BEYOND VIOLENCE

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PREFACE

It will surprise the reader that after many years of marriage I should say so little about my husband Bremer. However he insists that this is my story and that he should remain largely in the wings.

But the fact is that without him I would never have written this book. For this I thank him with all my heart.

A.L.H.

BEYOND VIOLENCE

Here is another book from the well-known Leakey family of Kenya.

The author as a girl leads an exciting life among the wild animals of Kenya. She suffers the trials of a colonial schoolgirl in England but finds her task in life.

The violence of Mau Mau erupts in Kenya. A prophetess of the Mau Mau decrees that a good white man must be offered to their gods. As the author's father is held in honour by the Kikuyu he is chosen. He is abducted and buried alive on Mount Kenya as a human sacrifice.

The author is overseas and battles through dark days to come to terms with disaster. Within a year she is back in Kenya in the midst of the war with Mau Mau.

She goes into a Mau Mau detention camp and talks with some of the detainees. She begins to understand some of the things the whites have done to alienate the blacks. Some of the Mau Mau return to their Christian faith. After their release she works with some of them to bring healing to Africa. Kenyatta is affected.

One of these men opens his heart to her and she learns that he was one of the Mau Mau committee that planned her father's death. He also tells her how later he helped to get a cousin of hers, Philip Leakey, elected to the Kenya parliament. He is the only white member and a junior minister.

She marries Bremer Hofmeyr and in South Africa they help start an action for all races with large inter-racial assemblies. They incur the anger of Dr. Verwoerd the Prime Minister for disregarding apartheid.

The author deals with the question asked by so many who have suffered Why? Why? Why?

This is a very personal story. Why does the author make it public? She says, "In South Africa today the stakes are so high that nothing should be withheld if it might in any way help the estranged peoples of our country to find one another in a new South Africa."

1
ON MOUNT KENYA

High up on Mount Kenya was an open grave.

Voices were approaching in the dark - voices of Kikuyu men. They were a Mau Mau band obeying the edict of a so-called prophetess of their religion.

There was also a white man bound hand and foot also speaking Kikuyu. He was saying that things were wrong in the country. They had to change. But killing people would not bring the change that was needed.

The captive was my father.

What had led up to this situation and to the momentous events still far beyond the horizon?

This is a true story.

2
LIFE AMONG THE LIONS

My earliest childhood memory is of being woken up in the night by the shouting of the Africans, the lowing of the cattle and a general sense of excitement. I got up from my camp bed, went to the door of the tent and asked by mother and brothers what was wrong. A lion had broken through the stockade and taken one of the cattle. My father of course was already after the lion with a gun, a fruitless chase I am afraid. This was on our first farm in Kenya.

Incidents like this happened almost daily, or rather nightly, in that outpost of the British Empire, Rumuruti.

Dad had acquired this virgin land from the government at a very reasonable rate and was cutting down the forest, using the wood to build the first house I knew as home. Until then we had lived in three tents which were in the centre of a large thorn tree enclosure. Around us were the house servants with their fires. Then came the cattle and sheep and another ring of fires between the livestock and the thorn tree barricade

or "boma". The outer fires were tended by the herdsmen whose job it was to watch the fence and sound the alarm when a lion or leopard broke through.

Our first home we built as the Africans did, with mud and wattle poles for the walls and grass thatch for the roof. There were three rooms, one leading off the other. The floor was flattened earth and the grass used to grow up under the beds. Before we retired we took a stick and whisked under the bed to make sure no animal had taken refuge there. We used wire netting for the windows as glass was unobtainable. One day we looked out of the living room window and there was a lion looking up at us.

Another evening we were out for our walk as a family. Sundown is the magic time in Africa and suddenly out of nowhere a whole herd of zebra came towards us, galloping round us in a circle and kicking up their heels. Then just as suddenly they disappeared into the dusk.

When my oldest brother Nigel was twelve years old he and my father used to spend many nights in a tree near the cattle boma hoping to shoot a lion that was prowling around looking for its evening meal. I do not remember their ever shooting one but no doubt they helped to scare them off. Once or twice a week the two of them would go off to shoot a buck for the pot. We got a bit tired of venison as a daily diet. I spoke Kikuyu as soon as I spoke English. We used to visit the Africans at their huts and squat on our haunches, African fashion, listening by the hour to their traditional folk tales. They had a name for each of us. Our father was Morungaru, meaning tall and straight. Nigel was Nasho, Robert was Kebaggi meaning big ears. Rea was simply Re and I was Engenethi, derived of course from Agnes.

We had not been long at the Rumuruti farm when there was a severe drought and the river dried up. The well we had dug dried up too and we had to trek. My father sold the cattle and sheep to a passing trader and set off on his motor bike to find another job. My mother followed with the four of us and all our household goods stacked on two wagons, each drawn by sixteen oxen. The drivers were Somali herdsmen,

magnificent men dressed in loin cloths and beads and their hair done in long plaits caked in red mud. They had whips made from the skin of a giraffe. A thong was cut from head to tail with the tail as the whip handle. They would reach the lead ox with a flick of this long whip and at a word of command the ox would strain forward encouraging the whole span to greater effort. The trek is vivid in my memory. I was never afraid, feeling the greatest security in my three older brothers, my mother and the African servants and hersdmen. We spoke their language as if it was our own. We trusted them completely and their tales of adventure kept us children enthralled for hours on end.

On that trek we covered about a hundred miles in ten days. At night we outspanned and arranged ourselves in a circle. My mother and we four children were bedded down under the wagons, surrounded by the servants, oxen, herdsmen with fires on all sides to keep the wild animals away. I still feel the thrill of looking out into the night and seeing the eyes of the wild beasts reflecting the firelight. With this last excitement I would drop off to sleep.

Africa goes from drought to flood. As we travelled the rains poured down and the rivers came down in flood. Still we had to press on. The herdsmen yolked both spans of oxen, thirty-two in all, to one wagon. With much shouting the oxen were persuaded to go into the swirling water. They were driven at an angle upstream and the wagon reached the far bank opposite where it had entered the water. Then the thirty-two oxen came back for the second wagon. I was carried over on the shoulders of one of the Somalis, holding on to his mud-dressed coiffure for support. I can still smell that mud, sweat and river water. I loved it. It just smelt of adventure.

My father left messages along the way indicating to us where to check in next. Eventually we caught up with him in Nyeri where he had found himself a job as manager of the White Rhino Hotel. We had lost everything in our first farming venture.

In addition to the humans there were two unforgettable members of our family whom I remember from my earliest days. One was Kaboo,

a lovely white horse who was gentle and understanding. Two of us would ride him together. He helped us mount by putting up his back leg as a step and allowing us to pull ourselves up by his tail. There was another horse too, a chestnut. Church services were occasionally held at neighbouring farm houses and we arrived in cavalcade - two boys on the chestnut, my mother riding side-saddle on Kaboo with another child behind her, and my father on his motor bike with the last child on the pillion. There was no padding, just a cushion tied over the metal frame and the roads were very bumpy. My seat was usually very sore by the end of the day.

Our year at the White Rhino Hotel also had its adventures. The Masai and Somali warriors would come into town in their war paint. We were entranced and watched them by the hour. They enjoyed giving us a fright by suddenly leaping into the air and thrusting a spear towards us with a piercing yell and then subsiding with a grin. Often we would return from a day's adventure to find that the hotel had filled up and we were relegated to a tent in the garden. No guest was to be turned away so we had to move.

Our only great sorrow at Nyeri was that the faithful Kaboo was bitten by tsetse fly and died.

After a year Dad managed to gather enough money to buy another farm at Ngong some twenty miles from Nairobi. Today it is a suburb of the city but with our limited modes of travel we felt we were way out in the wilderness. We had implicit trust in another four legged member of our family - Buster, a black retriever. He was our nursemaid, companion and protector, prepared to fight off any kind of wild animal.

One day an African came to tell us that a lioness and her cubs were in a thicket some two miles from our house. We were determined to see the cubs so off we went with Buster. Not through courage but through stupidity it never occurred to me to be afraid. We found the place and Buster went round one side of the thicket and started barking at the lioness. She stood between the cubs and Buster, twitching her tail. We crept quietly into the thicket from the opposite side until we could see

the little balls of fluff, and the lioness worried only about Buster. Having satisfied our curiosity we crept out again and ran all the way home, well satisfied with the day's adventure. Buster returned half an hour later, safe and sound.

Life was one great, glorious adventure. On another occasion, we were walking in single file through the forest on the far side of the Ngong river. Nigel, being the oldest, was in front carrying the gun. I was usually in the middle of the file. Suddenly Buster set up the alarm. We all froze. Nigel peered ahead and spotted a lion in the path ahead of us. He stood with his gun poised and told Rea who was last in line to walk slowly backwards until he reached a big tree and get behind it and wait for the rest of us. This he did. Then Nigel ordered me to do the same, then Robert. When the three of us were hidden he proceeded to walk backwards himself with the gun still pointing at the lion. Unhappily he tripped over the root of a tree and fell flat on his back. He leapt to his feet and ran for all he was worth along the path we had come with the rest of us in hot pursuit. No more nonsense about always facing a lion. The beast must have been bewildered by our antics.

On another occasion Robert and I were walking in the bush. He had made himself a spear with which to protect me. It was nothing more than a long stick with a nail hammered into the end. With this in hand we proceeded, ready to tackle any danger. Before long he spotted a lion trotting towards us along the game path. He pushed me up into the nearest tree and shinned up himself. From the safety of our perch we watched the lion trotting by below us.

Bath time was a great family affair. We had two portable zinc hip baths which were brought into the main bedroom by the servants and filled with hot water. My father had first option on one bath and I, being the youngest and supposedly the first in bed, had first place in the other bath. My father always wore boots and socks on the farm so he left the water reasonably clean. My feet were always filthy as I regularly went barefoot, so there was great competition amongst the three boys as to who should have second bath in Dad's water. By the time the five of us

were finished the water was distinctly muddy. Then the baths were carried out and put under the house which was raised off the ground, so that the water could be used on the garden next day. However the hyaenas discovered this water and often at night we would wake to hear them lapping the water with an occasional snarl or whimper as they jostled one another for a better position. My mother was privileged to have a bath to herself every morning.

Another thing the hyaenas would do at night was to attack the leather thongs and the harness that hung from the rafters of the wagon shed. They would leap up and pull them down and chew them amid much noise and snarling and hyaena laughter. This often kept us awake and my father would fire a shot into the darkness to scare them away. There would be silence for five minutes and then it would start all over again.

We did each possess a pair of shoes but these were only for church on Sundays. They seemed to get too small between one Sunday and the next. It must have been a dreadful expense as they had to be imported from England. The only measurement we sent was the outline of our feet traced on a piece of paper. For the rest we went barefoot. The soles of our feet were as tough as leather and shoes were regarded as a nuisance. Once I hurt my foot and my longsuffering mother made me wear my shoes. I decided to be elegant and feminine and wear them all the time. Then one evening there was a loud cackling in the hen house. I could not wait to put on my shoes and rushed out just in time to see my father shoot a cerval cat that was having a field day among the chickens. From then on shoes were again abandoned.

Living barefoot meant that we got jiggers in our feet. Jiggers or doodoos as the Africans called them were little insects that burrowed under the skin or the toe nails and grew into a small white ball. If not removed in time it would burst and eggs would hatch out under the skin. After the ritual of our baths we would have supper and then the search for jiggers would begin. The table was cleared and the four of us would sit on top of it round the paraffin lamp and proceed to dig the jiggers out with a needle. When we got one on the needle point we would hold it

over the chimney of the lamp where it would pop in the heat. When we were told to go to bed we always claimed that there was just one more jigger and the operation was extended for as long as we could get away with it.

3
I BECOME AN AMATEUR FARMER

When my father and mother got married she brought out with her from Britain a bolt of blue cotton cloth guaranteed to be unshrinkable. From this she made little safari suits for the boys and little dresses with matching pants for me. We wore the old faded ones through the week and the bright new ones on Sundays until they too were relegated to weekday wear and new ones sewn for the Sabbath. My mother said she could see this blue clothing against the brown and green of the veld. We wore red flannel spine pads to keep us from getting sun stroke. All we knew was that they were horribly hot and we disliked them intensely. The modern Kenyan is more likely to go bareheaded and to wear the lightest of shortsleeved shirts.

Another thing that my mother brought out with her to Kenya was an ottoman trunk that locked. In it were toys for boys and girls up to the age

of ten. For every Christmas and birthday the ottoman was opened the night before the celebration and a suitable toy selected and wrapped in brown paper - none of today's gift wrappings. But the thrill of knowing that the treasure chest was going to be opened, and the joy of that one gift were beyond imagining.

As I was older my memories of the Ngong farm are more vivid and it was the last home we had together as a family. Having few toys we had to invent our own games and played them by the hour. One was motor bike racing and riding, inspired by Dad's old motor bike. We built up a pile of rough stones, something like the shape of a motor bike with a flat stone for the seat and a forked stick for the handle bars. Another forked stick wedged between the stones provided the foot rests. Motor bike noises provided plenty of scope for our lungs and many happy hours were spent racing and improving our bikes without moving a hundred yards from the house.

One day, as we were playing "house", Rea came rushing to my "house" which happened to be in a tilted ox cart and said he had seen a wild animal disappearing into the bush just as he had come back from visiting me. It had pulled down a hind quarter of beef that was hanging in the wagon shed where his "house" was located. We dashed back to see the damage and without a moment's hesitation we were off into the forest, armed only with sticks, to track down the wild beast. I felt completely secure with Rea and it never occurred to me to question his judgement in the bush. Also it was broad daylight which made the bush less scary, and probably the animal was just a hyaena. In any case we never caught sight of him.

