minister of Burma when the country gained independence. It was a friendship that proved of real value to Burma in the coming days, for after that first visit, Ma Mee and her friends went often to see him and his wife, and their understanding and encouragement strengthened his resolve to take a stand for honesty and unity in the land, and to draw a battleline in Burma between right and wrong.

Because Ma Mee loved her country and wanted the very best for Burma, she was asked to speak on the radio several times. She called for honesty, 'Honesty on two legs', she called it, and reminded people that they all had two feet.

4 Turning enemies into friends

Ma Mee had discovered a secret, one which the whole world needs to know – how to turn enemies into friends.

She first discovered it when there was a feud between herself and the girls in the school where she was headmistress. She saw where she had been wrong. She said she was sorry. She asked them to forgive her. The feud ended, and she and the girls became friends for life.

That was only the beginning. If your country has quarrelled with another country, what can you do? How can you turn your enemies into friends?

Over two hundred years ago her country, Burma, had quarrelled with its next-door-neighbour, Thailand. One day Ma Mee visited Thailand. She knew she must do something about that quarrel, but what could she do? She wasn't an ambassador or anything important like that. She was invited to speak at a banquet. Was this an opportunity? She asked God what she should say.

She stood up to speak. She told the people of Thailand how sorry she was for what Burma had done in the past; for they had invaded Thailand many times to steal their royal white elephants, killing many people and destroying many cities.

'Why do I fight against another person?' she asked. 'It is always because I want something; so I grab. Then the other person starts grabbing and we fight, and both get hurt.'

She clenched her fists and held them up. 'When I am like this, I can't shake hands, I can't give, I can't accept. And that is exactly where Burma and Thailand are now. So the only thing for Burma to do is to let go; then together we can find out what is right, and unite, and give to the world.' She held out her open hands.

Then she had another opportunity. She was invited to meet the Prime Minister, and again she asked God what to do. She had among her possessions a little hollow red seed, with three tiny ivory elephants inside. The thought came to take them to the Prime Minister. It seemed a funny thing to do, but she obeyed.

She knelt down in front of him, as Asians do, shook the little white elephants into the palm of her hand, and held them out to him.

'These little elephants have been away from Thailand for such a long time, nearly two hundred years,' she said. 'They were so homesick, they have become very thin.' And as the Prime Minister laughed and laughed, something happened in his heart to heal the old hurt.

The story was broadcast on the radio, and Ma Mee's own Prime Minister heard of it. Then he publicly apologised over the radio for all that Burma had done; and instead of being enemies any more, the two countries became friends.

5 She loved the world

Although Ma Mee loved her own country, and was always looking for what she could do to help Burma to be what she was meant to be, her heart grew and grew to take other countries into it, and to love them as she loved her own. Even the people of distant countries became like her own to her,

until her heart became as big as the world, and the world became her country.

It all began when she first visited America. It seemed very strange to her, and after she had been there for a little while she grew lonely and homesick, and longed to go home to her own people.

She had learned to go to God about things, and to listen to what His voice said in her heart. As she listened, a picture came into her mind of a pail of water. A handful of sand, when dropped into the water, just sank to the bottom of the pail. It was in the water, but not part of it. But a handful of salt dropped into the water became part of it, and gave its own special flavour to the water. 'Lord,' she said, 'I am sorry. If you want me to, I will stay in America all my life.'

From that time she began to love every country she came to as her own. 'This is my country, these are my people,' she would say. She stayed in many lands, whether among Laplanders in the far north of Europe, or African women in Kenya, or the Japanese in the East. Once she had a marvellous birthday party on the roof of a house in Burma, where a friend of hers celebrated it, not by putting lighted candles on a cake, but by planting little flags in her black hair for every country she had visited. But wherever she went, the most important thing to her was that she let the quiet voice of God speak in her heart, and tell her what to do. That took her into many different places and brought her many new friends.

Once, in Switzerland, she was resting on her bed when God said to her, 'Get up and go to the lift. Someone needs you.'

She got up and went. She heard the whine of the lift coming. It stopped and the door opened, and out stepped a mother from Sweden, whom she had met the day before. The mother had been so occupied with her thoughts and problems that she had pressed the wrong button by mistake. But it was

the right button after all, for there was Ma Mee saying, 'Oh, it was you!'

They sat down and talked, and Ma Mee told the mother the secret God had shown her, of how to open her heart to her pupils at school. The Swedish mother found a new way of bridging the gap between herself and her teen-age family, and Ma Mee took another bit of the world into her heart, as a new friendship was born between Asia and Europe, the East and the West.

M. E. Procter
(For further reading see
The World My Country
by M. E. Procter – Grosvenor Books)

DÉDÉE THE UNDAUNTED

1914

1 Escape across the river

Andrée de Jongh was a Belgian girl who during the Second World War was one of the patriotic people who were secretly helping the Allies. Each of them was given a code name, because it was too dangerous for them to be known by their real names. Andrée's code name was Dédée.

She was the daughter of a schoolmaster, and lived with her family in Brussels; but her secret work was to rescue British and other airmen who had been shot down over Northern Europe and help them to escape into Spain, a country which was neutral during the war.

The Germans had made it almost impossible for escaping servicemen to get away by sea, and so they must take a long and dangerous route into and right across France, a large part of which was occupied by the enemy. Then there came a difficult climb over the high Pyrenees mountains into Spain.

There were difficulties and dangers at every step, but Dédée soon gathered a team of determined and trusty young helpers. Her courage, decisiveness and faith inspired them, and she had the backing and help of her family.

There was much to be done. The airmen would have to be collected, passports and false papers given them for the journey and, since few of them would be able to speak fluent French, escorts must be provided to travel with them. And above all, safe places for housing them en route must be found, where

patriots were willing to face the terrible penalities if they were discovered.

They called their organisation The Comet Line. Dédée and a helper who was known as Arnold escorted the first party, numbering twelve. To avoid a major check-point in Belgium, they arranged to cross the river Somme by boat. A farmer would leave one hidden in the rushes for them at a certain point.

It was dusk when they reached the river. Arnold scouted ahead. He was back quickly with a warning. Campers had arrived and were pitching tents on the bank near where the boat was hidden! 'Well, we shall have to find another spot and swim,' said Dédée crisply. There were whisperings in the group. 'Five of us can't swim,' declared one of them. 'As there's no going back,' said Dédée, 'we must rig up a ferry.' Arnold went off to find a rope and an old tyre. 'We'll tie a rope across from a tree on this side of the river to one on the other side. Then anyone who can't swim can use the tyre to keep afloat and pull himself along by the rope. One of us who can swim will be alongside to help. There's a farm over there where we can all dry off. And for goodness' sake keep as quiet as mice, because we know that the Germans patrol the river bank.'

