

BOOK 11  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER

Come Wind, Come Weather

Happy Christmas

*Come Wind, Come Weather*

London 1941

George H. Putnam

The Project Gutenberg

111 New York Street

The Project Gutenberg

BOOKS BY  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER

*Come Wind, Come Weather*

*Happy Christmas*

*Rebecca*

*The Du Mauriers*

*Jamaica Inn*

*Gerald: A Portrait*

*The Progress of Julius*

*I'll Never Be Young Again*

*The Loving Spirit*

*Come Wind,  
Come Weather*

BY  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER



---

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN AND COMPANY, INC.

NEW YORK 1941

PRINTED AT THE *Country Life Press*, GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

BY  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER



CL

COPYRIGHT, 1940, 1941  
BY DAPHNE DU MAURIER BROWNING  
COPYRIGHT, 1940  
BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

FIRST EDITION

## *A Word to America*

---

THIS BOOK of true stories was written for the people of Britain in the hope that it would bring courage and strength to them in a time of crisis. The book was published on the fifteenth of August 1940, the famous date of threatened invasion, when every man, woman and child in the kingdom stood waiting, tense and expectant, for the blow to fall. Since then we in this island have experienced the full horrors of war in the air. Many have faced death itself, others are homeless, parents without children, children without parents.

In spite of these things we are standing firm. We are not dismayed. The spirit of the British people is rising triumphant, the old, lazy, go-as-you-please, every-man-for-himself attitude is becoming a thing of the past, and from this testing time of tribulation we shall arise, please God, worthy descendants of those ancestors of ours, who first sailed the seven seas and laughed at danger.

We believe that side by side with this war in Europe we are fighting another battle. The battle against human selfishness. When that battle has been won, we can look with confidence to the future and to a new world order, founded not on rivalry and greed, not on national interest alone, but on unity, co-operation and unselfishness.

You men and women of America may never be involved in the war in Europe, but the battle against human selfishness is one that cannot pass you by. Political rancor, class struggle, financial wrangles, the bitter un-ending problem of the "haves" and the "have-nots"—these are all questions that must be faced if we are to have an enduring new world. There are many millions of people in your country who are bewildered, doubtful, dissatisfied, knowing in their hearts that somewhere there lies a solution to every human problem, and every national one as well. This vast body of men and women, if welded together in a common purpose, could become the greatest force for good the world has ever known.

There exists, I believe, in every one of you, something of that fine pioneer spirit that drove your fathers and your mothers to the forests and the prairies of the west, determined to build homes and towns out of the waste land, and to create a race who would be healthy, strong, and free. It is that spirit of adventure, comradeship and faith in God that will build the new world

order, and we British people, in our island fortress, look to you across the sea that parts us but will never divide us, in the certainty that with your co-operation, your enthusiasm and your deep-bred belief in justice and equality, the battle against human selfishness will finally be won.

It is not the great leaders, the great soldiers, the great poets, who will win the battle. It is the people themselves. The ordinary men and women who toil and sweat, create and die, whose names are never written on the scroll of fame. Abraham Lincoln said, "God must love these ordinary people, because He made so many of them."

In your country there are many replicas of the men and women in this little book. You will find them in your town, in your street, possibly in your own house. They will be among the pioneers of the new America, that you are going to build, an America whose claim to the proud name "United States" will have meaning and purpose for the world, and whose gay flag, bright with stars, will not only be a true symbol of your own unity, but will point a finger of faith to heaven itself.

DAPHNE DU MAURIER

## *Contents*

---

A WORD TO AMERICA

v

COME WIND, COME WEATHER

xi

THE ADMIRALTY REGRETS . . .

i

GEORGE AND JIMMY

6

OVER THE RATION BOOKS

13

A NATION'S STRENGTH

20

A MINER'S TALE

28

ix



## "PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF"

35

## SPITFIRE MEGAN

42

## LONDON, 1940?

47

## MRS. HILL AND THE SOLDIERS

53

## IN A LONDON AIR-RAID SHELTER

63

## EPILOGUE

72

# *Come Wind, Come Weather*

FOREWORD TO THE BRITISH EDITION

---

WHEN the present war started the first thought of nearly every man and woman throughout this country, and the other countries concerned, was

“How is this war going to affect *me*?” The thought, if not particularly gallant, was a natural one, because our present civilisation and way of living have so influenced human nature that our own personal problems are more vital to us than the problems of other people. This outlook has developed widely during the present century, and we have only to recollect the national slogan of some few years back—“Safety First”—to realise how great is the gulf between the twentieth century and, for example, the sixteenth.