Rea and I used to have a lot of fun harvesting the coffee beans in exactly the way Dad and the farm labourers did it. We would pick our own red berries and while the Africans were at lunch we would put them through the machine that removed the pulp from the inner bean. Having drained the water off we would lay the beans on a small drying table we had made ourselves by stretching sacking over sticks we had driven into the ground. The beans lay in the sun until they were bone dry, after

which we put them into small sacks which I made from old sheets on my mother's treadle sewing machine. The final task was to oversew the tops of our sacks and pile them on to the ox cart on top of other huge sacks of coffee. We felt very proud as we watched them disappearing down the farm road on the way to market. I have often wondered what my father did with them once they were out of sight as they could certainly not have been sold as they were.

As we produced coffee and milk, these were our staple drinks at all hours of the day. Tea was expensive and reserved for very special occasions as we always seemed to be poor. Lots of other luxuries were unknown to us. When I was about seven there was great excitement. Some friends had come to visit us and brought with them two beautiful red apples which we had never seen before. They were put on the mantle piece and admired for several days before my mother cut each in half so that we could each have a portion. I made mine last as long as possible and even ate the pips.

Our neighbour on one side of our farm was a Colonel Gorrange. He was a rather frightening character who had been master of hounds in England at one time and had a colourful selection of swear words in his vocabulary, doubtless collected from the army and the hunting field. He grew strawberries down by the river and after most had been picked for market we were allowed to go into the beds and eat whatever was left. We spent many happy hours among his strawberries. He also grew grapes for agricultural shows and we watched with the greatest interest as these grew and ripened. As show time drew nearer each bunch was carefully wrapped in a muslin bag to keep the birds away. One day when he was in town and we were coming from the strawberry beds we somehow managed to get permission from the African head man to eat some grapes. That night as we were getting into bed we heard the clatter of horse's hooves, the barking of dogs and a colourful stream of language coming from Colonel Gorrange. We dived under the blankets and were immediately apparently fast asleep leaving our hapless father to deal with the situation.

Animals by daylight did not bother us but we had a healthy fear of animals at night. Nothing would induce us to go out after dark unless we were all together and had plenty of hurricane lamps with us. However one hot and sticky night when we could not sleep my mother suggested that we walk round the house in the moonlight. Fear was my immediate reaction but she seemed unconcerned so I thought I had better go. It was full moon and to my amazement there was not a lion or a leopard behind every bush or tree. It was as calm and beautiful as only an African night can be. Even Buster was quite unperturbed as he walked with us.

Education was a bit of a problem. My mother taught us while we were still young. She was well qualified as she had been governess to Louis Leakey and his brother and sisters when my father met her. Louis was later to become a renowned anthropologist who discovered the oldest known human skull. We breakfasted early and then my mother tackled the household chores. The trouble was that long before she was ready for us we would be away in the forest building tree houses or playing at hunting. So our education was rather neglected.

Farming was always hazardous as there were so many unknown factors including every kind of pest, drought and flood. It was a precarious existence. Our main crop was coffee and sometimes the price would take a nose-dive. I once overheard my parents saying that they might have to sell the farm to pay our debts. It is the first time I can remember having a feeling of panic. My whole world seemed threatened.

One day in 1926 we came home and heard my mother groaning. My father sent for our neighbour Colonel Gorrange. He came with his car and he and my father drove my mother to hospital in Nairobi. She had a perforated appendix and without modern drugs she lived only a few days. Dad brought the news and it was a shattering blow to all of us, especially Robert who had been closest to her. He disappeared for a whole day and did not return from his wanderings until late that night. Only much later did I learn why he felt our mother's death even more

keenly than the rest of us. Shortly before this he had fallen out of a tree and broken his arm. He had to go to hospital to have it set, and this depleted our small savings. His sensitive child's mind jumped to the conclusion that if there had been more money she would have been sent in earlier and her life would have been saved. So poor Robert felt it was his fault.

My father became more silent than usual. I had a vague sense that I ought to be looking after him but I did not know what to do. I was only eight. Dad sent me to stay with an uncle and aunt of his, Canon and Mrs. Harry Leakey. He was one of the first Anglican missionaries in Kenya and my father had originally come out to help him build the mission school.

I loved those months at the mission school at Limuru. The oldest Leakey son Louis was studying at Cambridge and had left many orphaned baby animals behind which his sister Julia and I looked after. There were several dyker, a monkey and a baby baboon that became my special pet. He lived in a cage in a tree near the house. He would climb down from the tree and perch on my shoulder and we would go for long walks together. When we went to church he was locked in his cage but as he grew bigger he learned to bite his way out. One Sunday he followed me to church, walked down the aisle to the front pew where we sat, climbed along the back of the pew and took his place on my shoulder. I was delighted to have to miss the sermon and take him home. Another Sunday as we were waiting for lunch he came down from the tree, dashed into the house, grabbed a loaf of bread from the dining room table and shot back up the tree. From the safety of his perch he began pelting us with bits of bread. As he grew bigger he might have become dangerous and had to be consigned to a zoo.

4
TRIALS OF A COLONIAL SCHOOLGIRL

When they could afford it the settlers generally sent their children to England for their education.

There was only money for two of us to go. Nigel being the oldest was a natural choice, and I being the lone girl was to accompany him. An uncle was a housemaster at Bromsgrove so Nigel went there. He did not think much of the English boys and invariably got into fights, often ending up with a bloody nose.

I went to stay with my godmother, Maye Conner, and her husband Colonel Conner. He had retired to his home in Ireland and become a magistrate. However he became a target of the Sinn Fein and was advised to leave the country. They poured themselves out morning, noon and night, tutoring the backward Kenyan in every subject to fit me for school with my age group. The transition from the wilds of Kenya

to the confines of England was a traumatic experience. I felt I was in a cage. The English climate was rugged after life on the equator. Hot baths were available only every second night, so half the winter nights I lay awake shivering and suffering from chilblains, too proud to appear soft and ask for a hot water bottle or comforts which the others did not enjoy.

After this year of devoted tutoring I was admitted to Malvern Girls College Junior School. The first day a class mate asked me where I came from. With great pride I said "Kenya". "Where is that?", she asked. Shocked at what seemed to me unpardonable ignorance I explained that it was in East Africa. "Oh, then you are a little colonial" said the girl and walked away. So ended the budding friendship. I decided not to get hurt again and while Nigel defied the British, I conformed to their ways, so becoming less and less myself. I was miserable and wanted to get back to Africa, so I would employ every tactic, honest or dishonest, to avoid conflict and get ahead.

If poor in money and knowledge I was rich in relatives who treated me most generously. My father was one of a family of eight. For many years twenty-nine nephews and nieces used to spend the summer holidays together. Renting accommodation was out of the question, so we lived under canvas, supervised by an uncle and aunt who had handled many young people in the Boys Brigade and Girl Guides. My first camp was at Mullion in Cornwall in discarded World War 1 bell tents. The beaches were beautiful and fascinating and often dangerous. There were old tin mines with entrancing stories of smuggling. Not far away was the town of Helston where my grandfather had once been the vicar. We were shown the bell tower with eight bells. My father and his brothers and sisters had once been the bell ringers, each having his own bell.

Other camps were held at West Mersey in East Anglia. We had a couple of rowing boats and learned the rudiments of sailing with a ground sheet tied to a tent pole. The aunts were expert boatmen and kept the strictest supervision until the young could handle the boats properly and could swim reasonably well.

Six of us in the group had been born in the same year and stuck

together inseparably. One moonlight night we raided the stores, loosed a boat and rowed up the creek to an island where we spent the night. We breakfasted on boiled pigeon eggs until we opened one and found boiled baby pigeon inside. That rather put us off. At dawn our absence was discovered and some irate aunts arrived to escort us home. But the aunts were good sports and would plan special surprises for the different groups. One morning Aunt Lilian quietly woke our group before dawn and beckoned us to her tent where she had packed breakfast. We tiptoed down to the boat and she took us right out to sea and along the coast to a distant beach where we cooked our food and spent a leisurely morning swimming and sunbathing far from the daily chores of the camp. We formed bonds of friendship that endure today.

The Leakey family have a strong religious tradition. My mother's family the Laings were more worldly and belonged to the business and professional world.

Uncle George Laing was a family doctor in Surrey. The whole family observed all the traditions of gentility. Dinner each evening was a formal occasion with dinner jackets and long evening gowns. I stood in awe of the style of my cousins who had several evening dresses while I rarely had one and felt like Cinderella. Wines were served with the meal and the gentlemen stayed for port while the ladies retired to the drawing room - all very different from the scant clothes and lack of formality of our Kenya home.

Back at school disaster struck. One day I heard some of the grownups discussing the problem that money for school fees had run out. Already very insecure, I jumped to the conclusion that I would have to leave school and go out to work. The only work I could think of was domestic service as I had no qualification. I felt numb at the thought. It was winter and bitterly cold. I lay awake at night, partly from worry and partly from the cold. Finally I would cry myself to sleep.

I realise now that my generous godparents would never have considered such a step, but at the time my world seemed to have come to an end. Then something happened which to me seemed a miracle. After my

mother died my father sold the coffee farm at Ngong. The purchaser in turn sold it to a distant relative of my mother's. Suddenly the price of coffee escalated and the cousin sold the farm for a big profit, having done no work on it. With incomparable generosity he gave the profit to my father to use for us children, either when we were twenty-one, or immediately if he wished. The money was promptly put to our education. All three of my brothers could now go to school in England and I could go to boarding school.

The four of us used to visit my favourite aunt, a spinster named Alice, affectionately known as AA. She resembled my mother and did much to take her place. Visits to her were always a joy. She had a weak heart which compelled her to stay in bed for breakfast. I used to creep under the covers with her in the morning and with luck might also be served breakfast in bed. She took us to pantomimes and circuses and later to plays and concerts in London. Dinner in town was always a great excitement. At home she always read the newspapers to us and taught us the intricacies of the stock exchange. Fortunately or unfortunately I never had the means to put this financial "training" to use.

Best of all were the holidays with her at Bamburgh in Northumberland. AA's father, my grandfather, had been a landowner in those parts and there were still old timers who remembered him and his Bamburgh home. The castle was a great place for exploring. Once we found a disused tunnel a long way from the castle. My brother Robert followed it and found that it came up within the castle keep. Robert pursued this love of underground exploration and later in life became a well known "spelunker". His name featured in the press from time to time in courageous underground rescues when people were trapped.

We explored the moors, had picnics in the Cheviot Hills, swam in the rivers and joined the local fishermen on their trips to sea in their fishing smacks. We did trips to the Farne Islands and to Lindesfarne where Saint Cuthbert had once established his centre of religion and learning. There were tennis tournaments which Rea and I once won, a far cry from our tree tennis in Kenya. Then to my disgust a beautiful blonde appeared on

the scene and Rea demanded to play with her, leaving me to some inferior partner. However I got some grim satisfaction from the fact that the blonde was a dud with a racquet and Rea returned to the fold.

With our new windfall I was admitted to the Alice Ottley School in Worcester. It had the intimacy of not being too large and I felt at home. Tennis was my love and I played for the first team. Yet there were a lot of things unresolved. There was the underlying bitterness against the snobbishness I felt in the British. My father had married again and I began to hate him as I did not want anyone to take my mother's place.

My guardian Aunt Maye Conner was much worried about me and her teenage children, and our apparent indifference to anything religious. We had long seen through her strategy of leaving "good" books around the house for our edification. Unlike us she was strong for church meetings and the like. One of her gatherings was in Oxford at the same time as a big conference of the Oxford Group, later known as Moral Re-Armament. The taxi driver from the station got the conferences mixed and dropped her at Saint Hugh's College. There were a lot of people the age of her wayward brood and her mind began to work. She extracted a promise that she would receive an invitation to the next conference like this, and went on to her church meeting.

In due course the invitation arrived for a conference at Welwyn Garden City, north of London. It was holiday time and Aunt Maye firmly announced that we were all going. The statement was greeted by howls of protest but she was adamant. She was shutting up the house. The children pleaded that they must stay to look after the dog. No use. The dog was going too. So dog and all we piled into the old Alvis with a canvas roof that folded down, and duly arrived at the hotel. After much argument as to who should have the dog for a room mate we unpacked and joined the conference.

Over the weekend certain things stuck in my mind. I had thought of religion in terms of being good. These people came from a great many countries and thought in terms of a world task. They had a sense of purpose and there was a comradeship in a common fight. But the most

arresting thing was the idea of a living communication with God after the formality of chapel prayers, and that specific direction could come from the mind of God to the mind of man.

All this was very new and a bit strange to me. But I did find myself thinking about my father. I resented his second marriage, and though I never spoke about it to anyone, a wall had gone up between him and me. I wrote him the sort of letters I imagined a dutiful daughter would write but deeper communication ceased. I realised how very selfish my attitude was and felt I should write honestly about it to my father and try to rebuild the family. I told him of the barrier I had erected and apologised for it and said I wanted to be a real daughter to him again. The letter went off, by sea of course, and there followed six weeks of anxious waiting. I worried whether I had done the right thing and whether telling him of my hatred might make things worse. Then to my relief the answer came and my fears vanished. My father thanked me for writing. He had known that a barrier existed but did not know what had caused it or what he could do about it. He asked me to write more. This began a new chapter in our relationship which grew deeper with the years.

Who would guess that this simple act of a young girl would touch history in far parts of the world? Yet so strange is the human lot. However the first ripple was in our family.

It turned out that my letter had come at a time of crisis in my father's marriage to my stepmother. They were not getting on together and the future was uncertain. They decided that my stepmother should come over to England to see what had so deeply affected my father's difficult daughter. It proved to be what they needed. She found the answer to a rather bad temper and the marriage was healed. He also began to rethink his relationship with the farm workers.

Despite this promising start to my experiment, my experience was still very superficial. I began to cut corners on school rules. Worse still I gathered others round me and made them take the risks of breaking bounds and buying ice cream and other goodies outside the school. At last I realised that this was a mean thing to do and began to take the risks

myself. In the end I was caught, severely scolded and threatened with expulsion if I did not mend my ways.