Hardly had she spoken before a light appeared along the tow path and a German patrolman cycled towards them. The party crouched, breathless, among the reeds till he had passed.

Another patrol came past while they were crossing the river. But they got safely through, though the whole operation took till two in the morning.

Dédée swam the river eleven times that night, helping the non-swimmers. As she sat, exhausted, in the friendly farmer's kitchen and drank a mug of hot soup, she felt thankful that the first stage of the journey had been accomplished safely.

2 Escape over the mountains

Many allied airmen were shot down over Belgium and northern France during the war. It was vital to get them back to Britain to fly again. A long escape route was organised by patriots, ending with a dangerous mountain climb over the frontier into Spain.

Dédée, the valiant Belgian girl who had inspired the creation of the escape route called The Comet Line, would travel with a little group of them while her father and friends in Brussels provided forged passes and papers. With the Germans occupying Belgium and a large part of France, dangers threatened at every stage of the journey. To avoid too many check-points where papers and passports must be shown, they had often to travel by slow local trains and to lie up in homes where their courageous hosts risked their lives by receiving them.

When they arrived near the Spanish frontier Dédée would make for the home of Monsieur and Madame de Greef, a wonderful couple, who with their son and daughter, Freddy and Janine, were heart and soul in the rescue movement. Madame de Greef, like Dédée, received, after the war, the George Medal – Britain's highest award for outstanding courage. She dealt in the food Black Market as a cover-up. Food was severely rationed in France, but delicacies were brought over the mountains from Spain and sold at a high price – Mme de Greef got to know these smugglers and enlisted them as guides for the parties of servicemen. Her husband was an interpreter at the German Civil Headquarters and so had the opportunity to get hold of the passes which the travellers would need.

Dédée's first party got through safely. Now she was returning from taking another over the mountains. As she neared Mme de Greef's home she thought of the good news she was bringing. A great worry had been how to meet the

expenses of the airmen whose journeys they arranged. There was also anxiety over the fact that help for the escapers was not certain in Spain. Although the country was supposed to be neutral in the war, many of the Spanish officials were pro-German in their sympathies, and it would be quite possible for British airmen to find themselves locked up for months in a provincial prison there.

Now, however, these troubles had been overcome. She had seen a senior British Consul in Spain and he had promised that all the men's expenses would be paid and that he would personally make arrangements for each party of escapers to get back quickly to England.

Dédée was delighted to be bringing this good news, but, at the same time, she wondered uneasily what news would be awaiting her about a key member of her team whose code name was Arnold. He and his party should have arrived in the frontier zone by train two or three days ago at about the same time as she did. But he had not come when she set off with her party to cross the mountains.

Mme de Greef was eagerly awaiting Dédée's return. When she had introduced her to the mountain guide who was to take their party across the Pyrenees, he would not at first believe that such a slight young girl would have the strength for the long hours of dangerous and difficult climbing in the dark. But, in fact, he soon found that it was Dédée, with her strong, steadfast spirit, who encouraged the others and kept the party together. Although the men were often tough types, she always won their warm respect.

On Dédée's arrival, she rested in Mme de Greef's garden, exchanging news with her friend. 'The British Consul could hardly believe I'd come all the way from Belgium and over the mountains. I think he thought I was a spy,' she laughed. 'But I managed to convince him, in the end, that I really was Andrée de Jongh, the daughter of a Brussels schoolmaster, and that my story was true. He's going to give us all the help we need.'

Dédée's first enquiry had been for Arnold. They discussed his non-appearance with growing anxiety. It seemed only too likely that he and his party had been captured.

Just then there came a low whistle over the garden wall. It was one of the Comet Line helpers from Belgium, Charles Morelle. He brought bad news. Arnold and all his party had been arrested. 'And they have now got your description, Dédée,' he said. 'You cannot return home to Belgium.'

There was no question of Dédée giving up. She must make fresh plans. It looked like the start of a new and still more dangerous phase of their work.

3 A narrow escape

The German secret police, the Gestapo, were relentlessly on the trail of those who were helping British airmen shot down over northern Europe during the war. Andrée de Jongh, the Belgian girl known as Dédée, was now in special danger, as they had discovered that she was connected with the escape organisation known as the Comet Line. They had not, however, found out that she was its chief.

It was too risky, now, to work in Belgium, and so she moved over the border to northern France, where she was not known. In both countries the German army was in control.

Her father took on the Belgian end of the Comet Line, helped by the rest of the family and in particular by Dédée's married sister, Susan Wittek. With young friends acting as couriers, they collected the airmen from the homes where they had been sheltering, provided them with forged travel passes and took them across into France. There they would be met by Dédée, or others of the team, who would escort the servicemen on the long journey from north to south of France. At its end came a dangerous night climb over the Pyrenees mountains into Spain, always dodging the frontier patrols. Dédée went with them to hand them over to the British Consul in Spain. Accidents were not rare. One Belgian helper

lost his life fording a swift-running mountain river. A girl courier fell and broke her leg. But Dédée, steadying them all by her quiet courage and refusal to be daunted by obstacles, got her parties through. Throughout the summer of 1942, she escorted fifty-four servicemen in small groups to safety.

They had many terrifying moments on the journeys across France. The forged travel permits had to be shown many times. Would some sharp-eyed official spot that they were false ones? They must be on their guard the whole time. If they were questioned, one of their French-speaking guides would reply quickly for the Englishmen. If caught, the servicemen would be sent to prisoner-of-war camps in Germany, but for their French and Belgian civilian helpers it could mean death, torture or one of the dreaded concentration camps.

Dédée's family was visited by the Gestapo. They did not, at that time, suspect her father, Monsieur de Jongh, a respected headmaster. They were searching for Dédée. The family met their enquiries by saying that she had left home and they had no idea where she was.

It was a narrow escape, for if they had searched the house they would have found in his desk a pile of false identity cards that he had been making up for the servicemen. After that, he moved his headquarters to the school where he taught. But soon came a warning that the Gestapo were making suspicious enquiries about him. He resigned his job, hurriedly grew whiskers to disguise himself, and moved to a small house in another part of the town.

Before he left home, Dédée paid one swift visit to the family. As they sat talking, her sister Susan's two stepsons, aged sixteen and twelve, kept watch.

'Quick!' suddenly cried the twelve-year-old from the window seat, 'The Gestapo are here!'