It is difficult to imagine Drake and Raleigh and Sir Philip Sidney talking about “Safety First”. The Pilgrim Fathers, starting across the stormy Atlantic from Plymouth Sound, knew no such war cry, and Oliver Cromwell, to the best of my belief, gave a very different order to his Ironsides. I do not for a moment suggest that these men were

better than the men of our present century. They were often cruel, coarse, and had unpleasant personal habits; but there was a certain selfless gallantry about them that makes our own caution a poor thing in comparison. Life to them was an adventure and a hazard, not a business of stocks and shares and going one better than the Joneses who live next door. They lived and loved and fought and died, they had faith in the destiny of their country, and they had faith in God. I cannot believe that the men and women of those days said "How is the war going to affect *me*?" when the Spanish Armada put forth from Cadiz Bay. They would have sworn in rich Elizabethan words which are not, alas, at my disposal, "How can I affect the Spanish Armada?"

I believe that the old English spirit is not dead. It still lurks in the hearts and minds of every man and woman in this island, but centuries of soft living and thinking only in the first person singular have made the spirit a shadow of its former self, and the door which hides it is not always easy to unlock. The present danger has come upon us as a challenge. Are we going to discover once again the old fundamental values, truth, honesty, selflessness, and learn "to give" instead of the inevitable "to get"? These are the only qualities that will give us courage and help us to endure. Tanks and aeroplanes, guns and ships have failed men in the past and in the present, but the

weapons of the spirit have enabled them in the past, and will enable them again, to survive any disaster.

We cannot all be soldiers. We cannot all keep watch upon the seas, or fight to freedom in the sky. Many of us are very ordinary men and women, timid of heart, selfish of interest, clinging to habits and customs that are not easy to throw away. Other people are to blame, we say. "The Government has got us into this . . ." "Those Allies have let us down . . ." "Factories have not worked hard enough . . ." "The failures in this war have been none of our doing . . ." Perhaps . . . Yet think a moment of the real cause of failure, in war or in peace. Is not it always, in every walk of life, amongst the rich and amongst the poor, because we put "self" first?

And you and I? What is our profession? Our trade? Can we honestly say that we work for the community and not for ourselves alone? These are uncomfortable thoughts, and because they are uncomfortable, it is easier to criticise others than to criticise ourselves. The question is this: Is it too late to root out the germ of selfishness from human nature and to cultivate the seed of generosity instead? Can we look upon this war, and every trial and tribulation that besets us in the course of our mortal life, as a challenge to bring out the best in us, instead of the worst?

I believe we can. It is not too late. The ordinary

man, woman and child can face up to this challenge and be victorious. The cares of state are not borne upon our shoulders, and the battles upon sea, land and air are waged by others. We have to follow the common round of day-by-day. Ours are the little problems. Worry, anxiety, the petty household cares. Difficulties in business, difficulties at home. Children evacuated, strangers in our house, loved faces absent. It seems at times easier to face a hundred bombers than one irritable relative! Such is our poor human cowardice!

Yet in our sphere, too, there are deeds of gallantry to be done. There will be no bugle-call, no beating of the drum, no banners to unfurl. The fight is not spectacular. It is a silent struggle between self and Spirit, and the voice of the Spirit is the voice of God. We can listen to either. It is a matter of free-will. The man who listens to the Spirit and decides to be honest instead of being clever, to tell the truth instead of evading the issue, has no pistol to his head commanding him to obey. The choice is his own. It is very simple, very practical.

In the following stories I have tried to show how ordinary men and women, like you and me, have faced up to the challenge of war and change, and how they have overcome their troubles. There is nothing heroic about them, they are in no wise different from or better than ourselves. But each one has experienced the "inner battle" and can

look to the future now with faith and courage and conviction. These stories are not my own creation. They are the true stories of living men and women which I have pieced together and put on paper in the hopes that other men and other women may gain courage from them. The characters in each story have a problem which may bear some resemblance to yours.

The doctor could cure the sick in body, but he could not cure the sick in heart. Megan, the "woman from Wales", the terror of the local Council, found that one of the most difficult things in life to do is to apologise to your own family. The grocer in East London had to choose between his own profit and the well-being of his customers. The wife of the mill-manager in the North found herself saddled with two unruly evacuated boys from Tyneside; her method of dealing with them was original, but entirely successful. The Durham miner clamored for world peace, but he had first to bring peace into his own home. The wife of a retired Army officer broke down the barriers of class and shyness, and made her small but very special effort, and "Coppernob" and the rest of her "tough crowd" fought in the retreat from Dunkirk and won their battle. The mother who feared for the safety of her sons might have given way to her fear—so might the charlady—but the voice of the Spirit won.