Somewhat chagrined I went back to the Conner family for my holidays. To my surprise I found that they had taken the ideas of the conference more seriously than I had done and really tried to put them into practice. The atmosphere in the home had noticeably improved. This was something for me to chew on after my bad term.

As my experience with my father had worked out so well I decided I would try the same approach to my daily life at school. I thought of one of the girls who might understand what I was trying to do and told her of my search. She agreed to join me and we began to think together how things might be improved in the school. There was a history teacher who was a brilliant academic but had no idea how to handle children. We took advantage of this and asked all sorts of stupid questions to throw her off balance. Then the class would laugh at her discomforture. We decided to try to make her the most popular teacher in the school. So we began to think out questions that would draw out her extensive knowledge and soon she became a source of fascination for the whole class. Discipline ceased to be a problem.

Cheating about our work was very widespread and in fact the girl I was working with had been my partner in crime. We decided that we would cut it out and word got around. There was a big drop in the amount of cheating that went on.

Then we thought about games. Tennis coaching was minimal. We went to the games mistress and offered to take on the younger girls and give them coaching. Soon the standard began to rise. So the school year ended on a happy note.

5
BACK TO KENYA

My schooldays over, the question was what to do next. It was decided that I should return to Kenya for a year to be with my father and consider the future together. I took the train across France to join an uncle and aunt in Bordighera for a last fling in Europe - croissants and coffee and tangerines in bed for breakfast, tennis and mountain climbing, or watching the tennis giants of the day like Borotra, Lacoste and von Cramm in their exciting duels. Then on by train to Genoa where I picked up a German boat, the Watussi, for the slow trip through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. Then on to Mombasa and the thrill of being back in Africa.

Living out the precepts I had learned in the disciplined atmosphere of school or the strict Conner home was one thing. A long sea voyage with swimming, sun bathing and dancing with a host of unattached young men was a different matter. At least I managed to cling to my convictions sufficiently to keep out of trouble though I did not seem able

to get my ideas across to others. There was also one encounter that encouraged me. I got to know a girl my own age who was a chain smoker and desperate about her inability to give it up. I felt unable to help her as I had an occasional cigarette myself, so I suggested that we give it up together and help each other. We made a pact and it did help the chain smoker. It was also a milestone for me. I saw the need to discipline my own life if I wanted to help others, and in fact I never smoked again.

It was a happy year in Kenya. Our home was now at Nyeri Station near the famous Treetops Hotel where Princess Elizabeth was later to be woken up and told that she was Queen Elizabeth II. The farm was bounded by two rivers full of trout. From the house you looked over level grazing land, then the river, and then the land climbed steadily to Mount Kenya with its two jagged peaks. My father had built a bedroom for me a few paces from the house where I slept with our dog Sam. Outside the window was a game track leading down to the river. When the moon was shining the dog and I spent the night at the window. Kudu, waterbuck, bushbuck and impala trod daintily by. Hyaena and jackal slipped furtively past. Occasionally a leopard glided by like a shadow in the night. I decided that night life in London was not a patch on night life in Kenya. My father could never make out why I was so sleepy at breakfast after a long night in bed.

It was good to get to know my father and stepmother after the years of estrangement. Every evening we would take a walk over the veld. My father loved trout fishing and often we would walk down to the river. He initiated me into the fisherman's arts - tying a fly, spotting a likely lie for a fish and then dropping the fly as quietly as possible in front of him. Then the thrill of the screaming reel and the pride of landing your first fish.

Snakes abounded. Dad walked in front and if he came across a sluggish puff adder he would stop and send me to cut a stick and made me despatch the snake. He felt I needed to learn to look after myself in the bush. Wild animals abounded and rhino and buffalo lived down by the river. My brother Rea once came face to face with a rhino as he

rounded a tree. Both of them got such a fright that they turned and ran in opposite directions. As I fished I would often get the feeling that some dangerous beast was staring at my back. Once I got a bad fright. There was a definite rustling among the trees just behind me and I was sure it must be a buffalo. To my relief I suddenly saw a lot of colobus monkeys floating from tree to tree. Their lovely long black and white hair supported them almost like a parachute and gave the impression that they were actually flying.

Kathleen Hill-Williams, proprietress of the Sportsman's Arms in Nanyuki, was a good friend. She was a hardy character, one of the few women I knew who used to go out lion hunting. Their skins adorned the lounge of her hotel. Soon after my arrival in Kenya she invited me to join the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (the FANYS). It was a carry over from the First World War. Lady Farrar, an old Kenya settler who had seen service in World War I, commanded the unit and its exercises were held on her farm at Molo at an altitude of eight thousand feet. The course had a distinctly military flavour - P.T., marching, shooting with rifle and pistol, army tactics, motor mechanics, tractor maintenance, cooking, and of course nursing and first aid. In fact all these skills were of great value for any Kenya girl in these wild surroundings. Officers from the regular army came to give us our tests in lorry driving and convoy leadership.

Reveille was at first light but I had come to attach importance to a time of quiet before the day's work. So I rose in the dark and repaired to one of the cars for this morning meditation. Some of the others including our instructor, second lieutenant Hill-Williams, had embarked on the same search and we joined together in our quest. As the youngest recruit I was called on to make a speech at the end of the course and I tried to get across the idea of inner discipline as well as physical discipline. Something seemed to get over. Then to my great surprise I was given a cup for the best recruit and a cup for first aid.

When I got back to our farm my father decided to put me to the test and persuaded me to decarbonise his model A Ford station wagon. I

started out with great enthusiasm while he sat on a rock watching me with a twinkle in his eye, always relighting his pipe which kept going out. He got up to help me if something heavy needed lifting, otherwise I was on my own. I was torn between pride in what I was doing and fear that something would go wrong and I would be shown up and have to get his help. However, I struggled through.

Kathleen Hill-Williams also introduced me to polo which she loved. I think I was fairly reckless and took a lot of spills with no serious injury. But, as so often happens, you survive the big hazards and come to grief unexpectedly. After a vigorous practice I was slouched in the saddle as the pony walked off the field. Someone hit a stray ball that hit the pony's foot. In the heat of the game I had always simply rolled over but this time I put out my arm to stop the fall and broke the elbow. The local doctor was rarely sober. He assured us that it was only a sprain and put it in a sling. But in a few days the arm was three times its normal size and my father bundled me into a car and drove through the night to Nairobi. By now the arm was really painful and the bumping of the car over rutted roads added to the discomfort. My father tried to take my mind off the elbow and thoughtfully kept up a running commentary on his early life in Kenya which I later persuaded him to commit to paper.

In Nairobi the excellent Dr. Gerald Anderson lost no time in getting the right diagnosis of the situation and setting the arm in plaster. Dr. Anderson was a legend in his time in Kenya. You only have to mention his name among the old timers and you get the response "He saved my life."

All of the Anderson family were always very kind to us. When we stayed with them they would take us out in the late afternoon to the Athi Plains to look for game, especially lion. Lone Tree was a favourite landmark. One evening we girls were cruising in this region when another rather battered car overtook us and pulled up. Out stepped Louis Leakey. Dr. Anderson had sent Louis to find the party as his wife Mary Leakey was very ill and needed a blood transfusion. Blood banks were unknown and it was believed that after a long time in Africa your blood

became thin and possibly infected by parasites. I, being fresh from England, was the obvious donor. I don't know whether the theory was right. But true or not, Mary Leakey got my blood and recovered.

The Ngong Hills with five symmetrical peaks are a favourite view from Nairobi and were a favourite picnic spot of ours. One Sunday I set out on such a picnic with the five Anderson children and various other young people. The rainy season had started but this was a glorious sunny Kenya day. The gravel roads were dry and we decided not to return by the direct route but to drive down into the Rift Valley and circle the Ngong Hills. Kenya's fickle weather cheated us. It began to rain within the hour and soon the murram roads became a quagmire. The heavier vehicle, a box body Chevrolet, got stuck. Everyone got out into the mud and pushed, treating it all as a great lark. But progress was slow and night began to fall rapidly as it does on the equator. We took stock of the situation. The second car was a Morris Minor and easier to push. Two of the Anderson girls, Robin and Patty, had to be in school next morning. It was decided that their brother Peter should take them on and hope for the best. So off they went. The Chev was firmly embedded in the mud. We pulled down the canvas side curtains and settled in for the night. It was lion and rhino country and all around us we heard the grunts and roars of wild beasts. Sleep was out of the question. Then came an unexpected and unfamiliar sound. Another car was ploughing through the mud towards us. It was an intrepid young widow, Billy Blunt, with whom I was staying at the time. When I failed to return Billy set out with a couple of strong African men bringing a tow rope and chains for the tyres. In no time the stalled car was hitched up and on the move again.

Then in the mud and the rain another car joined the convoy. Dr. Anderson, whose daughters were missing, had come in search of them. But most bizarre was the fourth car that got involved. The father of one of the young men in the party had been dining at the Muthaiga Club. When he discovered that his son was missing he collected a friend and set out complete with dinner jacket and boiled shirt in his low slung American car and without any chains. Inevitably they got stuck too and

were only rescued when the sun came up next morning. Our party arrived home in time for breakfast, caked in mud from head to foot. The school girls had arrived some hours earlier and joined their Monday morning classes on time.

My parents and I took over the Sportsman's Arms hotel in Nanyuki to allow our friend Kathleen Hill-Williams to get away for a holiday. Life in Kenya was pleasant for the white man provided he worked hard. The black sheep of many British families were packed off to Kenya with a remittance to make their way in a distant land where they would not be an embarrassment to their families. There was a lot of social life for a girl of nineteen and I enjoyed it to the full.

The hotel had its stables and we went out for early morning rides. I discovered that buck are not afraid of humans if they are on horseback. One morning I rode right into an untroubled herd of waterbuck. I can still see their fearless gaze and the morning dew glistening on their fur coats - one of memory's treasures.

In the uninhibited atmosphere of the Sportsman's Arms it was not easy to maintain the right standards for my life. I did keep out of trouble but absolute standards were not a part of my life. So there were mild flirtations which I passed off as harmless. Then one day an attractive young couple with a baby arrived at the hotel. He was a car salesman. When his wife was busy with the baby he would play up to me. I was flattered at the time but I thought about it early next morning and felt guilty when I thought of the wife and baby. I considered what I might say if he sought me out again. Sure enough we met and I remarked on what a lovely wife he had, and didn't he think that the nice things he said to me were really for his wife? He stopped in his tracks and went straight to his wife. I don't know what transpired but next morning they came to me together to thank me for bringing them closer together. I began to see more how the standards of my life affected others.

As I looked around the hotel I began to question not only my own standards but the standards of our whole society. One day at "sun-downer" time I was having a drink with a settler on the veranda which

was crowded with whites giving orders to the blacks with no thought about how their bossiness and flirtations affected those who were serving them. I said to my companion, "I wonder what the Africans think of us and the way we behave." His reply was, "They don't understand our language and don't notice what we do." I noted the expressionless masks of some of the blacks and wondered whether he was right. Mau Mau was to give the answer.

6
AFRICAN BEAUTY QUEEN

Something was always happening to shake me up. On one trip from Nyeri up to Nanyuki with a group of friends we stopped to call on a doctor and his wife. The wife turned to me at one stage and said with a smile, "I hear you have left a string of broken hearts between Nairobi and Nanyuki." She did not mean it unkindly but it left me troubled and I did a lot of thinking. It was true that I believed the old saying about safety in numbers and enjoyed every friendship as it came along. In fact we usually went to dances as a group of girls and young men and you danced with everyone. But if the doctor's wife was right and I had indeed broken some hearts what was I to do? I could not sit like a hermit on the farm. So I decided to stick to one male escort and hope we would not get too involved. He was a nice enough person and we were not in love. Yet we formed an attachment where we managed to hurt each other. Eventually we decided each to go his own way and it was a relief to us both. When later he told me that he had met the girl he was going

to marry I heaved a sigh of relief and gave them a wedding present with my genuine good wishes.

My father tried to keep me out of trouble by being a strict parent. Once I accepted an invitation to a dance with a young crowd, one of whom had a rather wild reputation. My father put his foot down, "You are not going." I put my foot down, "Nonsense, of course I am going." The impasse continued for a while. Then my father said, "All right, then I am coming too." I was horrified at the thought of my father coming along as a chaperone. But sure enough he got out his old dinner jacket, somewhat green with age and disuse, and we set out together. He sat at the side of the dance floor reading a book and looking completely miserable. Nor, in fact, was I enjoying the dance. At last the humour of the situation broke through and I began to laugh. I went over to him and said, "Let's go home."

The annual ball at Government House was a big occasion and we were all invited. In this outpost of Empire naturally the social etiquettes had to be observed meticulously. This meant long gloves for the ladies and white gloves for the men as they went through the receiving line. I doubt whether Nairobi shops had enough gloves to go round even if we could produce the money to buy them. Our arrangement was that one person would go through the receiving line and then run round to pass the gloves to the next of our party to be presented. It worked well for the ladies. The men were not so fortunate. One of our party, who had big rough farmer's hands, tried to force the gloves on and one split from top to bottom.

I was still very much in search of the right way to live my life when I had another strange experience that strengthened my frail belief. I visited Billy Blunt, who like me had embarked on a search. A group of Africans worked in her large garden. Generally they sang at their work but one day an ominous silence reigned. Billy enquired what was wrong. One of their wives, they said, had been bewitched and was going to die. This was serious because, as everyone who has lived in Africa knows, if a person is convinced he is bewitched he simply does die. Billy and

I went to the woman's hut to see her. Clearly she was in dire straits. There were all sorts of charms like beetles wrapped in mud around her to ward off the evil spirits but she did not think they were succeeding. She was going to die.