Then came a thundering knock at the front door. While her father slowly descended to answer the summons, Dédée

raced ahead and out into the back garden. There, her older nephew hoisted her up so that she could drop over the high back wall on to some waste land. Then he took a spade and carefully wiped out her tell-tale tracks in the snow.

She had managed to get away this time, but for how long would she be able to give her enemies the slip?

4 **Danger closes in**

The escape route, known as the Comet Line, for the British airmen shot down in Northern Europe during the war, was running into grave trouble. Dédée, the courageous girl who was its chief, had had to leave Belgium and was now making her headquarters in Paris. At first her father, Frederic de Jongh, had not been suspected by the German secret police. He had thus been able to stay in Belgium and provide the escorts and false travelling passes to take the escaping servicemen over the frontier into France. They were met there by Dédée and her friends who escorted them on the long and dangerous journey across France, which, like Belgium, was occupied by the enemy army.

Then came bad news: the Gestapo, through its spies, had learnt more about the Comet Line. They believed now that Mr. de Jongh was its chief and they put a price of a million Belgian francs on his head. He must leave quickly and join Dédée in Paris.

A day or two after he had slipped across the frontier, his principal lieutenants in Brussels were arrested.

The whole base of the Comet Line looked as though it had been wiped out. But soon new courageous leadership sprang up again in Belgium, and airmen were again brought down the line to Paris.

Here they had to be housed while arrangements were made for the journey south into neutral Spain. French travelling passes, photos and cover stories must be prepared and beds found for them, both in Paris and in the frontier zone to which they

were travelling. The brave householders who put them up at the different stages of the journey and the young couriers who escorted the servicemen all knew the terrible risks they were running. The Gestapo had spies everywhere and could pounce suddenly. In the Comet Line, however, there was trust and teamwork, and they all found inspiration in Dédée's faith and selflessness.

A terrible blow fell in 1943, when they heard that the new organisation in Brussels, which had been functioning so well for many months, had been betrayed. Two Gestapo agents, pretending to be escaping American airmen, turned up at the home of one of the young couriers. She welcomed and fed them; but then they showed their true colours. They arrested the family at gunpoint and lay in wait for their friends in the escaping organisation who came to the house. They managed to round up nearly the whole network. Dédée's sister was one of the victims.

The search by the Gestapo for Mr. de Jongh intensified. He was not now safe in Paris. It was hard to get him to agree to go to England, as it meant leaving his family behind. But seeing that the search for him by the secret police brought danger to Dédée and the others with whom he worked, he decided to go with the next party which Dédée took across the Spanish frontier.

5 **Betrayal**

It was the winter of 1943. A little group of escapers waited anxiously in a house on the French–Spanish frontier. They had arrived from Paris and hoped to cross over the mountains from enemy-occupied France into neutral Spain. Outside, a terrible storm raged. Dédée, the courageous Belgian girl who had organised the escape of so many British airmen shot down in war-time Europe, had now got her father, Frederic de Jongh, among the little party she was escorting. The Gestapo were on his track and had put a price on his head. So he must

leave his work in Paris, where he had been helping the escapers as they passed through.

When the mountain guide, Florentino, arrived, he declared that the climb in this storm was impossible for an elderly person: Mr. de Jongh must wait for the next party to cross. Dédée hated leaving him there in hiding, but she would be back soon.

So she set off with the guide and three airmen. This was her thirty-third crossing of the mountain passes. She had escorted, in all, a hundred and eight airmen across the hundreds of miles of enemy-occupied France and delivered them to British officials over the frontier in neutral Spain.

Dédée had never known such a storm. The wind roared and they were soon soaked through and utterly exhausted. They thankfully spent the night at a friendly farmhouse high up in the mountains. Florentino said he would rejoin them next day.

In the morning the storm had died down. As they sat in the farmhouse kitchen awaiting the guide, the door was suddenly flung open and they found themselves looking down the gun barrels of the frontier police. Soon they were trailing down the mountainside under armed guard. In the nearest town the doors of a grim French prison closed behind them.

When Florentino arrived, one horrified look at the empty, ransacked farmhouse told him what had happened. He hurried to the home of Mme de Greef, who was at the centre of all the arrangements for receiving the servicemen who arrived in the frontier zone.

'We must try to rescue her!' cried Mme de Greef. 'If she is in the hands of the frontier guards they may not know who she is. We must move quickly before they pass her on to the Gestapo.'

Messages were smuggled through to Dédée in prison in a loaf of bread. She was thankful to hear that her father was still safe, but deeply worried that he had decided to stay and carry

on the work in France. He would be in greater danger than ever. She thought about the betrayal of her party and felt sure that it came through a former guide who had been suspected of stealing and dismissed.

Mme de Greef worked frantically on plans for her rescue. Unsuccessful efforts were made with grappling irons and a ladder to get into the high-walled prison. Then a brave plumber, who bluffed his way into the building, thought he could loosen the ventilator in Dédée's cell, so that she could wriggle through. But before he could start she was sent to another prison. There was a further betrayal. One of the prisoners, under threats of torture, betrayed the names of helpers, and the Gestapo moved in. Many arrests followed of courageous people in the frontier zone who had worked for the Comet Line. Miraculously, however, the de Greef family was never suspected.

Dédée was cruelly questioned many times by her captors, but she retained her faith and courage and never gave anything away. She was taken from France and put in the notorious concentration camp at Ravensbruck. There, among the hundreds of other unfortunate women in the camp, there was confusion about her name. This probably saved her life.

Two years later, at the end of the war, Dédée came out, terribly thin and ill, but with her spirit unbroken. Her sister had also survived imprisonment, but her gallant father had finally been arrested and did not survive. Dédée came to England to receive the George Medal at Buckingham Palace.

Then, as health and strength returned, she sought new fields of service. After all the suffering she had seen, she wanted to help and heal. She trained in tropical medicine and went out to nurse in a leper colony in the Congo. But, in the civil war there, her hospital was looted and burnt down. Now she is matron of a hospital in Ethiopia, a land where, again, she has

seen stormy days. In a life of adventure and dedication, and in many tight corners, her dauntless spirit has inspired all those with whom she has come in touch.

Mary St. J. Fancourt

MOTHER TERESA

1910–

1 Inspiration

If you were walking through the great city of Calcutta, in India, you might at first feel quite at home. You would see supermarkets and great stores, hotels and office blocks. But within a few yards of these signs of wealth you would see a very different picture. Everywhere, in the main streets as well as the lesser ones, with nothing but rags to cover them, lie hungry, sick, homeless and dying men, women and children.