There are two European stories included with

the others because the problems in both are the problems we face to-day. One comes from Latvia and one from Finland. The women in both those stories have known the horrors of war and the bitterness of invasion. Because they were armed with courage and conviction they have had the strength to rise above catastrophe. Their world lay in ruins, but they were not dismayed. To-day, with new faith and new endeavour, they are building their world afresh. Such determination can inspire us, too, in our hour of trouble. The dismal slogan of "Safety First" will be thrown aside, and in our hearts and on our lips will ring the old battle hymn of John Bunyan, who three hundred years ago saw this England torn and divided in a bloody civil war.

"Who would true valour see  
Let him come hither,  
One here will constant be,  
Come wind, come weather . . ."

Three centuries have passed since then, and now in 1940 England has once again become the scene of strife and bitter suffering. Those men and women who listen to the Voice within will "Constant be" like the Puritans of old, and linking hands, one with another, will form a chain of steel around this island that no enemy from without can ever break.

*July 1940*

## *The Admiralty Regrets . . .*

---

WHAT is the immediate problem that hundreds and thousands of mothers and wives are facing to-day? It is not whether we shall win the war or when we shall win the war, nor even how are we to win the peace, but how they themselves are to endure the strain of anxiety while their sons and husbands face danger every hour.

They can find work to do, it is true—join the Auxiliary Territorial Service, Women's Royal Navy Service or the Women's Auxiliary Air Force Service, sit on committees, knit mufflers, make splints and bandages—but all these are only temporary measures, like taking aspirin for some dread disease. The pain is softened for a few hours only, and will return again, ten times stronger than before.

Anxiety is a disease of the spirit, and can only be cured by the spirit. Hard work will not do it,



nor brave actions, nor the reading of many books. First of all we must get at the roots of the disease, throw the X-ray light upon it and discover what it really is.

This mother dreads the arrival of a yellow envelope bearing the news that her son has been killed. That wife sits in agony beside her radio set in case the announcer should begin the six o'clock bulletin with the formal words, "The Admiralty regrets . . ." The fear of these women is so great that they cannot eat or sleep, and every hour of every day is a torment.

What are they afraid of? They are afraid for those they love. They are afraid of being unhappy.

They are afraid of being alone. Other women will have sons, other women will have husbands, but they will never know love again, and to live without love is to live in darkness.

How are these women to overcome their fear?

Here is the true story of one woman's reaction to fear in September of last year. I will call her Mrs. Brown. She was like many hundreds of similar Mrs. Browns throughout the country, and when war broke out she knew her sons would be involved from the beginning. Tom was in the Navy, Reg was in the Merchant Service, and both would be in constant danger. After they had said good-bye and were gone from her and she was left alone, Mrs. Brown sat down in the empty house and began to think about the future. It was as

though two people lived inside her mind and held an argument. One said: "They are going to die. I am going to be unhappy, I have no future, no hope and no faith." The other said: "God loves your sons and can take care of them better than you. It's selfish to give way to fears and grief, when others need you. You can help them to find faith."

The argument was long and wearisome, Mrs. Brown, as I have said, being similar to many hundreds of other Mrs. Browns throughout the country; but in the end the second voice triumphed. Mrs. Brown was decided. She looked at the photographs of the two ships in which her sons were serving. Tom's was a destroyer, Reg's the *Royal Sceptre*. And then she smiled, and drew the curtains, and lit the lamp in the middle of the table.

It was only two days later that the news came. The *Royal Sceptre* was one of the first merchant ships to be torpedoed. Mrs. Brown received the official telegram. She listened to the radio too. "Ships have rushed to the scene of the disaster," said the announcer, "but no survivors have been picked up." And then a little later: "No news has been received of the crew of the *Royal Sceptre*, and it is feared that all hope must be abandoned."

Mrs. Brown switched off the radio and went and stood by the window. There were not two voices speaking inside her, but only one. The first voice was silenced. The second voice said: "Have

no fears. Other mothers will need you now." And Mrs. Brown sat down at the table and wrote a letter to the son in the destroyer. It was ironic perhaps that it should be the same destroyer that was sent to look for the survivors of the *Royal Sceptre*. One brother searching for another. Too much like a story for the movies. But it was true. In the movies, though, Tom, the brother in the destroyer, would have shaken his fist at the sky and vowed revenge upon his brother's murderers. In real life Tom did nothing of the sort. He wrote to his mother and said: "We found nothing. We did not expect to. But I don't feel angry or bitter or afraid. I believe that something which you call God and for which I have no name is taking care of Reg."

Many people called on Mrs. Brown. They came with the usual flowers of condolence, the usual little murmurs of shocked sympathy, and one and all were disarmed by the calm figure who met them on the doorstep and who, in some mysterious manner, seemed to give them consolation instead of them bringing it to her. One woman who came to offer sympathy and whose husband had left for France the day before, returned home with fresh courage and conviction, and Mrs. Brown, looking at the photograph of the *Royal Sceptre* on the mantelpiece, knew the value of that old truth so long forgotten, that by healing other people's pain we heal ourselves. Her son was not

lost in vain, his going had given her strength and this strength had brought new life to others.