We returned to the men to consult. Billy asked, "Do you believe in the evil spirits?" They said there was no question about it. The woman was bewitched by an evil spirit and she was going to die. Billy asked, "Do you believe in a good spirit?" They were less sure about this. However after a discussion they agreed, yes there was a good spirit but as he was not going to do them any harm there was no need to bother about him. Billy suggested that if they listened to the good spirit he might show them how to overcome the evil spirits. The men agreed that this might be a good idea and very naturally they stood quiet with bowed heads. I could get no helpful thought at all. All I could think about was what sort of fools we would look if no good came of this. But the husband of the bewitched woman spoke up. The good spirit had told him to go and get his wife out of bed! The others nodded agreement and off he went. After a while Billy and I could contain our curiosity no longer and went to the hut to see how things were going. The woman was outside her hut hoeing her maize patch. The charms had been broken and were scattered about the floor and everyone started singing again.

One of the joys of my visit was linking up again with my oldest brother Nigel. His job was decorticating sisal - extracting the fibre from the long pulpy leaf. He moved from farm to farm with his truck that carried the machine and the crew of African workers.

Nigel invited me to join him on one of these trips. We stayed in a small disused farm cottage with minimal furniture - mostly packing cases, a few chairs and one bed which he gallantly gave to me while he slept on the floor in the living room. He had two African servants who did their best to cook for him, do the washing and clean the house. The ways of the white man were strange to them and no doubt baffling. They were always willing and when they heard that Nigel's sister was coming to stay one of them picked a bunch of wild flowers and put them in an

old jam jar on the packing case that served as a table. I was deeply touched. My job was to drive the lorry from place to place and from field to field where the sisal had been cut and was ready to be worked. It was good fun and the singing of the Africans as they did their jobs added life to the scene. Nigel employed different tribes for the different jobs - one for cutting the sisal, one for putting it through the machine, and one for sorting and stacking.

At the weekend Nigel decided to take a trip into the Wakamba country. Several people came out from Nairobi to join us including two girls recently out from England. There were eight of us including the two Africans and we took along our camping equipment and food for the trip. We drove along gravel roads in virgin country and towards evening we came to a village where we heard that there was to be a dance that night. This sounded interesting so we set up camp. I felt I was Nigel's hostess and set about trying to organise things. Soon Nigel came to me quietly and said that the African men wanted me out of the way so that they could get on with preparing the meal. That was my first and last effort at doing the cooking.

As it grew dark the dancing started with a circle of girls in the middle and the men in an outer ring beating the drums, singing and stamping. During one of the pauses when the men had gone to heat up the drums over the fire to make them taut again the girls surrounded our three white women. They had never seen white women before. They fingered our clothes and hair, they looked us over from every angle and commented among themselves for some while. Eventually I asked Nigel who spoke their language to find out why they looked at us so intently. It turned out that they were judging which of us was the most beautiful. After much giggling and gesticulating they eventually pointed at me. I was flattered and rashly asked my brother to find out what were the points in which I surpassed my companions. The answer was that I was the tallest and the strongest and could carry the heaviest loads! In fact the English girls were petite, with lovely peaches and cream complexions. So much for different sets of values.

By this time the party was in full swing and the Africans suggested that we white girls should select the beauty queen from among their number. We picked a rather coy girl in the background who shyly held her hand before her mouth. The Africans were disgusted with our choice – she was the wallflower of the party because she did not have the courage to have her teeth filed to a point which was considered beautiful. Now the three men of our party were asked whom they considered most beautiful among the Africans. They picked the largest girl, with teeth almost wholly filed away and a big cheer went up from the crowd. At about midnight we went off to our lorry to try to get some sleep, the girls in the lorry, the men on the ground underneath. The dancing went on until dawn. Our two African men were in the thick of it but were all ready with a splendid breakfast when the sun came up.

Next day we went hunting and one of the men shot a small buck for our food. We cooked it African style. A hole was made in the ground and a fire built inside it. When the coals were glowing the buck was placed into the hole and covered with soil and leaves. The skin was left on to prevent the flesh from scorching and drying out. Some four hours later we were served a delicious meal of hot venison with fruit and fresh vegetables. We drove back to the sisal farm in the evening light and were treated to the magical sight of some thirty giraffe walking in single file along the skyline with the sun setting behind them. We watched in silence, overcome by the beauty of the scene.

African nights have a wonder all of their own. The stars seem so close that you want to reach up and touch them. There is one experience I had that I always associate with African night. I had begun to put my faith in God, but often He seemed so distant and people so much closer. When I returned home I quite naturally began to put my security in my parents, feeling they were in a way responsible for me. Then I realised that because I had been given so much in Europe they wanted to rely on me. So what was I to do?

That night as I walked over to my cottage I stopped and marvelled at

the wonder of the star-studded sky. God seemed very close and I turned to Him in my dilemma. A clear thought came to me, "Put your trust and security in Me. If your line of communication with Me is straight, then your line of communication with others will also be straight." A great sense of peace came over me. The cries of the hyrax and the other sounds of the African night took on an added delight.

7
I TRY TO BECOME A NURSE

Back in England after the wonderful year in Kenya I saw a lot of my brother Robert. He took me on a car trip to Scotland. Each night we would pull off into a wood and pitch our tents. One night some men stumbled on our camp. They were clearly worried that we would report them and they would be prosecuted for trespassing. They proved to be salmon poachers. Robert promised to say nothing provided they gave us a meal from their catch. But fate was against it and they caught nothing.

One night we camped next to a lake which we took to be inland water until the level rose and began to cover our tents. Obviously it was a sea loch. Next day we headed for Ben Nevis and camped on the south side. Rain poured down and we were soaked. Robert taught me the value of a pure wool blanket next to the skin. Wet or dry it did the trick.

It was still raining when we set out to climb the peak. Robert, who was a mountaineer, went in front and hauled me up the steep faces with a walking stick. When we reached the top the rain had turned to a blizzard of snow. We ate our sandwiches in zero temperature, clad only in shirts and shorts, but savouring the adventure of it all. We descended on the north side which was not difficult except that I lost the sole of a shoe. I was absolutely worn out and pinned my hopes on a youth hostel at the bottom. Alas! It was for men only. However the generous couple who managed the hut allowed me to sleep on the hearth rug in front of their living room fire, snugly wrapped up in a blanket. I knew nothing for twelve hours but Robert, who is incredibly tough, walked back round the mountain and brought our car with the gear to the hostel.

Robert is a great talker, an idealist always dedicated to some cause. At that time it was Communism and he felt deeply and sincerely for the unemployed miners in Wales, and for others suffering hardship. But mixed up with his concern for the underprivileged were other aspects of the Communist faith, one of which was free love with its appeal of "liberation." I was attracted and repelled at the same time. Throughout the trip I weighed Robert's beliefs against what I had learned about building a new society on Christ's uncompromising standards and the belief that, insignificant as I was, I could yet be part of God's overarching plan for all his children everywhere. In the silence of my heart I decided again that this was to be my path, and to the best of my ability I would let God pattern my course.

The question of my future now became urgent. I was determined to start my nursing career right away. Three times I was accepted by some of the best hospitals in London and three times something happened to stop my entry. Once a good friend fell ill and there was no one but me to care for her. The next time my parents decided to come over to England - the first visit in years - and I thought I should be free to be with them. At my third attempt I was about to buy my uniform when I got the worst go of flu I had ever had and was completely laid out. So again the chance went by.

I went to recuperate with my godmother Mrs. Little on her farm in Hampshire. She spoiled me with a glowing fire in my room and breakfast in bed. I had plenty of time to sleep and think in the lovely atmosphere of an English spring. I still felt guilty about my involvement with the Kenya farmer and knew that somewhere I had lost my way. The future seemed uncertain. I felt there was some new step I needed to take and I did not know what it was. I wrestled with this, tried reading the Bible and praying about it. Then I realised a simple point - I had never given my life fully to God with no hold back or reservation. I quailed at the thought and began to write down the things I did not want to let out of my control. Four things stood out. I was set on my nursing career. We had been poor and if I ever had money I wanted to spend it as I decided. I wanted marriage and I was determined to live in Africa.

But I had set my feet on a road and though my steps had been hesitant and fearful, I believed it was the right road. If I was going forward there was no way round giving my whole life to God. So on my own, on my knees, I promised God that whatever He showed me I would carry out to the best of my ability. Specifically I put in His hand the difficult issues of career, marriage, Africa and how I spent my money.

I got up off my knees. Nothing seemed different. I continued my holiday. I did realise that it meant nothing to say I was giving my life to God unless I tried to find out what He wanted. So I began to make a practice of starting the day in a quiet search for God's direction. It has struck me since that one of the great losses to the world is that so many people at some time have in all sincerity given their lives to God, but do not make this effective by simply saying each day, "God I have given my life to you. What do You want me to do?" and to seek the answer in their heart of hearts.

One morning, out of the blue, there came a thought that absolutely petrified me - that I should offer to give all my time to working with the Oxford Group. Fears began to crowd in. What about money? I had nothing. Was I good enough? Of course I wasn't. What if I was not accepted? It would be an awful blow to my pride. I was not even sure

that my past sins had been forgiven.

In this uncertain state of mind I went to stay with my Aunt Lillian Ridge in Enfield. On Sunday she invited me to come to a communion service in her church. I went more to keep her company than out of conviction. Little did I know that this was to be another landmark in my life. During the service words I had heard hundreds of times came to life and took on a new reality. There was born in me a certainty that my sins were forgiven. I felt sure that Christ was real and that He was my friend, ever at hand. I left the church light in spirit and determined to go forward.

I summoned my courage, went to some of my friends and hesitantly raised the idea of working with them. I was really nervous about their reaction. However I got nothing but encouragement. I began to help as I could, working in the book room and passing on to others as best I was able my still very limited experience.

This was in 1938. Hitler was on the march. Re-Armament was the order of the day. Frank Buchman, who had initiated the move in which I was becoming involved, had a burning conviction that material re-armament might win a war, but it would take moral and spiritual re-armament to build real peace. So he launched the programme known as Moral Re-Armament in the West Ham town hall, then at a world conference at Interlaken in Switzerland, and now he was preparing to launch it in America. People from many nations were invited to join him and were busy raising their fares for the Atlantic crossing.

In the middle of all this I received a legacy of one hundred pounds - a large amount at that time, and the first money I had ever owned. Immediately I thought of all the things I needed or wanted to buy and was about to go on a spending spree. Suddenly an awful thought - what about the promise I had made to God about money? It stopped me in my tracks. A little sadly I sat down and tried to think what I ought to do. I thought about this move to America and its importance at this crucial time. A great deal of sacrifice was going into it and many people were trying to raise their fares. I decided to offer the money to the next person I met

who was going on this mission. I met various people who were going and offered to help, but all seemed to have raised what they needed. Clearly my idea of using this money for the American trip was not right and I began to doubt whether God really did guide people in such earthy things as money.

Then I had an even more shattering thought, "Perhaps you are meant to use the money to go to America yourself." My reaction was negative. What would I do in America? I had so little experience and so little faith that I would be a fish out of water. I tried to put the thought out of my mind.

Next morning a friend phoned and asked whether I had ever thought of going to America myself. I lied and said no. Later another friend phoned with the same query. I said, "Well, may be."

To my astonishment a third call came with the same idea. This time I admitted that the thought had crossed my mind. As all three callers were in different places and as far as I knew had no collusion I knew I had to take the matter seriously. I went up to London and discussed the idea with a few people. It seemed to all of us that I was meant to go, so I got busy. Within three days I had got my passport and my ticket and was on my way to Southampton on the boat train.

I was being catapulted into an orbit far larger than I had bargained for.

I had telegraphed my father in Kenya asking his thought on the venture. He cabled his full support. This was quite an event as he hated sending telegrams or cables. We were always poor and he argued that you could say so much more in a letter. On one occasion when there was some family wedding in England my step-mother badgered him into sending a cable. The message was the shortest he could think up. It said "Participating - Leakey".

We held a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden in New York, another for thirty thousand people in the Hollywood Bowl, and a demonstration at the San Francisco world fair held on an island in the bay not far from the old Alcatraz prison.

Our group were meeting together when word came that war had been

declared. Although it had for some time seemed inevitable, it was still a stunning shock when it actually happened. We all sat in silence realising that the world we had known was going beyond recall. Each one of us had to decide what we would do. Some felt they should return at once to Europe. Others felt the importance of keeping a nucleus together through the war preparing for the task of building unity in the post war world. My heart felt deeply for Britain and I had some idea of what she would have to endure. But I felt my calling was to stay with this force in America.

With Britain at war and American industry geared to "lend-lease" aid to the allies we had to think out what our best war service was and how we would operate. We repaired to Lake Tahoe in the Sierra mountains to consider the situation. We started with one cottage that had been loaned to us. I had once taken a domestic science course and, rusty as I was, I found myself catering and cooking along with another friend.

More and more people came until we were having to care for more than two hundred. Of necessity we had to co-opt and teach more cooks. For many spoiled young Americans, as for me, it was a salutary training. Most paid labour was now in the war industries and people would have to do their own cooking in the years ahead.

We hired more cottages and put people up as best we could. Some slept in tents, some out in the open. Finally we took over a disused casino built out over the lake.

One of those who came was John Riffe, a labour organiser in the Steel Workers Organising Committee. His marriage was in stormy waters and his description of himself was "I swear like a trooper and drink like a fish." He found an inspiration which enabled him later to play a central part in uniting the long divided labour movements of America known as the A.F.L. and the C.I.O.

Once more a big development came from a small beginning. The owner of the casino was a rugged character, Frank Globin, reported to be an ex-bootlegger. We wanted to thank him for the use of his casino. We decided that a "floor show" would be the thing for him. We prepared

a great entertainment putting into skits the truths we felt America needed to fulfil her mission in the world. The themes were "Sound Homes, Teamwork In Industry, Unity In The Nation". People had come from the surrounding towns for the occasion. Before we knew it we were launched into the nation. We were invited to Carson City, the capital of Nevada and to Reno, the divorce capital of the world.