If you could imagine yourself in that city, seeing a baby, so thin that its bones showed through the skin, and so ill that it cried all the time, your first thought would be that the baby needed food and medical aid above all else. This 'life story' is about a woman who would gently correct you and say that the child's greatest need was love.

Mother Teresa, the title by which she is known all over the world, is nearly seventy years old now and seemingly just as active and energetic as she has ever been. She was born in the town of Skopje in Jugoslavia, was christened Agnes and lived quietly with her mother, father, a sister and a brother. The family was Catholic by religion, but she went off daily to a non-Catholic school and seems at that time not to have been marked out in any way; but before she reached the age of twelve years, she was convinced that she would dedicate her life to the needs of poor people. She became a member of what was called the Sodality of Our Lady, a group of young girls and women aged from twelve to twenty who accepted a simple rule of life with prayer, meditation and discussion.

Since at that time the Jugoslav Jesuits had begun to work in Calcutta, letters from them were regularly read to the young Sodalists and, even at that age, Agnes voluntered to work in the Bengal Mission when she became old enough. She was put in touch with the nuns at Loreto Abbey in Dublin, since nuns from Loreto were going out to Calcutta, and she entered the House there when she was eighteen. From there she was sent to Darjeeling, in India, where she began her training to be a nun, employed in teaching geography at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta. Agnes declared that she loved teaching more than anything. She took her first vows to become a nun when she was twenty-one and her final vows at twenty-seven. She took the name of Teresa, the saint of Lisieux, often called the Little Flower. She says that although she knew that God had called her, she had loved her family life and it was a hard decision to leave home; but once having decided to leave, she never had a moment's doubt about the rightness of the decision. Her work from then on gave her a happiness that no one can take from her.

She continued to teach and indeed became Principal of her school, but then, when she was thirty-six years old, came what she calls her 'inspiration day'. She was travelling on a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling when an 'inner voice' told her to give up all and serve God among the poorest of the poor, the hungry, the sick and the dying people of Calcutta. This call, within her call to be a nun, she declares, was God speaking to her. She was at one time asked whether she had even a moment's doubt. 'No,' she said, 'There was no doubt. The moment you accept, the moment you surrender yourself, that's the conviction. It may mean death to you. But I have never had doubt.' This calm unwavering certainty is the strength of Mother Teresa which inspires all her fellow workers.

2 Responding to her call

In the train travelling from Calcutta to Darjeeling Mother Teresa heard her call to serve the poor people of Calcutta, but she could not follow it immediately. As a nun who had taken final vows, she could not simply leave her Order. She had to obtain the permission of the church authorities to come out of her convent.

With the approval of the Archbishop of Calcutta, she wrote to Pope Pius XII telling him that God was calling her to give up all and to surrender herself to serve the poorest of the poor in the streets of Calcutta. This sort of request normally meets with delays while it is being considered, but Mother Teresa received that permission by return of post. She still had to observe all the rules of her Order, but she would work outside the convent. This was an even greater sacrifice than one can imagine, for not only was she entering the most dismal and disgusting part of the city, but she was leaving the very beautiful environment of the convent. Mother Teresa said simply, 'That was a sacrifice.'

She laid aside her nun's dress and clothed herself in a white Indian sari with a blue border and a cross on the left shoulder. She realised that in her future work she would need some knowledge of medicine, whereas you will recall that she had been trained to teach. She went to Patna for three months to the American Medical Missionary Sisters for intensive nursing training. There is a story told about her at Patna which shows how inexperienced she was in medical matters. On one occasion when she was working alone in 'surgery' a man came in with an obviously gangrenous thumb. If his life was to be saved the thumb had to be taken off. Sister Teresa took her scissors and, saying a prayer, she cut. The patient fainted, falling one way, and Mother Teresa fainted, falling the other way.

By Christmas, this woman, trained as a teacher and a nun,

armed with what little medical knowledge she had learned in three months, was back in Calcutta, living with the Sisters of the Poor, and opening her first school for homeless children in Moti Jheel, a poor part of Calcutta. She started with five children on the first day. At the same time, in order to be more closely linked with those she wanted to serve, she became an Indian citizen.

When recently one of the sisters was asked if she could remember anything about Mother Teresa in those days, she said that Mother was a joyous spirit, an energetic, dynamic and totally dedicated nun, but there were no legends, no stories to be told about her. The remarkable thing about Mother Teresa was that she was just ordinary.

It is very difficult to get Mother Teresa to talk about herself. 'I am not important,' she will say to those who want to write about her. 'Write about the work and my people.'

She started her work with a class of five children in a room 2·7 m by 1·5 m (9 ft by 5 ft) which she rented for five rupees a month. Mother Teresa was joined by a nineteen-year-old Bengali Sister who adopted the name by which Mother Teresa had been christened. This was Sister Agnes, a small shy girl, wondrously strengthened by the spirit of Mother Teresa and learning not to worry about tomorrow and its needs and problems. 'Why worry?' Mother Teresa would say, 'Isn't God looking after us *today*?'

Between the two of them, starting each day at 5.30 a.m. and working until the small hours, the work of loving and caring for the poor and needy of Calcutta was begun. Another Sister joined them, Sister Gertrude, and Mother Teresa founded a new Order, the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

The little room for five children soon became overcrowded, and, since many of the children who came in stayed to sleep as well, Mother Teresa knew that she had to find more room.

3 The foundation of her work

You will remember that Mother Teresa started her work, teaching five children in a small room only nine feet by five feet in the poorest part of Calcutta, an area known as Moti Jheel. Two sisters had joined her, Sister Agnes and Sister Gertrude, and this was the foundation of the Order known as the Missionary Sisters of Charity. That was in December 1948. Today there are about a thousand Sisters in the Order, and nearly two hundred Brothers in a companion Order.

Girls seeking to join the Order are called aspirants, and first spend six months observing the work. At the same time they have to learn English, which is the language of the Order. This is because there are not sufficient spiritual books in the many different Indian languages. The girls then spend six months as postulants, learning about the spiritual life. They then become novices for two years with hard study of Theology, Scripture, History of the Church, and the rules and vows of the Community. They must thoroughly appreciate the vows to be taken – Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and wholehearted free service of the poor. Only after understanding these conditions and accepting them are they admitted to the Order. From then on, the only possessions the Sisters can call their own are two saris – one worn and one in the wash – and a bucket for that washing. The Order has no servants; everyone from Mother Teresa to the youngest aspirant is called upon to do all, including humble tasks.