The story should end there, otherwise a fairy-tale atmosphere will cling about it, but because the end is true it must be told. The following morning Mrs. Brown heard that the crew of the *Royal Sceptre* had been landed by a steamer safely in Brazil.

## *George and Jimmy*

---

ALL over the country people are talking about the difficulties of evacuation.

"The mothers won't settle down in their temporary homes. . . ." "The children are ill-mannered, ignorant and dirty. . . ." "Schoolteachers are overbearing, truculent, and won't do a hand's turn to help the children when the day's work is done. . . ." "Hostesses are unkind, and make no effort to welcome the strangers in their midst. . . ." So the talk goes on, until most people are sick to death of the very word "evacuation".

Like most other problems, of course, the root of the trouble is personal selfishness. Hostesses object to the lessening of their own personal comfort. Evacuated mothers object to the restraint of living in somebody else's house. And the children, taking their cue from grown-up behaviour, squabble amongst themselves.

Is there any way of settling these hundred and one problems and smoothing out the inevitable difficulties? One woman, in a north Yorkshire village, whose husband is the manager of a mill, has found a way that is successful, at any rate with the two lads from Tyneside who arrived on her doorstep one morning shepherded by a somewhat harassed billeting officer.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I've just got to find room for these boys. They've been in two billets already, and the people complained. The teacher admits that they are the most difficult boys in the school. I dare say most of it is mischief and high spirits, and what they need is a firm hand and the stick. Will you take them in?"

The wife of the manager swallowed down a protest and summoned a smile. "Yes, of course," she said, "we'll do our best," and the billeting officer departed.

The hostess looked down at the "difficult" boys. They were twelve and eight respectively. Two pug-nosed little fellows in shorts and gym shoes, with grubby legs and shirts none too clean, an extra shirt in a paper bag their whole equipment for a Yorkshire winter.

"What are your names?" she said.

"I'm George and he's Jimmy," said the eldest in a strong Tyneside accent. "I've got a letter here from my dad. He said I was to give it to the chaps what took us in." Their hostess held out her hand

for the smudged scrap of paper, already well-thumbed by previous readers. "My advice to you is thrash George good and hearty. He's rough at home and rough in school. His mother and I don't mind how hard you lam into him."

The hostess gave back the scrap of paper, her lips twitching. "You both look as if you want some grub," she said.

The house was small, the rooms were neat and tidy. The manager and his wife, through bad times at the mill and his own recent illness, found their yearly income small enough for themselves. That Government grant of 8s. 6d. for each boy would have to be stretched somehow to cover clothing, shoes and extras, as well as food. It meant cutting out any little private luxuries, that was certain. They had been used to having their hot meal in the evening, they had done so ever since they could remember. This would have to be changed. A small thing perhaps, but a long-standing habit takes some breaking. From now on they would have hot midday dinner instead. The one spare room upstairs had to be made possible for two, extra blankets and sheets provided, and books and magazines found.

The boys watched the preparations in silence. They looked up at their hostess with curious, speculative eyes. Funny, she hadn't shouted at them yet. After a while they got bored and started running up and down the stairs and shouting.

Crash! Their hostess's heart sank! Breakage number one. She went out on to the landing to investigate. The clock on the hall table had been knocked over. It lay on the floor, the glass shattered. The boys were nowhere to be seen. She heard a furtive scrambling in the kitchen, and going in, found them hiding behind the kitchen door. She had the clock in her hands.

"Would you boys like to go into the village with this and see if Mr. Brown the carpenter can give you a new piece of glass for it?" she said. There was silence. "You broke it, banging into it, didn't you?" she said. "I shouldn't run up and down stairs so fast another time. But it was stupid of me to leave it on the table."

George, whose face had been set and sullen, blinked in surprise.

"Ain't you going to beat us?" he said.

"No," said his hostess, "if I beat you it wouldn't stop this glass having been broken. In this house when we do anything careless or stupid we say what we've done, and then try and make up for it."

George thought a moment.

"We didn't mean to break your clock; we're darn sorry, ain't we, Jim?"

"Sure, that's right," said Jim; "can we take the clock and get it fixed for you?"

"Yes, I'd be very glad if you would," said their hostess.



Problem number one had been settled, without bloodshed!

Problem number two came later in the day. The boys were put to bed. All was quiet. The manager and his wife settled down to listen to the radio. Shouts and yells started from the spare bedroom. Thumps and bangs. The manager's wife put aside the sock she was darning and went upstairs. The two boys were fighting on the floor, screaming at each other in their own Tyneside dialect. She pulled them apart and put each on his separate camp-bed.