Winter came and we had to leave before we became snow bound. From this unexpected beginning our war service had become clear. We criss-crossed America with the revue and with a handbook of the same name, "You Can Defend America", which we distributed in millions, specially through industry where conflict was rife. Our aim was to nurture and encourage the qualities of sacrifice and statesmanship that would outlast the war and secure the peace.

However my role was to be a supporting one. I was not essential to the revue but some parents with families were badly needed. I volunteered to look after the children of three families to set their parents free to travel round America taking part in the revue.

There were six children, two girls and four boys. A girl from the deep South and I were in charge. We were quite inexperienced. The children, all of schoolgoing age, were suspicious of us, and we felt our only hope lay in complete honesty between us two older ones and equally with the children. They were homesick for their parents, I was homesick for Kenya. One evening there was a commotion in the room of one of the boys and I went to see what was going on. He had thrown the bedclothes and mattress on the floor and was in a furious temper. I was totally unable to cope and burst into tears. He was a sensitive child and was immediately concerned for me. He put his arms round me and asked what was the matter. I told him I did not know what to do with him and I wished I was home in Kenya. I asked him what his troubles were. He said how much he missed his parents and burst into tears. We ended up laughing, together remade the bed, said our prayers and peace was restored.

Those children really taught me how to love.

8
VICTORIA CROSS

The war around the world was always very close to us. Most of us had members of our family in the services and death was never far away. My three brothers had enlisted. One was fighting in East Africa, one in the Middle East and one in Asia. Nigel, my oldest brother, was fighting in the liberation of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) from the Italians. I had a close relationship with him as he, too, had found a faith and we kept up a running correspondence - as much as one could in war time. I wrote about our doings and our hopes for the post war world. He told me how he had come from scepticism to faith. In one letter he wrote, "If the sacrifices we are called on to make will give you a chance to build a better world then I am ready to give everything." The words were prophetic.

One night I woke with the distinct impression that Nigel was in the room with me. He stood there smiling - and then he was no longer there.

I prayed for him and felt he had come to say goodbye. I noted the date and only much later learned that on this day he was lost and presumed dead in a battle with the Italians.

Months passed before details of the battle emerged. His regiment were without anti-tank weapons when they were ambushed. Nigel hid behind a bush until the lead tank was opposite him. He leapt on to the tank, prized open the turret, shot all the crew except the driver whom he compelled to turn round and drive into the oncoming tanks. He tried to operate the gun but could not manage it. He shot the driver and leapt on to the next tank, trying to put this out of action the same way. That was the last that was seen of him.

For this act of heroism he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation describes the battle and concludes:

> Sergeant Leakey throughout the action displayed valour of the highest order. His determination and his initiative were entirely responsible for breaking up the tank attack. By his own individual action he saved what would undoubtedly have developed into a most critical situation ... The superb courage and magnificent fighting spirit which Sergeant Leakey displayed, facing almost certain death, was an inspiration to the troops who fought on with inspiration after witnessing the gallantry of this remarkable feat.

There is a footnote to his life that I only learned many years later from a British diplomat in Addis Ababa who said, "The night before the battle Nigel and I got talking. We got on to the question of faith and he told me how he personally had found a faith for his life. I wanted to get some sleep with the battle coming up next day, but our discussion was so fascinating that we talked until two in the morning. Next day he was killed."

Not a bad way, I thought, to spend your last night on this earth.

In a little English church in Addis Ababa the names are listed of those who fell in the liberation of Ethiopia. Years later my husband and I found Nigel's name there. It is nice to know the specific place where he

is remembered as his body was never recovered and he lies in an unknown grave. We laid flowers before the altar with these lines remembering how much he loved Africa:

I know not where he found his rest,
His heart, I know, was full possessed
By Africa
No cross above his clay may rise
Sufficient that a loved one lies
Beneath the sun and soil and skies
Of Africa

But back to America.

There was one other person from Africa in our revue, Bremer Hofmeyr. He was a South African Rhodes Scholar, athletic, and from a distinguished family. He was fair and of medium height while my ideal was tall and dark. It had once in fact crossed my mind that if I ever got married it would be to him. I thought at least I should get to know him, and at a large reception I started up some conversation about our both being from Africa. His mind was elsewhere and I made no impression. I felt somewhat brushed off and decided that if that was all he thought of me, then definitely he was out.

We linked the impact of "You Can Defend America" with training conferences where we sought to build faith, build unity and inspire people with the vision of the unselfish society so that the sacrifices of war would not be squandered in a selfish peace. Mackinac Island in the great lakes of North America became our summer centre. We restored a derelict hotel and drew in people in their hundreds.

With my limited training in cooking at Lake Tahoe I once more took on the kitchen with a number of others, one of them a Swiss girl. One day she burst out at me, "Agnes, you are the most impossible person to work with. You always have an answer for everything and you are generally wrong."

Some statement. It shook me considerably as she was an even tempered person and I thought we were getting on well together. I took it seriously and went off to think about it. I knew she was right. I always had an answer because I wanted to be boss. This was very far from the concept we were trying to develop in the conference. I felt a real betrayer. I wrote down two other thoughts that came to me as I reflected in quiet - "Live to make the other person great. Give the best to people without demanding anything in return." Quite a different story.

I realised that I was afraid of being hurt. I withheld myself from people until I was sure that they accepted me first. This was exactly what I had done with Bremer Hofmeyr when I felt that he had brushed me off.

Much shaken I tried to live with my heart open to everyone, not just to those of my choosing. I began to fall in love with Bremer. He showed not the slightest interest and one day I picked up a piece of gossip that he was fond of someone else. Even worse I found myself thrown together with this very girl - a most painful situation. But I sincerely tried to live with my heart open to her and to everyone and she became a good friend.

Time passed. Still not the slightest indication that I meant anything to Bremer. Was I meant to be loyal to him in my heart when I meant nothing to him, and his affections seemed to be elsewhere? There were lots of other very attractive and eligible young men around especially as the war ended and young heroes returned to join us. I was really in a quandary, but somehow my heart held true.

I had kept close to my father - or as close as one could by letter in time of war when mails were very uncertain. Soon after the war ended I received a delayed letter saying that my step-mother Bessie had died of cancer and he was on his own again. His hearing had been somewhat impaired by cannon fire in the First World War. It made communication more difficult for him and tended to cut him off from people. I knew how lonely he must be and I longed to go and help him. But travel for civilians was still impossible and getting to Kenya was really an insuperable problem. There was nothing to do but to wait.

Then there was another development. The time seemed ripe for the force we had developed to move to Europe to make what contribution

we could. We moved heaven and earth to get berths on a troop ship returning to Europe. Another letter came from my father saying that he was bidden to Buckingham Palace to receive Nigel's V.C. from King George VI. The British government would pay his passage and give him priority travel. My heart leapt. In this way we would meet again. Someone in heaven seemed to be working things out.

9
STRANGE ROUTE TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE

We were a party of well over a hundred so we embarked on a special train in Los Angeles for New York. I was very weary and looked forward to a long rest on the four day journey.

Much to my annoyance on the first afternoon out, when I was really beginning to relax, I was invited to a tea party in the compartment of a good friend. Most of the party were those who had shared a home in Los Angeles. Bremer Hofmeyr was one of them but this was natural enough. We enjoyed the tea and the train pulled into a small station, Trinidad in Colorado. We all got off the train to stretch our legs on the platform. When the train started again I returned to our tea venue and to my surprise the only other one of the party to return was Bremer. I was a little embarrassed and felt some conversation was needed so I asked whether there was any chance of his mother joining the party in Europe.

"You know Ags," he said, "that is the one place you could help me." This seemed strange but I said, "Certainly I would like to help, but what can I do?" To my astonishment came the reply, "The only thing that would bring my mother to Europe is if you would marry me."

We were in each other's arms.

The ticket inspector came by and we told him our happy news. All the way down the train he informed our party that two people on "his" train had got engaged. Speculation was rife until we came in to dinner together to a great cheer from our friends. We cabled our families at the next opportunity. Bremer cabled "My heart has found its home."

As we were returning to British austerity we were showered with gifts. I was offered a wedding dress from a store but felt that in our life of travel it would be an encumbrance, so I opted for a trousseau instead and borrowed a wedding dress that had to go to England in any case.

Bremer's mother did come from South Africa and my father travelled from Kenya.

My brother General Rea Leakey (then Colonel) was also to receive a decoration so we began to plan for the investiture at Buckingham Palace. Each recipient of a medal could invite two guests to the ceremony. Bremer and I were invited along with Frank Buchman who had been very much a father to me in America, and Nigel's godmother made the fourth.

To the dismay of my father and brother who had extended the four invitations it turned out that when a decoration is awarded posthumously it is done at a private ceremony after the main function, and extra guests are not invited. So there were only two guest tickets and four invited. However there was a Leakey relative working in the palace and we told him of our predicament. He promised to do what he could, and soon phoned back. Bremer and I were to present ourselves at the tradesmen's entrance next to the stables at five minutes to eleven. We were duly met by an aide and escorted through the boiler room and underground passages passing vaults where the gold plate was stored and ending up outside the reception room where the investiture was to take place. As

the band struck up "God Save the King" the aide opened two swing doors, placed two chairs in the aisle, and disappeared. So we had an unimpeded view of all that went on.

The British are masters of ceremonial, and the occasion was profoundly moving. As each recipient of a decoration came forward a string orchestra played resonant music. The citation was read out and the decoration presented. When my brother Rea came forward the King said, "Haven't I seen you before?" He had indeed received previous decorations and they chatted about the time the King had visited the tank regiment in North Africa. The V.C. for Nigel was presented after the guests had left and my father had a quiet conversation with the King.

We had one further visit to Buckingham Palace. I was "presented at court". In normal times this is a great evening affair, but there was such a backlog from the war years that the traditional ceremonies would have involved too many occasions. A large garden party was substituted. There were no individual presentations. Nonetheless it was a very happy occasion on a lovely English summer afternoon with everybody in a good mood after the rigours of the war years.

We were married in Christ Church, Mayfair, close to 45 Berkeley Square where the reception was held. This had once been the home of Clive of India and he had fought a duel in one of the corridors. Bremer had been a member of a chorus, the Mackinac Singers, and they sang from a minstrel gallery where the sound echoed up and down the stairwell. They had also sung in the church - Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" with a second verse written by Bremer for the occasion and expressing our hopes for the years to come:

Jesu, star of mankind's hoping
For a dawning breaking bright,
Nations in the darkness groping
Find in Thee their perfect light.
O possess our every yearning
Fire our hearts with passion burning
Till our lands at last shall see
In Thy will their destiny.

We drove off from the reception to the inevitable rattling of tin cans behind our car. We headed for the south coast for the first few days of our honeymoon. As we got into the country a strong scent assailed our nostrils. I must have been very euphoric because I suggested it might be new mown hay. Soon it became apparent that it was anything but new mown hay and we pulled in to a garage. The attendant opened the bonnet to find, wired to the engine, the charred remains of a juicy kippered herring. The attendant kindly cut it loose for us, sadly shaking his head and murmuring, "My favourite food."

10
BACK TO MY LOVED AFRICA

We spent the first year of our marriage in London where our son Murray was born in 1947. We met three men who we discovered had been laying foundations in Africa on which we were to build. Group Captain Pat Foss had flown an unbelievable number of sorties over enemy territory during the war and had "airman's tummy", the aftermath of years of tension. Andrew Strang had been a prisoner of war of the Germans. Charles Burns had broken his neck and was mobile but in poor shape. They decided to come to Africa to recuperate. As travel space was unobtainable they bought a single engine Percival Proctor airplane, got addresses of people up and down the continent and set off to link up those who had been isolated by the war.

They returned to Europe a year later full of stories of their adventures and deeply convinced that the time was ripe for a major move if Africa

was ever to find its way to peace and freedom. We had long discussions and were convinced that the time had come for us to return to Africa. We also considered who might make a contribution and in the end seventeen of us set out for Kenya. Public transport was still very hard to find so we embarked from Holland in a KLM chartered DC3 Dakota, one of the most durable aircraft ever built. It was slow going and took three days. The pilot was an adventurous soul and once over Africa he could not resist the temptation to dive down to show us herds of elephant he claimed to see. Unfortunately Bremer was a terrible flier and did not appreciate the acrobatics. Our baby Murray was a friendly infant and was very happy to be passed from one passenger to the other for mutual entertainment.

Kenya was a short stop but a delight to my heart. My father and his new wife Mary farmed at Nyeri near Mount Kenya in as beautiful a setting as one could find on this earth. We proudly displayed the grandson and we spent pleasant days getting to know Mary, whom we had not met, and rebuilding the happy relationship with my father. From our veranda one looked straight up to Mount Kenya. In front of us were level grasslands and then the land broke away to one of our trout rivers. Dad taught Bremer to cast a fly as Kenya fishermen were purists and no other lure was acceptable. All seventeen of us were put up on the farm of old friends Jack and Esther Hopcraft. Such was Kenya hospitality.

The Kenya stay was short as we were starting our African venture in the South. Bremer and I with our baby son went straight to the Cape where his whole family were gathered on holiday. I met six brothers, a sister, and seven in-laws at one fell swoop. They all seemed to look alike and of course I got the wrong wives paired with the wrong husbands, but they were very kind to me. Two brothers were to become directors of major companies, three well known educators. One was an advocate who could have become a judge, but he was unhappy about the legal set-up in the country and moved to the side bar.

The rest of our party joined us in Cape Town. They were mostly young and attractive. They had musical talent, a good repertoire, and a

Christian commitment which South Africa appreciated. They adhered to firm standards in their personal lives which endeared them to the strict Afrikaners. We were warmly received by all parties in Parliament. As long as the Nationalist government perceived us as an international group trying to help South Africa, building moral discipline in young people, we were greatly welcomed. As time went on and it became clear to them that we were serious about a wholly new society in which all men of all races could share equally, an iron curtain came down.