Back in 1948, with her two assistants, Mother Teresa soon found the small schoolroom incapable of holding the many children who crowded into it, and shortly they moved into the upper part of a house owned by Michael Gomes, a gentle, serene Indian who is described by Mother Teresa as 'a holy man'.

Michael's mother had been seriously ill and Father Henry, a

friend of Mother Teresa who knew her need for house room, had been called to administer the Last Sacraments. Father Henry happened to mention this need, and Michael Gomes said that the whole of the upstairs of his house was empty, and he offered it, free of charge, to Mother Teresa. There were furniture and other belongings which she could use, and gradually the whole of the upper floor was occupied.

Inevitably many of the children stayed to sleep, and, since there were only two wash places and toilets, problems arose. One day some builders came in voluntarily and with bricks and bamboo matting put up some bathing cubicles on the roof. The children enjoyed this, and their laughter could be heard all over the house and down in the street.

Soon there were so many children that at night the floor was covered with sleeping bodies, and Mother Teresa realised that she needed even more room. Many Sisters had joined her now, and she realised that she must find a Mother House for the Order.

While teaching had been the first work, it was very evident that the Sisters would have to devote much of their time to caring for the sick. From the first, Mother Teresa attended to dying homeless people right on the streets where she found them. One day she found a woman lying on the pavement outside a hospital which had refused to admit her. She was so ill and full of pain that she was not aware that rats and cockroaches had eaten away her feet. Mother Teresa carried the woman through the streets to another hospital to be met with the same refusal. The woman died in her arms. This made Mother Teresa realise that she must find accommodation for her school and also a home for the dying, as well as a House for the members of the Order.

Mother Teresa was offered a house, but it was so old that it seemed on the point of collapse. The man showing them round this property insisted that it was sound, and began to jump up and down to prove it. On the second jump he dis-

appeared through the floor to the sound of splintering wood and amid a great cloud of dust.

Mother Teresa never failed in her certainty that somehow she would get the room she wanted. 'God will provide what we need,' was her reaction to any setback. Her faith was justified.

A Muslim gentleman, who was selling his house and leaving India for Pakistan, asked her to see him; and he greeted her, although a complete stranger, with the words, 'I love you.' He offered Mother Teresa the house for any price she could afford. Mother Teresa knew how much the Archbishop could provide for her – about £7,500 – less than the value of the land on which the house was built. The Muslim accepted, and so the Missionaries of Charity found the House which became and still is the Mother House of the Community.

It was in fact three houses, providing room for the Sisters, the school, a chapel and a courtyard, right in the centre of the city.

At the same time the richer people of the area gathered money for a home for the dying homeless. The place they finally provided was called Nirmal Hriday – The Place of the Pure Heart. This house for the dying was later removed to a place called Kalighat, a spot sacred to the Hindu. There was local opposition, particularly since some Hindus saw this as an attempt to convert the Hindus to Christianity, but quietly, by her own personality and the work she was doing, Mother Teresa made herself accepted.

Probably even she could not at that time foresee the future expansion of her work that was to cover the world.

4 World wide

After the establishment of the Mother House and the home for the dying, Mother Teresa's work became more widely known in and beyond India. In 1950 there were only twelve Sisters,

but gradually the numbers increased and new homes were set up in other parts of India. Mother Teresa found that the girls coming to work for her, to devote their lives to the poor, the homeless and the dying, were for the most part from middle- or higher-class families. A great many were well educated Indian or Anglo-Indian girls. They wanted to give their best, with a total surrender to God and to the Community. From the first they spent some time working among the people in need, facing the horrors of the Calcutta pavements, giving free service to the poorest of the poor, to Christ in His distressing disguise. Mother Teresa's great strength, which she passes on to her Sisters, is to see Christ in everyone she meets, however ill, however dirty, however diseased they may be. As she loves Christ, so she loves them. Having committed herself to this love, then she must serve them as she would serve Christ. From love comes all the care and provision she gives to the poor. The sufferers realise that she does not provide clothing, food, medicine, treatment and shelter alone, she provides Love.

Once she was asked why she did not leave this work to local authorities whose duty it was to provide welfare. She replied, 'Welfare is for a purpose; my work is for people.'

There was never enough money to do all the work she wanted to do, but subscriptions came in from all over the world to enable new houses to be set up.

She was a remarkable worker herself. In the vicious Indian climate, she went out at eight o'clock in the morning and returned at four or five each evening with nothing to eat or drink all day. The rules of her Order forbade eating outside the walls of the House. Many gifts came her way from sympathetic friends. Once she was offered a consignment of flour, and she went with a lorry herself to fetch it, to be sure it wasn't stolen. On the other side, a Government Minister once sent a note to ask her to give four blankets which had been given her to his driver. She sent back a note, 'These blankets are meant for the poor.'

In 1971, when millions of people were fleeing from Bangladesh, Senator Edward Kennedy visited Calcutta and saw one of the Sisters washing clothes in the cholera ward. It was Sister Agnes, the first to join Mother Teresa at the start of her work. Senator Kennedy went forward to shake her hand. She said her hands were dirty. He shook her hand nevertheless, saying, 'The dirtier they are, the more honoured I am.'

At that time, Mother Teresa felt that, with so much disease and sickness and suffering, she must have an area of land, off the streets, where she could look after the sick people. At last she found such a place and the owner put it at her disposal. After they had agreed, the man offered Mother Teresa a drink of fresh lime juice. Mother Teresa refused, saying, 'We are not allowed to eat outside our own House.' He said, 'Mother, I am not asking you to eat, only to drink.' She took the glass and drank, the first food or drink she had touched since leaving her community house early that morning. It was then eleven o'clock at night. That day she had also received a telegram with an offer of a fully equipped field hospital, if only the plane bringing it had somewhere to land. The plane arrived the next day and was able to use the newly acquired land.

Mother Teresa's supporters increased over the years and the work became world-wide.

1965	Venezuela.	New centre near Caracas
1967	Ceylon.	New centre in Colombo
1968	Tanzania.	New centre in Tabora
	Rome.	New centre in slums
1969	Australia.	New centre in Bourke

Also Palestine, Africa, England, America.

Perhaps it comes as a surprise to see rich countries like England and America included. Yet some of the poorest and

most unloved people live in these parts. Tramps, drug addicts, drunkards are among those needing the love that Mother Teresa's workers will give.

In London, the Sisters have a centre where every day poor, sick and homeless people find meals, beds, clothing and medical care, but, most of all, love. One London tramp was a friend of one of the lay workers who help the Sisters, and when this worker went on holiday she sent him a picture postcard, addressed to him personally. On her return she found that it had given him tremendous joy and he was preserving the card most carefully. He said, 'That is the first time in my life that I have received anything through the post addressed to me.'