"Look here," she said, "never mind what the quarrel is about. I want to ask you a question. Why were all you kids evacuated from home?"

George grinned. That was easy.

"'Cos there's a blasted war on," he said.

"That's right," said the manager's wife, "there's a war on, and you've had to leave home because Germany and England are fighting each other. You can't go home till they've stopped. It's bad enough having a war in the world without having it in the house as well. Do you think countries will ever agree if two boys like yourselves can't agree?"

They stared at her solemnly.

"Now, you two sit quietly," she said, "and let that stupid old anger die away, and when a better feeling comes, let it show you where *you* are wrong, and never mind about the other fellow. In this house I don't tell you what to do, nor my

husband either. God tells you what to do. That better feeling you'll get in a minute is God."

The boys said nothing. They waited expectantly. Their hostess did not speak, and there was not a sound. Then George suddenly said: "I pulled Jimmy's hair and punched his nose—sorry."

"All right, George," said his hostess, "what about you, Jimmy?"

Jimmy wriggled. "I called George a damn fool before he pulled my hair," he said.

"All right, that's finished and done with," said the manager's wife, tucking in the sheets. "Next time there's any trouble, don't fight about it, but we'll all work together to try and put it right. I often get cross and fed up, and then I sit quiet and listen to the better voice, and then I know what to do. My husband does the same. It saves a lot of fuss and bother. Good night."

Problem number two had been solved. The manager's wife went downstairs to finish darning George's sock.

The following week the billeting officer came to see how things were going. "Has your hair turned grey yet?" he asked. "I hope you've locked up everything of value. You never know with kids from that sort of home."

The manager's wife smiled and looked over her shoulder. George and Jimmy were pasting brown paper over the little window at the back of the hall. "My husband and I are going to the bridge

party to-night; we're leaving the boys in charge of the house. George is to answer the telephone if anyone rings up; Jimmy is to clear away tea. They are doing the black-out themselves."

The billeting officer gaped in astonishment. "Do you mean to say you trust them?" he asked.

The manager's wife laughed.

## *Over the Ration Books*

---

Nor everyone is faced in war-time with the tremendous issues of life and death. Those who are in the fighting services, and their relatives at home, face death and separation continually, and must necessarily bear the heaviest strain of war. But there are other men and women who have problems and troubles of their own, which are nevertheless the immediate outcome of war, and must be solved.

What happens to the storekeeper for instance? What effect is the war having upon him? Present conditions cause many difficulties between retailer and consumer, and when supplies are limited, co-operation between the different trades is not always easy. A seed of jealousy on the part of one man, a sneaking desire to profiteer, and his fellow-tradesman suffers, and so does his customer, and so in the long run does the national

interest. It's the same with his customers. Some of us do a little quiet hoarding. It probably never occurs to either of us, trader or customer, that we are doing our country a disservice. We believe we are doing our "bit" like everyone else. "But," we say to ourselves, "I've got to look after Number One." And that's where the trouble begins.

Tom and Mary own a small grocer's shop on the corner of a street down in East London. Tom was born just opposite that shop some forty-five years ago. As a small boy he used to look at the shop across the street, and he told himself he'd save every farthing when he went to work, and one day he would make enough money to buy it. So he did. Tom was that sort of a boy. At first he worked in a branch of a big provision store, and it was there he met Mary, who was working in another department. On Saturday afternoons Tom and Mary used to take a bus down to Poplar, and Tom would point at the little shop in the corner and say to Mary: "That shop is going to be ours one day." Three years later they were married, and two years after that Tom was serving biscuits and bacon behind his own counter. He has been there ever since.

He is a great personality down in Poplar. And he will tell people, if they care to ask him, what sort of effect the war has on a grocer.

"Ration books?" he will say, with a smile. "Yes, there's a whole pile of 'em on the mantelpiece

over there. Grocers have been driven nearly frantic with the darn things. Mary and I were up all one night with them. They wouldn't have been done in time but for the fact the barber opposite came in and asked if there was anything he could do to help. He spent the whole day after that making out the duplicates to go with the books. Was business slack with him, do you say? Why, no, not particularly. He just wanted to help. Excuse me one moment, please." And Tom bends down to a small customer who wants half a dozen oranges. "There you are, sonny, don't drop the bag now."

"Yes," he continues, "funny thing is, the barber wouldn't have helped me a year ago. Didn't used to speak to me then. Not he. His missus and Mary had a tiff over some nonsense or other, and you know what those things are, they hang on for years in a silly sort of way. And then Mary saw a bit in the paper, just about twelve months ago it was, about Moral Re-Armament between folks—being unselfish and Christian and such like—and she says to me, all white and serious: 'Why, Tom, that's meant for people like you and me.'