Dr. Verwoerd, as Minister of Native Affairs, wrote to my husband, "Frustration must inevitably follow for the black intellectual when he does not find the equality in everyday life which you give him in your mixed organisation." When he became Prime Minister he opposed us frontally and spoke against us in cabinet meetings. The then powerful Broederbond, the hard core of Afrikanerdom, warned their members across the nation against us. However our first reception was very friendly.

Our second son Gray was born in South Africa. We had no salary, no personal financial resources and seventeen people to care for. We had often said that where God guides, He provides. But the idea of raising a family without any base in the world just seemed impossible. However, much was going on about which we had no idea.

Charles Burns, one of the initiators of our African move, was a landowner with a stately old home in Scotland. Eton College and service in the army in India had left him with a very formal but rather impersonal faith. Later his faith became very real and he decided on a path of obedience to wherever God showed him. He was a great horseman and had written a handbook on horsemanship.

One day his horse refused a fence. Charles landed on his head and woke up in hospital paralysed from the neck down. This was a shattering situation. He had given his life, as he understood, to a loving God and this was the outcome. Was it all an illusion? They were dark days. One fact stood out from his questioning. When he had decided on a life of obedience he had not made any conditions. In fact a commitment with

conditions was no commitment at all. He renewed his decision and made a remarkable recovery to the point that he could take up tennis again.

In South Africa he met Barbara Macmillan. They fell in love and were married. They bought a house in Johannesburg far larger than they needed and with the greatest generosity invited us to share it with them. When we had to travel they would look after our children. We would do the same for them. The home had thirteen beds and became the centre for our operation. It was our home for the next thirty years, and there Murray and Gray grew up.

The Burns's second child Geoffrey was our godson. One night we had a big sit-down dinner. He knew many of the guests and was allowed to come in his dressing gown to greet them. He went round the table, prolonging the greetings as best he could to delay bed-time. Finally there was no more to say and he went slowly up the stairs. Halfway up he was seen to pause and say to himself, "Everybody is my friend."

Our problem was how to build a new society in the midst of an old, seemingly entrenched, apartheid system that divided man from man on a basis of colour. A few things were clear. Behind political, economic, and social injustices there lay pride, selfishness, arrogance, prejudice, fear and hate in human hearts. These were the root of the problem, and any basic answer had to deal with these roots.

Equally we believed that we from different races should pioneer new human relationships and be the new society. So from the outset we decided that the Burns-Hofmeyr home would be a home for all races. Today with cities opening up this is not news. But in 1950 when apartheid was a "religion" this was simply not done. We were very pleased to find that our neighbours were eager to come to the home to meet our black friends. They were very conscious of the great lack in our society that black and white people of similar educational backgrounds had no natural meeting place. So the home became a place of building new human relationships.

In the midst of this activity we had the supreme joy as parents of

seeing our children growing up. Gray, the second, had a mind like a whip. One day he was walking down the street with his father and suddenly said, "Yesterday I climbed up that lamp post." It was an unlikely tale and his father said, "Show me how you did it." Without batting an eyelid Gray replied, "No. It was magic. But it does not work when there are grown ups around." Sad for us grown ups. One day I was making up Gray's bed. Gray came into the room clearly with something on his mind. At last it came out, "Mom, if I tell you something bad that I did will you spank me?" "No", I said, "not if you are honest with me." He considered this for a while and came to his conclusion, "I think I'll get under the bed and tell you just in case you change your mind." He could always get out of trouble by making me laugh.

He had a very open nature. Once when I had to go overseas he came to me, "Mom, whom shall I tell all my troubles to when you are away?"

Murray was an enchanting child but he used to be troubled by nightmares. He would wake up screaming "There's a monkey sitting on my bed." We would dash into his room, put on the light and try to explain that it was only a dream. "But you weren't here," he said, "I saw him."

We wondered what to do as it was a serious matter to him. When we said prayers at night he would pray that the monkey would not come. And indeed when he remembered to pray about the monkey he did not have the nightmare. So prayer became important to him. It has often been said that God meets a man at the point of his deepest need. I suppose for Murray this was the point of his need.

The meetings for all races in our living room continued to grow, and though we could squeeze fifty in at a pinch, it was clear that we needed a larger venue. In the nineteen fifties no public buildings allowed meetings of all races so we began to hold great inter-racial assemblies in large marquee tents outside Johannesburg. It is strange to think that in that era this was sensational news. "The Star" daily newspaper reported the meetings under a full page banner headline "Natives At Moral Re-Armament Conference." My husband took a picture of some prominent black and white South Africans talking together at the

conference to a major English language paper. The editor agreed that it was news but replied, "I am sorry but it is the policy of the paper not to print a black face." These things are hard to credit today but so it was and that was the background against which we worked.

A great many people found a new approach to the other races. Other very simple human problems found an answer. Handling money is a world problem and in Africa it is chronic. To one of the conferences came a school master, the treasurer of his local branch of the teachers association. He had been cooking the accounts and pocketing the balance. The idea of absolute honesty shattered him. Finally he wrote to the national treasurer to whom he was answerable telling him what he had done. The letter lay in his pocket for days burning a hole. Finally he took a deep breath and dropped it in the mail box.

Days dragged by but no reply. Then came the conference of the association and he was a delegate. Again at the conference no word from the national treasurer. Finally he could stand it no longer so he talked to the man. Had he received the letter? "Wait", said the national treasurer, "we will let you know." More agonising days. Finally came the last session. The chairman then thanked our friend for his devoted service to the association over many years. In recognition they wished to make him an ex gratia payment and handed him a cheque. It was for the amount he owed them. He thanked them and returned the cheque. This integrity has marked his life and he is the trusted head of a national educational organisation.

We produced a play, "The Forgotten Factor", dealing with industrial strife and reconciliation and played it widely in the mining towns of the Reef and the Free State. It led to a weekly informal meeting between the Gold Producers Committee and the Mineworkers Union which continued for many years. One picturesque character stands out in my mind. He was "Kommandant-Generaal" Erasmus who led the white mineworkers in a general strike in 1922. The Smuts government declared the strike illegal and called out the troops. Pitched battles were fought on the Reef, most notably the Battle of Fordsburg. The "rebellion" was put

11
STORM CLOUDS OVER KENYA

Though based in South Africa we felt a continuing commitment to Kenya and made visits whenever we could. I was delighted when it was decided to take the play "The Forgotten Factor" to my country. A group of Afrikaans theological students who were working with us undertook the backstage work and at the end of the show they, too, were introduced to the audience. Their unseen, selfless work left its impression.

The most controversial figure in Kenya at that time was *Jomo* Kenyatta. Nobody knew quite what to make of him. He was the father of the nationalist movement and was regarded by the government with the greatest suspicion. He had spent a year in Moscow and this was chalked up against him. It was of course the period when Russia was trying to destabilise Africa.

Kenyatta felt that the education in the government schools was too

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down and the strike leaders were captured and put on trial. Erasmus was condemned to death for treason and awaited his fate on death row. However he was reprieved and later released and became president of the Mineworkers Union. He became a firm friend and ally and at his suggestion the Mineworkers donated five hundred pounds to the play, the first public body in the country to do so.

Erasmus of course was an Afrikaner and on the whole I found it difficult to get to know them. The Hofmeyrs of course are Afrikaans and naturally I was expected to know the language. I did try hard to master it but found it difficult. People spoke Afrikaans around me and I felt like a fish out of water and this was a barrier.

I often felt hurt, but my brother-in-law Koos du Preez opened a new vista for me. He always showed me the greatest care and courtesy. One day I learned that during the Boer War his mother and sisters had been put into a concentration camp by the British and one of his sisters had died there. For all that I never felt a trace of bitterness in him.

This moved me deeply and I began to study more about the Boer War. The only fact I could remember from my school history was that the British had won.

We also had a visit from a relative from England who as a young man had fought in the war. To him it had been one great adventure. He spoke with enthusiasm of the battles in which he had fought and all he wanted to do in South Africa was to visit the scenes of his action. It never seemed to occur to him that it had been an unjust and wicked war. I was terribly embarrassed and I began to understand why many Afrikaners hated us British.

We put on other plays including one, " The Ladder", depicting the conflict in the life of a politician between ambition and integrity. In Pretoria, the capital city, it was played on a public stage by a cast of black, white and brown South Africans. One was a militant leader from Soweto. Two were prominent Afrikaners, one a supreme court judge and one a leading advocate. Prior to this the advocate had been on the team prosecuting Nelson Mandela and others in the famous "Treason

Trial." As he strode on to the stage there were cries of "Treason Trial" from some of the audience. The atmosphere was electric. However after the play the advocate and the hecklers got together and had a valuable talk. This sort of meeting of extremes had great value. The advocate became a supreme court judge and is today one of the most potent voices for a new democratic South Africa.

A cast of all races in 1990 is not news but in the nineteen fifties it was an act of great courage for men like these to take this stand.

One great friend who played a large part in all this was a black medical doctor, a great figure in his day. He had a large practice but never sent out a bill. A community leader and political leader, he was in demand as a speaker at every function. He lived under extreme pressure and this lead to heavy drinking. Then came an extraordinary intervention in his life which he once recounted to a group of young people in this way:

> I am going to tell you something very personal. I am not proud of it. I am very ashamed of it, but perhaps it may help somebody, so here it is.
>
> One Christmas eve I went to bed drunk. It was the night our Saviour was born and I was drunk. In the middle of the night I woke up. I felt as though I was on a boat – my bed was a boat – and the boat sinking. A voice said to me, "Whither are you sinking?" I felt terrible.
>
> Then before my mind's eye there passed Abraham Lincoln, William Wilberforce, Aggrey, Kagawa – a host of people who had done great things for their fellow men.
>
> The voice said to me, "There you belong."
>
> I never touched a drop again.

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STORM CLOUDS OVER KENYA

Though based in South Africa we felt a continuing commitment to Kenya and made visits whenever we could. I was delighted when it was decided to take the play "The Forgotten Factor" to my country. A group of Afrikaans theological students who were working with us undertook the backstage work and at the end of the show they, too, were introduced to the audience. Their unseen, selfless work left its impression.

The most controversial figure in Kenya at that time was Jomo Kenyatta. Nobody knew quite what to make of him. He was the father of the nationalist movement and was regarded by the government with the greatest suspicion. He had spent a year in Moscow and this was chalked up against him. It was of course the period when Russia was trying to destabilise Africa.

Kenyatta felt that the education in the government schools was too

scant and was weighted with colonial philosophy. He founded the independent school system with over one thousand schools entirely independent of government education. Many of the schools were one room huts, and the qualification of the teachers was often minimal. Yet by any standards it was a remarkable achievement and it gave coherence to the nationalist movement and was their channel of information.

The arrival of "The Forgotten Factor" from South Africa was big news and most of the leadership of Kenya turned out to see it, either at the Donovan Maule theatre in Nairobi or on our tour through the country. We invited Jomo Kenyatta to the Nairobi showings. He came and much enjoyed the performance. He in turn invited us to visit him in Githunguri. He was a genial host and gave us an excellent chicken meal. He invited us to address the villagers and himself interpreted the speakers.

It was a happy occasion.

We got to know a Kenya family, the Waruhius. The father was a senior chief of the Kikuyu tribe. The son David and daughter Mary became allies of ours and we worked together a lot. Chief Waruhiu invited us out to his home at Kiambu in the Kikuyu country and we spent a happy day meeting his people and talking together. To commemorate the occasion he and Bremer planted a Podo tree which they declared to be a tree of unity.

We spent pleasant days with my father and his wife Mary at their farm. Mary had a generous Irish heart and invited any number of people to come and stay for some days to meet us. As an after thought came the question, "Wherever shall I put them?" We slept in toolsheds, out-houses, anywhere. But to her there was always room for one more.

We returned to South Africa with little sense of foreboding.

When Murray and Gray were five and three years old we were again in Kenya. There was much unrest in the country and the papers wrote of atrocities and secret oath takings. We kept hearing of Mau Mau, but no one knew just what it was or even what the words meant. Jomo Kenyatta was generally believed to be behind it. It was always pointed

out that he had spent a year in Moscow. Yet whenever we met him we were warmly received and we never felt we were up against a stone wall. But in due course he was tried and convicted for managing Mau Mau, an illegal society, and placed under house arrest. One Governor described him as the "leader to darkness and death."

On arrival in Kenya I took our sons by train to Nyeri Station to visit my parents, Bremer following later. At each station where the train stopped there were crowds of Kikuyu on the platform. Gone were the friendly African faces I had known as a girl. I realised with trepidation that there was not a cheerful face amongst them. One of the passengers in the compartment had a gun under the seat which she had had repaired in Nairobi. Everyone was looking to their weapons. It was a distinct relief to find my father on the platform at Nyeri Station with the car to take us to the farm.

Those were eventful months in Kenya. Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth visited the country. The reception at Government House was a gala occasion. Some of the African chiefs, to make sure that their invitation cards would not be lost, had sewn them on to their blanket covering. It was while the Royal Couple were at "Tree Tops", a few miles from our farm, that Princess Elizabeth was woken to be told that she had become Queen overnight. They also stayed at a lovely bungalow, Sagana Lodge, which had been given to them by the Kenya government as a wedding present. This was even closer to our farm.

While we were there our son Gray got ill. The nearest doctor also doubled as a vet and it was rumoured that he sometimes got the human and animal doses mixed up. Certain it is that he gave Gray far too strong a dose. He got worse and began to pass blood in his urine. We put him into a car and hurried to Nairobi where our faithful Dr. Anderson took him in hand and soon had him on the mend.

Back in South Africa we kept reading awful stories about Mau Mau atrocities. Clearly it was becoming a revolution. To Mau Mau adherents it was a liberation struggle. To others it was an anti-Christian movement. Some two thousand black Christians were murdered because they

would not embrace Mau Mau and undergo its ritual oath-taking which was contrary to their Christian faith. The British army was strengthened but fighting small bands in the thick bamboo forests was an almost impossible task.