5 Her message for us

One of the most surprising things about the work of Mother Teresa and her co-workers is the way in which the suffering are somehow transformed by the caring of the Sisters. This does not mean that they are cured, for many are incurable. On the streets, many of the people taken up by the Sisters are pitiful and revolting because of the nature of the diseases from which they suffer; starvation, cholera, leprosy and approaching death. At Kalighat, for instance, there is Mother Teresa's Home for the dying homeless. You will recall that it is known as Nirmal Hriday, the Place of the Pure Heart. It has no doors and so it is always open. It is crowded, smelling vaguely of death and antiseptic, bustling with activity, yet strangely quiet.

Yet those who have visited this place say that the natural feeling of disgust that comes to you is dispelled immediately, and one is caught up in a mysterious serenity. Mother Teresa calls it 'going home'. She declares that it is the treasure house of Calcutta from which people go straight to God. She says, 'When they go, they tell Him about us. We help them to die with God – to make peace with Him according to their own

faith.' A remarkable thing about Mother Teresa is that although she is so strong in her own belief in the Catholic faith, she never tries to impress it on the people she serves. There is no condition laid down before she gives her love and service. She is completely unselfish.

She has received awards and prizes from all over the world, but they mean nothing to her except that they bring new support for her work.

In 1964, at the end of an important world conference, Pope Paul VI presented Mother Teresa with his car – a splendid Ford-Lincoln limousine especially designed and given to the Pope as a gift from the American people. The Pope had used it for a few hours only and gave it to Mother Teresa 'to share in her universal mission of Love'. No one could imagine Mother Teresa going around in this great ship of a car, which was worth at that time about £7,500. Mother Teresa obtained permission to raffle the car. The raffle raised £37,500 for the work of the community. This enabled her to start one of her great ventures, the Shantinager Home for Lepers.

She never saw the awards as being for her. They were seen as being for her poor people who were being recognised. She felt that in some way they were being loved, and more and more people were involved. On one occasion somebody said to Mother Teresa, 'You know a lot about love, you must be married.' Mother Teresa replied, 'Yes, I am, but sometimes I find it difficult to smile at Him.' She meant that she considered herself as married to Jesus Christ.

She has suffered considerable illness herself, but will have little to do with doctors or their prescriptions. Generally if a doctor gave her a prescription for medicine she tore it up. One doctor was doubtful about her work among the sick, considering that she and her workers had such limited medical knowledge that they might do more harm than good; but he finally became one of her greatest supporters. On one occasion when Mother Teresa was very ill and was on the

point of collapse, this doctor forced her to enter his nursing home. After an examination, he wrote a prescription for medicine, and before she could get her hands on it, said that he wanted to whisper a prayer in her ear. She could not refuse this, and a Sister standing nearby quickly took the prescription and made sure that it wasn't torn up.

One of the amazing and vital things about Mother Teresa is that while helpers crowd forward to help her in her work, so many that she cannot meet them all, without exception they feel that she is touching them and inspiring them even if they do not actually meet her.

Many of her workers already look upon her as a living saint, and in some shrines in India her picture stands alongside those of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. She and those nearest her are embarrassed by this, but her power to inspire is astounding.

Not so long ago a well-known person was asked if she had ever heard of Mother Teresa. Her reply was 'Yes, I have, actually. She's something of a saint, isn't she?'

Victor J. Green

TEST MATCH

The story of Conrad Hunte

1 A poor boy's rise to fame

A small six-year-old boy stood in front of the wickets, holding his first cricket bat. It was an exciting moment for him. His name was Conrad Hunte and he lived in the sunny, warm West Indian island of Barbados in the Caribbean Sea.

Conrad did not know that he was going to become a world-famous cricketer, Vice-Captain of the popular and lively West Indies Cricket Team, but he already dreamed dreams about it.

Like all the other boys, he made his own cricket bat from a coconut frond, cut to the right shape. The wickets were carved from branches of the trees around them. The ball was made from a cork wrapped in cloth, tightly wound with strong twine. The game was played on the rough dirt tracks around the village where Conrad lived.

Conrad's family was poor and his father often in debt. His mother was a clever dressmaker. She earned money by making clothes for the neighbours, as well as for her own large family of nine children. Conrad was the eldest. They went through hard times and happy ones as all large families do.

Every boy in that country loved cricket. Conrad's friends all learned to play at an early age. They imagined the games they played were wonderful Test Matches. There was much laughter and fun and, sometimes, squabbles.

It soon became clear that Conrad was a good player, better than most of his friends. Cricket became, for him, the most

important thing in his life. His father wanted him to be clever, and gave him many a beating when he found him neglecting his school work to play cricket.

'Why can't you study hard like your friend, Winston?' he would say. 'It's the only way to get on in the world.'

Conrad did not agree. He felt he could earn more money to pay his father's debts, and give his mother a comfortable home, by becoming a great cricketer.

'I hate him! I hate him! I hate him!' he cried to himself. 'I don't want to be like somebody else. I want to be myself. I want to find my own way.'

When he was old enough he was thrilled to receive invitations to play for his island. His father came, then, to watch the matches, proud of his son.

Still Conrad was not satisfied. He wanted to be chosen for the West Indies Cricket Team, to play in Test Matches all over the world. People told him his chances would be better in Britain, so he waved goodbye to his family and sailed away to England. Some West Indian friends helped him to find somewhere there to live, but he had a very hard time at first, and had to work as a factory labourer for many months. This was a time of struggle. At last he was offered a job with the Enfield Cricket Club, and life was better. Yet he still had not achieved his ambition.

One day, he heard that the West Indies Team was going to Blackpool to play against Lancashire. Conrad travelled north to watch the match and to meet his friends. There, the manager of the West Indies Team, Mr. Tom Pierce, spoke to him. Imagine Conrad's excitement when Mr. Pierce asked him if he would like to try for a place in the West Indies Team to play against Pakistan. Of course, Conrad's answer was 'Yes.'

When he returned to Barbados for the trials, his family were all there to meet him. It was good to see them. Conrad worked hard to get into practice. After a time he was chosen to play in a match, Barbados against Pakistan.

At the end of the game, the selectors announced the West Indies Team for the Test Matches to come – and Conrad's name was among them. His dreams had come true. The poor West Indian boy had become a great cricketer, soon to be famous all over the world.

Yet, in the years to come, Conrad was to discover that fame was not enough. He needed something bigger to live for.