"'Go on,' I said. 'I'm not going to church at my time of life.'

"'Doesn't say anything about going to church,' she said, looking down at the paper, 'it says we'll never have peace in the world until we have peace

with our neighbours, and in our own home. Sounds like common sense to me.'

"I don't hold with all that gup," I said, but when she went up to bed I took a look at the paper myself. Funny thing, but somehow it got me thinking. I thought of the people I know; Harry, for instance, he's a grocer too, a pal of mine over in Stepney. He and his wife were living apart and he hadn't spoken to his son for over five years. He was mighty keen on peace, was Harry, thought war was a terrible thing. And yet there he was, living alone, having quarrelled with his wife and his son. Not much peace about that home. Mary was right. What that paper said was darn common sense."

There is another tinkle at the shop door, and another customer comes to be served.

"Anyway," says Tom, putting his pencil behind his ear, "the long and short of it was that Mary went across the street the next morning and made it up with the barber's wife. They went to the movies in the evening! And he came in and had a chat with me. And since then we've never looked back. Simple, isn't it?"

Tom turns to an old woman who wants a tin of sardines. "No, Mrs. Harris, fish isn't rationed and won't be rationed," he says. "Them fellows out in the North Sea will see after that." He shuts the door after her. "Cold enough to freeze an Eskimo,

isn't it?" he says. "I feel sorry for those poor chaps out at sea. We lead a peaceful sort of life compared to them. That's what I said to my pal Harry only last week. We've a lot to be thankful for," I said. "I showed Harry that bit in the paper, you know, and bless me if he didn't get to puzzling it out, much the same way as I had. You'll never guess what he did, though. He made it up with his old woman! It took a bit of doing, I can tell you, because she was none too easy. Poor Harry had a thick time of it, breaking the ice, as it were. He told me the trouble was it made him feel such a darn fool! 'That's all right, Harry,' I told him, 'you're only feeling what most of us have thought about you for years!' No, he wasn't mad, he only laughed. But when war broke out in September Harry went off at seven o'clock one morning and cycled fifty miles to apologise to his son, who was in camp. Funny, isn't it, how a chap can change? His daughter-in-law is coming down to live with them, and bringing the baby."

Tom laughs and wipes a crumb off the counter. "Oh, well, this war will make a lot of difference to a lot of people. But we'll never get the Nasties right unless we get ourselves right first. That's common sense, isn't it? And it's not an easy thing to do, I can tell you that. Why, right at the start of the war the maximum selling price for a certain brand of tinned food was raised fifty per cent, and



I had to decide whether I would pass on that increase in price to my customers, though I was still getting it at the old wholesale price from the dealers, mark you.

“‘Come on, Tom,’ says one little voice inside me, ‘there’s a chance to make a bit extra.’ ‘Hold on, Tom,’ says another voice, ‘you know you don’t have to charge the customer more until you have to pay more yourself.’ Well, the second voice won, and I haven’t regretted it.”

Tom cocks his head on one side and whistles a song. “Unselfishness pays, that’s the thing so many chaps don’t see,” he said. “Harry and I are finding it out every day in this war. Last month Harry had extra supplies of some goods I couldn’t get, and I found I’d got one or two spare articles that he couldn’t obtain. So we settled on an exchange of goods until we could get our own supplies from the normal sources. Like that we are both able to keep our trade going, and customers weren’t disappointed. Harry’s trying it out now at Stepney. They’re a tough lot in the market there, and plenty of competition. Harry used to fight hard and strong with some of the chaps down there, but he’s different now. He decided to treat them the same as he treated me, and share his surplus stock. ‘As long as I’ve got it,’ he said, ‘you can share it. When it’s gone, we’ll all do without.’”

A voice calls from the back of the shop. It’s Mary dishing up the dinner. “All right,” says

Tom, "I'm coming. If there's one thing I'm a pig over it's steak and onions, always have been. But as I was saying, the funny thing about this love-your-neighbour business is—believe me or not—that the darn thing WORKS!"

## *A Nation's Strength*

---

WE all know about the spirit of the Finns. We have all admired it. But few of us over here realise what a miracle their unity is, for few of us know of the bitter memories left by the Civil War of 1918.

Employers did not easily forgive workers who had thrown some of them into the burning furnaces of their own factories, but fostered instead a spirit of bitterness, and refused to engage workers who had socialistic sympathies, though they had taken no part in the bloody deeds of the extremists.

Besides this cleft between Left and Right, there was division amongst the Swedish- and Finnish-speaking sections of the nation. The Finnish-speaking belonged to the ancient farming peasant stock; the Swedish were the remnants of the Swedish aristocracy who had formerly ruled Fin-

land and still formed a large proportion of the land-owning and professional classes. The Finns jealously guarded their culture and resented the Swedish influences; many refused to learn Swedish, or, knowing it, scorned to speak it. Few Swedes bothered to learn the Finnish language.