I would lie awake thinking of my parents in the heart of the Kikuyu country which was the Mau Mau territory. I resolved to try to get them to South Africa where I felt they would be safe.

Bremer and I had to go to Switzerland. He needed to go via Nigeria but I travelled via Kenya to make a bid for my parents. Dad said they would meet me in Nairobi as he did not want me to drive through that lovely country, now so treacherous. No word of the obvious point that it would be as dangerous for them as it would be for me to do the trip.

In Nairobi I had to step round barbed wire entanglements. There were frequent road blocks. Suddenly there would be the rattle of gunfire and running soldiers. A very different Nairobi from the one of the Royal visit.

I was struck by Dad and Mary's calmness and sense of peace. I made my case as to why I felt they should come to South Africa. Dad thought for a long time. Then he said he was grateful for the offer but they felt that God's plan for them was that they should stay where they were, "If God can use us to help bring an answer we are ready. If the Mau Mau come for us, we are ready too." He paused and then said, "It would be an interesting experience to die. I would find all the answers to the questions that have puzzled me through my lifetime." Then he said quite urgently, "You must get on with the job you are doing. You are young and we are old." Their minds were firmly made up and there was little more that I could say.

During the next days we visited Colonel Alan Knight and his wife Maude at Athi River where he was in charge of a detention camp where Mau Mau leaders who had been captured were interned. Several of them had been convinced by Alan Knight's disciplined and caring quality of life, had abandoned Mau Mau and returned to their Christian faith. He asked if we would like to talk to them and we met in a guarded room. Dad

recognised one of the men as having been at Rev. Harry Leakey's mission school in Limuru so he asked him, "You were a good Christian. Why did you embrace Mau Mau?" All this in Kikuyu which Dad spoke fluently.

The man told his story. He was educated at the mission school, but when he went out to get a job he was treated as a second class citizen by whites who were not as well educated as he was. It made him bitter and Mau Mau offered him a chance to get his revenge. So he took the oath. What impressed me was that he told all this without bitterness. Something had happened in his heart. He spoke with hope for the future and faith that something better would come into being.

Then the others spoke of humiliations and injustices they had suffered. One told of an occasion when his dog had barked at a white man. The man pulled out his gun and shot the dog. The African said, "White men's dogs have often barked at me, but if I had shot one I would have landed in jail." Each had his own story. One said, "We were taught not to get drunk on beer, but we saw white men getting drunk on whiskey and what is the difference?" Another, "We were told that as Christians we should have only one wife. But we saw white men being unfaithful to their wives, and then coming to church and singing hymns on Sunday morning. What were we to believe?"

This was the sort of thing that had made so many bitter and disillusioned and turned them against Christianity and the white man. Mau Mau, they felt, offered them a chance to win back and run their own country.

I was very shaken by all I heard, but inwardly I walled myself off from any personal sense of guilt, saying to myself that it was other whites, not I, who had done these things. We were not all bad, and look at the many good things we had brought to Africa.

My parents left for the farm the day before I was to fly to Europe. On my final morning in Kenya I was reflecting on the many things we had discussed and all the things I had learned. I felt that this was the end of a chapter and that a new one was about to begin. I also had the feeling

that I might not see my parents again. I found it a frightening thought and I did not voice it to anyone until many months later.

Bremer and I met at the Moral Re-Armament conference at Caux in Switzerland. Many were there from Africa including David Waruhiu who had been such a good friend to us in Kenya. It was a good summer in Europe. But then a cable arrived from Kenya. Chief Waruhiu had been ambushed by a Mau Mau gang and shot to death. Bremer had to break this news to his son David. Mau Mau was coming very close.

12
TRAGEDY

The Kenya pioneer settlers were a breed all of their own, courageous, inventive, generous to their own, generally at war with the government, and often very stubborn.

My father was no exception. Farms were not always carefully surveyed and in the early days were certainly not fenced off. This was a ready recipe for boundary disputes and again my father was no exception. He and his neighbour could never agree as to where their boundary really ran. They fell out over the issue and communication ceased. Each sincerely believed he was right and it became a matter of "principle" not to let anyone cheat you.

The material stakes were not high. The wives thought the men were being absolutely ridiculous and childish and that the feud ought to end. Each worked on her spouse and finally it was agreed that the men would meet on a Saturday morning at a large ant hill near the disputed area, come to an agreement and bury the hatchet. The big day came and each

wife saw to it that her husband set off for the meeting of reconciliation. Unfortunately there were two large ant heaps in the designated area and my father settled himself at one and his neighbour at the other. Dad beckoned to say "Come over here." His neighbour beckoned "Come over here." A long pause. Then a repetition. Another long pause and another repetition. Then they both got up and went home. The wives had to start all over again until they finally got the two men together at the same time at the same ant heap and the matter was resolved.

The relationship between a sophisticated colonising people and a simple colonised people is a difficult one anywhere. In Kenya the whites thought the blacks were often lazy and irresponsible. The white housewife spent a lot of time chivvying her servants. "Chunga" is the great word - "get moving." The blacks resented it - specially from a woman.

Again my father was no exception. He sometimes got irritated and angry when things did not go as he expected. Then had come the bombshell of my letter of apology for having hated him and my longing to be a real daughter to him. My stepmother came to England and learned something of the secret of God's guidance. My father found her much more pleasant to live with. He thought the idea was excellent. Both the women in his life were now more reasonable. But then it began to rub off on him and he became conscious that his attitude to the blacks needed a lot of changing.

Kenya farmers, being a stubborn breed, are not lightly given to apology and there was a belief that if you apologised to blacks you would lose their respect. Yet my father felt that this was what God was asking him to do. So one morning he gathered the farm staff and spoke to them humbly and sincerely. He spoke of the times he had hurt their feelings in anger. No doubt he had also often hurt them without realising it. He asked for their forgiveness. He spoke about the farm and how he wanted it run not just for his own profit but for the good of all and for the good of the country. His words got a warm response and the meeting did indeed usher in a new day on the farm. His name Morungaru meaning

tall and straight took on the added meaning of being upright.

Into this situation broke the tensions of Mau Mau. Nobody felt safe. Everybody became suspect. One of our farmer friends was a keen cricketer. He would give all the farm keys to his head man and go off for a weekend's cricket feeling perfectly safe. It later came out that the head man was the chief Mau Mau oath administrator for the region.

The white farmers armed themselves. Dad wondered what to do. If he carried a gun would it be taken to mean that he did not trust his men? He decided to walk the farm unarmed with danger pressing round. One day in the forest he encountered a band of blacks, presumably a Mau Mau gang. He lifted his coat tails to show that he carried no weapon and they did not stop him.

I respected my father's decision and his courage but I could not help being worried for their safety.

Then it happened. We were in New England in the United States. The country was at its most glorious with maple leaves flaming red and gold. Everything was peaceful in a balmy Indian summer. One morning as I was about to go out shopping Bremer took me into the garden and showed me a cable from Kenya. My stepmother had been killed. My father had been abducted by the Mau Mau and no more was known. The cable was signed David Waruhiu. As Bremer had once had to tell him of the death of his father, now David had to break this dire news to us. I was stunned. My mind raced round and round trying to picture what had happened.

I was in a turmoil. I was filled with hatred towards the black people. I wanted revenge. I felt there could not be a God to allow such things to happen. I kept imagining my father in a grave with earth and stone being thrown over him. I took cold comfort from the fact that he was a diabetic and could not go for long without insulin. Perhaps he had fallen into a coma. I prayed that this might have been the case. I wept tears of anger, sorrow and pity all mixed up.

Eventually Bremer suggested that we might be quiet and listen. I was rebellious but there was nothing else to do so we were quiet. I said in

my heart, "All right God. If You are there, please tell me what to do." Then through all the turmoil the thought came perfectly clearly, "Have no bitterness or hatred but fight harder than ever to bring a change of heart to black and white alike." It seemed impossible, but it did open a door of hope for the future.

Then further news came and my worst fears were realised. A so-called prophetess of the Mau Mau was behind it. Things were not going well for Mau Mau and she said it was because the gods were angry. They had to be placated by a human sacrifice. It must be a good man they offered to their gods and that was why they had chosen my father.

Some sixty Mau Mau had attacked the house which sheltered my father, his wife Mary, her daughter, our cook and the cook's son. The cook was a loyal Catholic and had refused to join Mau Mau for reason of his faith. He was hung from a tree and disembowelled. Mary tried to get her daughter to safety. She helped her to climb through a trap door in the bathroom ceiling. Mary did not have the strength left to get herself up and she was murdered on the spot, but her daughter was saved. My father was carried off into the bush. His fate was uncertain.

After a few more agonising days the final picture emerged. The son of the cook trailed the Mau Mau band to see what would happen to Dad. They headed up Mount Kenya which is a sacred mountain to the Kikuyu. From time to time my father spoke to them in Kikuyu. Things were wrong in the country, he said. They had to change. But people had to change. Killing people would never bring a happy country.

He was laid in a shallow grave which had been dug on the mountain side. Still he spoke to his captors until they covered him over with earth and buried him alive as an offering to their gods. Dogs and goats were also buried in the grave as part of the ritual sacrifice.

The cook's son returned with the news and later led others to the site of the grave. Dad's body was brought to Nyeri where he was buried with Mary in the Anglican cemetery looking straight up to Mount Kenya.

During the next weeks I slept badly, often waking up in tears with bad dreams and imaginings. Bremer would get up and make us some tea and

we would talk and pray. With luck I would sleep again till morning.

We talked and thought a lot about Africa on our own and with our friends. We thought of our failures as individuals and also as part of the white colonial group in Africa. Like many Kenyans we had tried to be "good" to our black servants but we had taken the whole colonial structure for granted and this was the target of Mau Mau. The land question - why a white minority owned so much of the best land in the "White Highlands" - never struck us as a problem. To the Mau Mau it was quite fundamental.

Then one day another thought came to me. It was even more impossible than the first, "You must be responsible for the sins of your race, just as you are responsible for your own wrongs." I thought of the Mau Mau detainees we had met in Kenya and recalled what they had told us, how the attitudes and actions of whites had turned them from their Christian faith to the violence of Mau Mau. They had suffered. I could see their faces - happy and free, forgiven and forgiving.

13
THINGS WE NEVER DREAMED TO SEE

Within a year we were back in Kenya. We had travelled through Asia with a musical "The Vanishing Island." Africa was well represented by men and women from Ghana, Nigeria, Rhodesia, Kenya, South Africa, Egypt and Tunisia. David Waruhiu's sister Mary had been a striking figure in her colourful Kikuyu costume. After the Far East and the Middle East we had played in Cairo, ending with a late night performance. We packed the scenery and props, loaded the planes which we had hired from the United States Military Air Transport Service, and took off at dawn for the long hop to Nairobi. Around eight o'clock the sun's position in relation to the plane began to swing round. Soon the sun was on the opposite side of the plane. We had turned one hundred and eighty degrees.

We enquired of the captain what had happened. The radio equipment of one of the planes had failed and he was unwilling to go on like this. We were returning to Cairo where the radio would be repaired. The snag was that we were due to present the play in Nairobi that night at a gala performance for the leadership of Kenya. A return to Cairo would make it impossible. We had an idea which we presented to the captain. Why not continue as far as Khartoum and land there? We could put all the principals of the play in the two serviceable planes and leave the third in Khartoum until it could be repaired.

The captain had reason to take our suggestions very seriously because of a previous incident. Among the travelling group were several World War II pilots. They were convinced that when we took off from Teheran one of the planes had been far too long in lifting off, and then had climbed far too slowly. In Baghdad they had discussed this with the captain of the flight. He agreed to have his mechanic inspect the plane thoroughly. The mechanic's report was that the plane was in perfect order.

Our war pilots were convinced that this was not the case. They conferred together and still believed that something was wrong. They returned to the captain with their conviction. Understandably his position was, "I am sorry. We have had the plane checked thoroughly. We find nothing wrong. If you are dissatisfied I can only suggest that you cable Washington and ask that I be relieved of my command and someone else be sent out." They said they would not consider such a suggestion. They had great confidence in him, but they were convinced that there was something wrong.

The conference broke up with nothing decided and relations somewhat strained. But the conviction of the experienced war pilots so impressed the mechanic that on his own initiative he went back to the plane and went over it again with a fine tooth comb. To his horror he found a defect that precluded that plane taking to the air until a whole new engine had been flown in from the American base in Frankfurt.

With this background the captain considered our request to land in

Khartoum. For a tantalising length of time the plane continued northward. Then slowly the sun began to swing round again. We were heading south.

We jettisoned some fuel to help the landing in Khartoum but more trials awaited us. A plane had broken down on the runway we would use. No one on the ground seemed anxious to move it - and after all, our arrival was totally unexpected. At last there was action. The plane was moved and we were given clearance to land. Happily the broken radio was repaired with the help of spare parts from the other two planes and we were once more all on our way.

As we crossed the Sudan border and came over the territory of my loved Kenya I was invited to the cockpit. The captain allowed me to steer the plane for a short time. I was amazed at the way this huge craft responded to the lightest touch on the controls. It removed forever any fear of flying.

I rejoiced as we flew south over the lakes of the Rift Valley and the deep green of the wooded mountains. I thought of all the tragedies that had taken place in the land and the thousands who had lost their lives. What a price to pay.

The last plane landed in Nairobi at 7.15 p.m. in almost total darkness and at 8.30 the curtain went up on the show to resounding applause from the audience who had followed the drama of our arrival.

We could move freely in Nairobi but in the Kikuyu country all public meetings had been banned for several years. However David Waruhiu's request for a mass gathering at Kiambu was granted. We spent a day with him at the Waruhiu centre. We inspected the Podo tree that Chief Waruhiu and Bremer had planted together to commemorate our first visit. Then with traditional African hospitality we were treated to a feast with whole sheep roasted over an open fire.