2 Travels and surprises

There was great excitement on the cricket field at the fifth Test Match between Australia and the West Indies. Only three more runs were needed for Australia to win – and only three more balls to be bowled before the end of the match. Could Australia make those last three winning runs? The spectators leaned forward in suspense.

The batsman sent the next ball flying high over the head of Conrad Hunte, now Vice-Captain of the West Indies Team. Conrad gave chase and grabbed the ball just before it reached the boundary. He threw it back, at once, from ninety yards away, right into the wicket keeper's hands. The Australian batsman was run out. Only two runs had been made. At the next ball the other batsman was out and the match ended.

The score was, Australia 737 runs, the West Indies 737 runs. The match had ended in a tie, for the first time ever in Test Match history.

Conrad Hunte, once the poor boy from Barbados, was now having the time of his life, flying from country to country, playing cricket under blue skies to the constant cheers of the crowds. There were slow, hard days and exciting moments. There was money in his pocket and in the bank. He had paid his father's debts and provided his mother with a comfortable home. And he was famous. What more could anyone want?

Yet Conrad was beginning to want something more. He was interested in the countries he visited. There were some surprises and they were not all pleasant. India, particularly, upset

him, when he saw thousands of people who lived, slept and died on the pavements of the cities. He had been poor, but he had never seen poverty like this. As he travelled on he could not forget.

That was not all. In many countries he saw hate, violence and signs of war. He wanted more and more to help to put things right.

One day, in Australia, he was asked to speak on the radio. He told the people of Australia what he had seen of trouble and poverty in the world. He was going to use his cricket, he said, to end hate and unhappiness.

Afterwards he received many letters of praise for his talk. Instead of being pleased, he began to feel very uncomfortable. He remembered his hatred of his father. How could he end hate in nations if he could not heal his own hate? There were other wrongs in his life which made him ashamed. He did not know what to do.

Then came another surprise. An unknown journalist called at his hotel, not to write an article about him, but to invite him out to meet his friends. Conrad accepted. Their discussions that evening, together with a film which they showed him, made him think. Perhaps here was the answer to what he wanted to know. He asked the journalist and his friends many questions.

'If you want to change society,' they said, 'you need to start with yourself.'

This made sense to Conrad. He began to put things right in his life, such as paying back money he had once taken from his father, and some he owed the Cricket Board. As soon as he could, he flew home to Barbados and apologised to his father for his hatred. This was not easy.

His father was silent. Then he said, 'Son, it is you who need to forgive me. I wanted to do the right thing, but I did it the wrong way.'

He told Conrad some of his own mistakes. Conrad saw

that his father was human and needed help as he did himself. Then, without saying anything, his father went off to visit a younger son, with whom he had quarrelled. He had turned him out of the house. Now his father said he was sorry and brought him back home.

Other wrongs were put right in the family. For the first time Conrad saw what family life was meant to be like, with no secrets, no bluffing and no fights.

If change could come in his own family like this, perhaps it could come to put the big things right in the family of nations. To work for this change in the world became more important to Conrad than his own fame.

3 Conrad takes second place

The Captain of the West Indies cricket team, Frank Worrell, decided to retire.

'Who is to be Captain now?' This was the question all the members of the team, and many other cricketers all over the world, were asking.

Conrad Hunte was sure he knew the answer. He had been Vice-Captain for several years. Of course he would be chosen. All his life he had dreamed of being captain of the West Indies Cricket Team and now that day had arrived, he thought.

The Cricket Board took time and trouble before they decided. Frank Worrell had been a very great captain. He had trained his team to become famous and popular all over the world. The work of the next captain was to keep the team at the top of their form. It would not be easy.

At last the announcement was made. Gary Sobers was to be captain! Conrad was stunned. He could not believe it. He read the newspapers. They said that Gary Sobers was the best all-round cricketer in the world, and that Gary's appointment was the most important cricketing decision ever made.

It was some time before Conrad fully realised what the Cricket Board had done to him. Then he grew angry. How

could he be expected to take orders from Gary Sobers, who, though a good player, had been, until then, only an ordinary member of the team? Inside, Conrad became very bitter indeed.

'I will leave the team,' he said to himself.

Then he remembered how he had criticised other West Indians who had taken their skills to another country because they could not get what they wanted at home. Was he going to live differently from the way he talked?

He needed wisdom greater than his own to help him to see what to do. He asked God to show him. A clear thought came.

'Stay on and serve as number two.'

'All right, I will,' he answered. But he was not happy. Then another thought came.

'Apologise to Sobers for your bitterness against him because he got the captaincy.'

'Oh, no, I won't!' was his reply.

For six long weeks his conscience troubled him. He argued and would not co-operate with Gary. His bad mood upset the team and stopped him from playing his best. He had once decided to put the good of others before his own fame; but now he had let this disappointment make him completely selfish again.

One morning he decided to change. He would go and apologise. They were in Kingston, Jamaica, playing a friendly game in preparation for the Australian test matches, soon to take place. It was six o'clock in the evening. He knocked on Gary's bedroom door, in the hotel where they were staying. Gary Sobers was asleep.

'Good evening, Gary,' said Conrad. Gary awoke and sat up in bed.

'Good evening,' he replied.

'I wanted to say that I have taken your being captain very hard, and that I have been bitter. I wanted to quit. I am sorry. I will stay on and serve you and your team, if I am selected.'

When the Australians came to the West Indies, Sobers and

Conrad had become real partners, and the West Indies won. For the very first time, the West Indies had become world champions.

At the end, the President of the Cricket Board presented Gary Sobers, Captain of the winning team, with a trophy named after Frank Worrell. Then came a surprise for Conrad. The President picked up another award, the Karl Nunes Trophy, and presented it to him. The President said it was given to Conrad because he was 'the player who had done most on and off the field to foster better relations between Australia and the West Indies'.

Conrad Hunte served as a loyal Vice-Captain under Gary Sobers for several years. He worked with him to train a happy, united and winning team, making friends with the people in the countries they visited.

The next story describes how they did this on an exciting occasion.

4 Riots on the cricket field

On New Year's Day, Conrad sat with his team in the players' enclosure. It was the second day of the second test match between India and the West Indies, in the lovely Eden Park Cricket Ground in Calcutta, India. The teams were out on the field, ready to begin. But trouble was brewing.

Twenty thousand tickets too many had been sold, chiefly through bribery and the black market. There was no room in the grounds for all the ticket-holders.

Suddenly thousands of spectators in the stands jumped the low fences and squatted on the grass outside the boundary rope. Immediately, others surged forward and sat in their seats. When those on the grass were told to go back, they found it impossible. There was pandemonium.