Briefly, the nation was rife with jealousy and prejudice, and Field-Marshal Mannerheim, speaking a few years ago, said: "The greatest gift God could give to Finland is unity."

His prayer has been answered. The Finnish people have won the admiration and sympathy of the whole world. Here is the story of two of them, and how they worked for the new spirit of their country.

Leo is a director of the largest wood and pulp firm in Finland, and his wife, Saimi, is the granddaughter of a great Finnish patriot, whose statue stands outside the National Bank in Helsinki.

In the Civil War Leo's father was thrown into a Bolshevik prison, and his brother shot in his own garden before his family. It was hard for Leo to forget these things after the war. Saimi, his wife, brilliant, forceful, plunged into the struggle for women's rights, and toured the country rousing discontent wherever she went, leaving women dissatisfied with their homes and resentful against their husbands and children. Saimi felt she had all her grandfather's love of his country, all his energy and devotion, but she had never got over the fact

that she had been born a girl instead of a boy. She tried to rid herself of this resentment by making the rest of her sex resentful too, and she strode through life dominating and exhausting everyone she met, including her own family.

Then one day, like Paul of long ago, she travelled her own road to Damascus. In a blinding light of self-revelation she saw she was no Joan of Arc, but a stubborn egocentric, using her gifts to her own ends, demanding from everyone, giving nothing in return. Broken-hearted, she reached out to the unknown spiritual power she had always denied—and for the first time in her life was filled with peace and confidence.

She went home with a humility she had never known before, and with a new love for her husband and her children, and a new understanding. "We're going to share this together, Leo," she said, "this faith and this determination. And we've got to work for Finland, we've got to unite the country in the way we are united. The nation is only jealous and divided because the people are jealous and divided in their homes and in their work. And it's no use you and me just talking about it, Leo. We've got to go out and Do Something."

The grand-daughter of Finland's patriot was something of a strategist. She asked to her home people who would most quickly influence others, and the house, formerly a place of frenzied argu-

ments and clashing wills, became a spiritual oasis. An early ally was the leader of a youth organisation of 70,000 peasants, who, through the influence of Leo and Saimi, learnt Swedish, so that he could work with the leaders of Swedish-speaking youth organisations, each thereby forgetting his own petty quarrels for the good of his country. One of the first things these young men did was to go to Finland's Foreign Minister, whom they had previously booed in the streets, and tell him they would back him in any program he had for uniting Finland.

Next Leo and Saimi invited a leading Member of Parliament to their home. Saimi told him something of their work, but he would not commit himself in any way.

"Are you a patriot?" asked Saimi at length. "Of course," he answered, his eyes blazing. "How dare you ask me that!" "Well then," said Saimi, "how many people in Parliament would you co-operate with willingly? Can you honestly say that you are helping to build a united Finland?"

He could not answer. He knew that the obstructive attitude of his party was largely due to his influence and his personal ambition. He knew that to act differently now, to live as Leo and Saimi were trying to live, would mean apologies, the laughter of friends and enemies, the sacrifice of his pride. For forty minutes they sat in silence

while the spiritual struggle went on in his heart. Then, "I'll do it," he said.

A few days later came his opportunity. Leo and Saimi invited the leader of the party opposed to his own to dinner in their house. After dinner they sat round the stove and Saimi's friend, usually so eloquent, found the words came with difficulty now. "For years I've opposed you," he told his political enemy. "I've tried to thwart every good thing you've ever wanted to achieve, not from love of country, but because of my own ambition. I resented your power, not your point of view. I was jealous of your personal success. Will you forgive me and join in working together for the good of Finland?"

His opponent sat without a word, dark, bullet-headed, his face impassive. He would not show how deeply he was moved. Presently some of the youth leaders came in and told him how they were meeting and making friends with one another, Swedes and Finns alike, and how it was possible for a new spirit to sweep divided Finland. Still he did not speak. At length the youngest present, a boy late from school, went up to him and held out his hand and said: "We can build this new spirit in the Finnish schools, so that the boys will grow up as true patriots. Will you help us too?" The politician could resist no longer; he shook hands with the boy and with his former enemy. And the new spirit grew like a grain of mustard seed. It

began to show in Parliament, in the Press, in home life and in industry. Land-owners, who had never taken any interest in the poor farming families on their own estates, began to visit them, to improve conditions, to settle grievances. Mill-owners started to include labor elements on their staff. Three days before the war began the Prime Minister took part in a great demonstration arranged by Leo and Saimi celebrating this new national unity and, in the early days of the conflict, a department for Spiritual Defense was established.