As we were eating vast crowds began to pour in until they covered a whole hillside. Others perched like birds up in the trees to get a better view. David Waruhiu presided and first introduced people from Nigeria, Ghana and other parts of Africa - all resplendent in their

traditional robes. Then David announced that the next speaker would be the daughter of Morungaru - the name by which they knew my father. There was a gasp from the crowd. What would I say?

I spoke from my heart and apologised for the arrogance and selfishness of so many of us whites that had helped to create the bitterness and hatred in their hearts. I said how much I longed to see God's answer come to Kenya and all of Africa so that tragedies like this would never happen again and that I had given my life to this task. A murmur of understanding rippled through the vast crowd. Afterwards many of them came up to me and said how sorry they were for what had happened to my family. They wanted to join with us in taking this new spirit to the country. I was touched by what they said and all traces of bitterness that lingered in my heart were washed away. I felt that they were my friends. We were meant to work together to build something new in the country. For us the day was a healing of the heart.

The day after this historic meeting Bremer and I went to Nyeri to see how our farm looked. We invited Dr. William Nkomo from South Africa to go with us. The main road was fairly safe by then, guarded by soldiers and police at intervals. The one thing that baffled them was that with us was a black man who could not speak Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa. Who was he? In my rusty Swahili, I was able to tell them that he was a doctor from a far country, and we were allowed to proceed. From the main road we were given an escort to accompany us to the farm.

We found the farm house derelict. The doors were hanging on bent hinges, swinging to and fro. The furniture had been removed or broken. Among the things that had been salvaged were a silver tea pot and hot water jug that had been taken by the Mau Mau and later abandoned in the veld. We use them now continually.

We ate our sandwiches on the veranda. I thought of the fact that my father had built this home with his own hands. I looked across the wooded plain to Mount Kenya, its crown in cloud and its long sloping shoulders so clear before us. It looked so peaceful and so unaware of the

tragedies that had taken place on its slopes. I thought of the herds of elephants that had trekked across our farm twice each year between Mount Kenya and the Aberdare mountains. Would they continue their life, or would civilization contain and finally destroy them?

We talked of the fact that my father would never carry a gun. Some people thought he was crazy to follow this course. But certainly a gun would not have saved him or my stepmother on the night of the tragedy.

It meant a lot to us that at our side was a black South African with whom we shared the commitment to build a new Africa.

From the farm we went to Nyeri to the cemetery next to the Anglican church where my parents are buried. It is a peaceful place with a splendid open view straight up to Mount Kenya. A few paces away is the grave of Lord and Lady Baden Powell, founders of the boy scouts and girl guides. For the last years of their lives they lived at the Outspan Hotel in Nyeri.

Before we left Kenya we were invited to present "The Vanishing Island" to the Mau Mau detainees in the Athi River camp. After the presentation some of our group spoke. At first some of the Mau Mau covered their ears. They did not want to hear what the white men had to say. But gradually the hostility melted. One of the speakers was an Englishman, Peter Howard. He said, "I am a proud man and I come from a proud people. We have often hurt other people's feelings and sometimes we did not even know we were doing it. That is why we need to change. That is why my family and I are here today - to try with you to build something new."

As we were leaving, one of the detainees came to Peter Howard with a crumpled paper packet. "What is this?" he asked. "It is money, it is for your people. We cannot go with you but we want to help you. If we had known there were people like you there would never have been Mau Mau". The packet contained the equivalent of twenty-five pounds sterling. They earned a Kenya shilling a day for their work in the camp.

A few days later there was an act of supreme courage. Colonel Alan Knight, the camp commandant, stood up in full uniform before the staff

and eighteen hundred prisoners ranged in a hollow square. He referred to the visit of the international group and went on record that he wanted to accept fully the challenge they had brought. If anybody felt he was failing in that commitment would he please come and help him.

From that day Alan Knight's door was always open to any Mau Mau men who wanted to see him. Quietly they began to come. If he could change, could they not change equally? He spoke openly as man to man about what had been wrong in his life and how he had been able to put right what was wrong and make a new start in life. These men began to change, often at the risk of their lives, for it was the duty of a Mau Mau adherent to liquidate anyone who defected. The commandant asked whether they would like to be put into a separate compound for their safety. "No" they said. "We risked our lives every day for Mau Mau. Should we not be willing to risk our lives for God? But we would like to cook our own food so that we cannot be poisoned."

At first they were ostracised by their fellow prisoners, but slowly they made headway. In the end five hundred publicly abandoned Mau Mau and took the cleansing ceremony to absolve them from their oath. Some became positive forces in the land. After their release two of them, along with a Nigerian and a black South African, got permission to spend a day with Jomo Kenyatta who was still under house arrest. They told him of their experiences with Mau Mau and the new revolution of change in which they now put their faith. They showed him the African film "Freedom" which depicts the qualities of statesmanship and citizenship which are needed to win and preserve freedom. Kenyatta said, "This is the kind of freedom we want." He asked the two former Mau Mau men to put the film into Swahili for all East Africa to see and understand. They went to London. They raised the money, found the right Swahili voices and carried the project through.

When they got back to Kenya Kenyatta was a free man. They took the film to him at Githunguri. Kenyatta gathered the Kikuyu leaders to see it. He asked them all to help to get the film to the people. The operation started with mass showings in the Nairobi football stadium. A

daylight film unit showed it in the towns and villages wherever people gathered on market day. Probably a million people saw "Freedom." Nine members of the Kenya cabinet later paid tribute to what it had done to prepare the country for a peaceful transition to black rule.

Kenyatta's star was in the ascendant. Clearly he was the coming power and the white farmers were terrified. Kenyatta called a meeting of the white farmers at Nakuru in the Rift Valley and spoke to them. They could hardly believe their ears. If he had hurt anyone, he said, he asked for their forgiveness. Where he had been hurt he was ready to forgive. The past was past. They had to build the future together. Yet I believe that meeting was one of the great acts of statesmanship of Africa.

Somewhere in all this I believe my father's death and my travail may have played their part. Certainly I have drawn closer to people up and down Africa through this sorrow than I could ever have done without it.

For us the experience has helped answer one of life's big mysteries - the problem of pain. If we are to be free humans we will inevitably have the power to hurt others and to hurt ourselves if we choose. But of this we are convinced: in the darkest hour of the most inexplicable tragedy, if men will open their hearts to pain and open their minds to God's still, small voice, He will in unimagined ways bring some good out of it and weave it into the tapestry of a great master plan.

Many years after these events we had lunch with the High Commissioner for Ghana in the Australian capital of Canberra. He heard this story and sat quiet for a long time. Then he said, "That was a long time ago, but still I want to say how sorry I am." Once more the sadness became a great bond.

Laurens van der Post the author once invited us to tea in his London penthouse. He knew the history of the Leakey family and as soon as we came in he took me aside and spoke very earnestly, "I want to be sure you understand that it was the greatest compliment that could be paid to your father that he was chosen by the Kikuyu for sacrifice. Only the best

is good enough for the gods." We knew this, but appreciated his graciousness in going out of his way to see that I understood the inwardness of it all.

Africa lives close to violence. But also Africa has an extraordinary capacity for reconciliation when the conflict is over. Some twenty years after the Athi River Mau Mau detention camp was closed a group of ex-detainees arranged a dinner in Nairobi to reminisce about old times - rather like an old boys' reunion. And who should they invite to be the guest of honour for the occasion? None other than Colonel Alan Knight, the camp commandant.

More parts of the mosaic fell into place some years later at a conference in Caux in Switzerland. Bremer and I were having dinner with a former Mau Mau leader, Stanley Kinga. During his detention his life had taken a new course and we have fought shoulder to shoulder in many lands. During the meal he turned to me and said, "Agnes, there is something I have never told you that I think you ought to know. I was one of the committee in the Mau Mau that chose your father to be a sacrifice and planned his death."

I was staggered and could not believe my ears. I asked him to repeat what he had said, which he did. Finally I said, "Thank God we have both learned the secret of forgiveness or we could never sit here."

Stanley Kinga went on, "There is something more I want you to know. Recently I was part of a committee to nominate candidates to represent KANU (the government party) at the general election. I got your cousin Philip Leakey nominated as candidate for an entirely black constituency. He was elected and today he is the only white member of our parliament. In fact he is now a junior minister."

As the conference was dealing with reconciliation, it was suggested that Stanley and I might speak together from the platform as evidence of the unity that comes through change even in the most dire situation. Stanley agreed, but I had one hesitancy. In the conference was my sister-in-law who did not feel quite the same freedom about my father's death, and I did not want it to be a stone of stumbling for her. So at breakfast

before the meeting I told her of the events with Stanley Kinga and the suggestion that we might together be able to make a contribution to the conference. To my relief she said, "Of course you must do it. This is what the world needs to know - the answer to hatred and bitterness."

14
WHY? WHY? WHY?

These events took place years ago so why write of them now? South Africa is stepping fearfully, hopefully into a new era after years of political dead end and frustration. Negotiation and bargaining are going on and will for a long time ahead. But politicians can only go as far as the people will allow and this will be determined by the inner attitudes of all of us. Even the most generous of whites and blacks have a backlog of attitudes, judgments, prejudices and hurts that need to be washed away in a tide of honesty and forgiveness.

My husband's family are one of the most liberal but for all that he says, "I was eighteen years old before ever I shook a black man's hand. I assumed that the best things were for the whites and that service was our right. I was ready to correct a black man if I thought he was wrong, but I did not think it was his place to correct me." If this was the background of a liberal family what about the others?

There is a long road to walk together on the political front. There is

at least as long a road to walk in the recesses of our hearts where human attitudes and eventually political realities are born. It is not going to be easy.

In our turmoils thousands have lost their lives. Tens of thousands have been imprisoned. Innocents have been bombed and fear lies like a pall over the land. Security is about the only growth industry in the economy.

Seventy-eight per cent of all South Africans are registered as Christians, but in the heat of conflict standards of right and wrong have eroded. Unemployed have seen stealing as the only road to survival and if blacks take from whites it is not hard to feel that they are taking what is rightfully theirs. Whites in business are under sanctions and so falsifying invoices for survival is not felt to be wrong. Writing this is not to sit in judgement, but the question will be how to get back to the integrity that alone can be a trustworthy foundation for the new building we seek to erect.

It is with these considerations in mind that I have written of my own tribulations in the hope that they may in some small way contribute to the healing we all seek.

How do I see events in retrospect?

The first point is the issue of suffering.

When tragedy strikes the first question always is why? why? why? Certainly my own faith was deeply shaken when I heard of my father's awful death. Why did God allow this undeserved horror? It seems to me that God rarely answers the question "why?" Certainly for me He never did. But I am grateful that in my desolation I did with my husband's help calm down and sit quietly and say in my heart, "God, if You are there, tell me what to do."

I very nearly fell into the trap that so many people fall into - people who have tried in normal circumstances to live a life of faith. But when disaster comes and they most need their faith they take events into their own hands. For me no other word has been as far reaching as the difficult thought "Have no hatred or bitterness." I did not have any idea that this

was perhaps the most crucial moment of my life. Fortunately I did accept the thought and in time the total disaster became an experience that has done more than anything else to help bring healing around me.

And what about my father? I can only say that he had given his life to God to be used and that the aims of his life were furthered through his death in a way I cannot imagine a few more years on this earth would have done.

I still cannot answer the question "why?" Nor do I say that God is responsible for tragedies like this. All too often we lay at God's door events that are the product of human foolishness or human wickedness. I do not know whether in this case it was the sins of imperialism, the arrogance of ordinary whites, or evil spirits at work in embittered black minds - perhaps something of each. But this has become my unshakeable faith born out of travail, that in any situation, no matter how totally hopeless and disastrous it seems, if we will give it to God, give ourselves to God and listen to God, He will in ways we cannot foresee or plan, bring something good out of evil, something positive out of pain and build it into the fabric of His Kingdom. The worst part of suffering is that so often it seems to be useless, hopeless, painful, stark disaster. But it does not have to be.

The other question often asked is "How can you forgive?"

For me the key to forgiveness is to see how terribly wrong I myself am. As I wrestled with my problem through stormy nights of tears, more and more my thoughts focussed on what we whites had done in Kenya and what the Mau Mau men had told us of the treatment by whites that had driven them into revolt. We whites were very conscious of the good things we had done. The blacks were very conscious of the bad things we had done. We people are more conscious of where we have been hurt than where we have hurt others. I had to identify with the wrong things we whites had done and realise that I stood in need of forgiveness and I did ask the Kikuyu for forgiveness. So perhaps a key to the question "How can I forgive?" is to look at another question, "How much do I need forgiveness?"

15
BLOOD PROPITIATE

When we had word of my father's death my husband wrote these lines, structured as though my father was speaking. It was quite prophetic as so much of it has come true.

In bamboo forest shaded deep
My final sleep
Beyond the reach of human will
Peaceful and still
I rest upon the peaks above
The woodland and the fields I love
The acres that my hand has tilled
That now is stilled.

Of all the madness man has known
This stands alone

The spirit world exacts as price
My sacrifice
Unfathomed human reason deems
My offered life to aid their schemes -
That blood propitiate restores
A failing cause.

When men have done their worst I'm still
Within His will
The life they took was in His store
Long years before
The foolish ways of foolish man
He'll bend to serve His master plan
And life cut down like fallen grain
Not be in vain.

For through the darkness of the night
I see a light
A shaft of truth, a ray divine
I see to shine -
Perchance alike to friend and foe
From this my grave a stream will flow
To lave with healing from above
The land I love.

From "Poems of Trial and Triumph" - Grosvenor Books

FRONT COVER

The author at the time of this story, her husband, her father holding Victoria Cross outside Buckingham Palace, David Waruhiu who features in the book and Kenya friends.

Mount Kenya in the background.

Design by W. Cameron-Johnson.