Police tried to keep back the crowds who were beginning to pour all over the field in an effort to get out. Some were hurt. Men at the back of the stands started to throw pointed

sticks and brickbats at the police. There was fighting and screaming.

The teams quickly disappeared and locked themselves in their dressing rooms. The tear gas which the police were using seeped in and the men put wet towels to their faces.

Outside, at the height of the riot, a man, standing at the guests' pavilion, told the people, 'Get out of here. We are going to set it alight.'

Soon the stands on three sides of the grounds were blazing.

'Fire!' yelled someone in the players' hearing. The teams at once unlocked their doors and fled from the field – all except the West Indies' Vice-Captain, Conrad Hunte, two Indians, a plain clothes policeman and the physiotherapist.

Conrad sat quietly thinking. The thought he had was to stay where he was. This place was safe at the moment. Looking round the room he saw the team's gear and began to move it to safety, for the fire might reach the players' pavilion. Though the others helped, it took two and a half hours.

As they rested afterwards, Conrad looked up at the two national flags fluttering in the breeze, threatened by fire. He started to climb to get them down.

'Don't you go. I'll get them,' yelled the policeman. He climbed up, brought the flags down and gave them to Conrad.

At last the fires were brought under control and the crowds were gone. Conrad went outside to look at the scene – and almost wept. The only building left standing was the one where he and the others had waited. All the rest were burnt to the ground and the debris lay strewn all over the field. Soldiers stood round the actual cricket pitch. That at least had been saved.

Conrad took a taxi back to his hotel. On the way he noticed that there had been violence in the streets. He found many of the West Indies team ready to fly back home at once. He sat among them as they argued, and tried to think what was right.

'Let's leave the decision until later,' he said. They agreed.

Conrad went to see an Indian friend. He learned from this man that the riot was started by a small group of people who wanted to make trouble for the Government. If the team went home, the rioters would have won, for the West Indies would be angry and the whole world would hear about it through radio, television and newspapers. But it was not easy to persuade the team. Conrad told his Captain, Gary Sobers, what he had heard. Then he said, 'You may have to decide to do what will help India most, and not what will save our skins from danger or defeat. What you decide may affect the future of millions of people in this country and in our own land.'

Gary Sobers then had a long talk with the Indian captain, who said much the same as Conrad had done. At last Gary made up his mind. He spoke to his team.

'The Indian people are not against us,' he said. 'The riot was the work of a few trouble-makers. If we play on, the Indian people will be on our side. If we don't, they will turn against us and the rioters will have won. I think we ought to play. What do you say?'

'Now you put it like that, skipper, of course we will come with you,' his team told him. The match went on.

For the first half hour the atmosphere was extremely tense. People feared there would be more riots. But nothing happened. Soon everyone relaxed and began to enjoy themselves. In three days the West Indies won by an innings and forty-five runs.

Conrad had helped his team to put the nation before their own safety. The Indians were full of respect and gratitude to those courageous cricketers from the West Indies.

5 **The toughest test**

Conrad was worried. Race riots were threatened all over Britain. He was black and he understood what the black people felt.

'The Black Power men are right when they say that things need to change,' he thought. 'But they have the wrong cure.'

The year was 1967. Dr. Martin Luther King was the much-loved leader of the black American people. He led his followers in non-violent ways and tried to persuade them to show love, not hate. But many were so full of hate and impatience that they called for violence and started the Black Power movement. There were terrible burnings, shootings and imprisonments in America that year.

'Violence means death for hundreds of people, black as well as white.' Conrad said. 'At the end hate is still there. It is only when hate is cured and people change that a way to end wrong can be found.' He knew, because he had lost his hate and had seen the change in his family, in his cricket team and in nations.

Three years earlier Dr. Martin Luther King had been in Britain with some of his followers. Now, in 1967, those who wanted violence came and started up groups like themselves in many parts of the country.

'How dreadful, if the streets of Britain became a battle-ground for race riots and death, as American streets have been!' Conrad thought. He longed to pass on the better way he knew, but what could he do? Cricket took up so much of his time and energy.

'Give up your cricket career,' came a shocking thought. Conrad tried to forget it, but it kept coming back. At last he started to consider the idea.

He loved cricket, and, what is more, it was the way he earned his living. How could he bear to give it up – and what would he do for money? There was another risk. What would happen if he were not successful in his new life? Would his fellow black people understand or would they turn against him? He was full of fears.

One day, still unable to decide, he was walking along a London street when the thought came, 'Look up.' He believes it came from God. When he looked up he read the

sign on a public house. You can see the same sign on many public houses in England. It said, 'Take Courage.'

There was a church on his left. He went in and there, on his knees, he told God he would do what He asked. Afterwards, he sent in his letter of resignation to the West Indies Cricket Board.

He now had no job and no money coming in. How was he to start his new work? First he talked it over with many of his friends who were as keen as he was to put things right. They asked God to show them how to start.

An invitation came for Conrad to take a group of people to Coventry. An immigrant leader booked a hall where they could show a film and speak to people of many races. This was the beginning. Over the next two and a half years they had meetings like this in thirty-three British cities where the largest number of immigrants had settled. The ideas that Conrad and his new team took with them were put into action by many people.

One man, for instance, who owned a chain of dress shops, decided to employ people of different races, and persuaded others to do the same. An Indian now settled with his family in Britain lost his hate and decided to do his best for the country, as though it were his own.

One day, in April, 1968, there came from America a shattering piece of news. Dr. Martin Luther King had been murdered. All the black people who loved him were extremely angry. It was the signal for the Black Power men to start up the trouble in Britain which Conrad hoped to avoid. These men were preparing to burn to the ground one district in Notting Hill, London. Then riots would begin in many other places. Hundreds of police were drafted into the district. People were afraid.

Strangely, the burning did not take place. The Black Power leaders changed their minds.

'Why?' was everyone's question.

'Have any of the Black Power leaders been with you during the last week?' Conrad was asked. They had.

'That must be the reason they changed their minds,' was the reply. Some Black Power leaders said the same. They had decided to try Conrad's better way instead.

Conrad is still travelling, with teams which are always changing, to trouble spots all over the world. Scores of people have lost their hate and begun to work with him. They are showing that many races can live together happily in the nations.

'It is not easy,' Conrad says. 'But I am as determined as I was in cricket to play to win.'

Joan Pedley

(For further reading see *Playing to Win* by Conrad Hunte – Hodder and Stoughton)

The characters of individual people remain a source of endless fascination. Many great advances in society can be directly traced back to the dedication and commitment of a single man or woman.

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