The war came. Saimi worked in an evacuation camp with families who had lost their cattle and their homes. Saimi's boy fought at the front. And Leo wrote: "We don't understand what God has in store for us, but this struggle has brought our country to a unity never dreamt of before. The nation is like a granite block."

Now the Mannerheim Line has gone. The Finns still have one line of defence left—their spirit of unity.

#### A LETTER FROM SAIMI

"Helsinki,

*"March 23rd, 1940.*

"At last I have seen a whole nation act as one family, everybody eagerly wanting to give help, however dear the cost. Children have not been less



ready to sacrifice, and the only tears I have seen have been caused by the feeling of not being able to do enough.

"Thus in the midst of all evil in the world, there has at last been a demonstration of what moral and spiritual qualities mean, and can achieve. And not here only, but as a tremendous upheaval it has caused the same qualities to become living and active all over the world. The numerous miracles that have upheld this people these days bear witness of God's presence every day.

"There has been no end of real life-changing at the front, as well as behind it—if there has been any difference between the two, as, of all the towns in our country, there are only two which have not been bombed. 15,000 men have been killed and about 30,000 wounded. 460,000 people have lost their homes and are now without anything they hold dear. In other words, there is hardly any family which has not been somehow affected by this war. Every seventh individual is homeless and about a tenth of the country has been given away.

"I happened to be abroad on Government work when the message about peace came. The first reaction was sorrow and it was difficult not to burst into tears all day long. Apart from the sorrow about the land lost, the unbroken army, came the fear that this nation now would give way to disappointment and bitterness. I felt that the tre-

mendous positive things grown out of suffering and sacrifice might be wasted in this reaction. It was with this feeling in my heart that I returned home instantly after my mission abroad was ended.

"Already, according to what I have seen and heard, I assure you that these fears were without reason. You should see the faces of these people to-day. No blaming of anybody, no desperate sorrow, no bitterness. Everybody goes quietly to work in the reconstruction of the country. Great problems lie ahead of us. But they are not problems in the usual sense of the word—they are tasks where each of us can sacrifice money, work, time and skill, and I am certain that these are going to unite us still more than did the war, if ever that is possible.

"I do not know where our path goes now. I believe it is right to live and work with the nation where it stands, learn and serve with the gifts God has given each of us. Here at home we feel more grateful and rich than ever. We are all alive, have our health and home. Never before have we been more conscious of these gifts than now, and are trying to use them to the utmost. Never before have we understood better that each day is a pure gift, nothing we ever deserve."

## *A Miner's Tale*

---

"WELL, England's at war, and I guess we've all got to pull together," said the landlord of the "Black Boy". "But you can't get industrial peace all in a minute. War won't stop chaps like us and the owners squabbling amongst ourselves. There'll be war in industry and war in the world until men and women chuck away greed and envy, like our blooming ancestors chucked away their tails. And that took about a hundred thousand years."

"Maybe it did," said George, "but I don't mind laying ten pints to two that it's a darn sight easier to change our hearts than to change our back-sides."

Such a yell of laughter greeted this remark that George was quite taken aback, but the landlord, remembering the George of two years back, staggering down the village street on a Saturday night with the coal-dust from the pit still on his face,

would have laid twenty pints to none in those days on George growing a tail before he ever grew a heart, let alone change it. Long hours at the coal face hardly make for sweet temper, and when George was tired he drank, and when he drank he fought his neighbours, and made himself and everyone else thoroughly miserable. Of course, he blamed the whole world, but never himself. He blamed his wife, who never stopped arguing, he blamed his father, whom he had not spoken to for sixteen years, and he blamed his brother, whom, when he last visited the house, George kicked down the stairs.

It was Will, George's "marrow" at the coal face, who helped George to find himself. For some little time George had noticed that Will was different. He was calm when George was sullen, patient when George was difficult. He had stopped losing his temper, he was honest, he was cheerful, and this new happiness was so obvious that curiosity got the better of George.

"What is it, Will?" he asked, "Eno's Fruit Salts, or a girl?"

Will laughed, as he threw aside an old pit-prop that a few months ago he would have pinched for fire-wood.

"Neither," he said, "it just struck me I'd been making a mess of my life, that's all. So I'm letting God take on the job instead."

George stared, and then spat over his shoulder on to the pit-prop.

"I never thought you'd fall for Hallelujah, Will," he said.

Will laughed again. "I've been reading my mother's old Bible these last few weeks. There's a lot in it they never explained to us in school as kids. I can't find much about singing Hallelujah, but there's plenty about being honest with yourself when you're in the wrong, and facing up to it, and then trying to start from the beginning again. Fact is, we're all so damned selfish we can't see beyond our noses, and that's why nothing goes right with us. Nations are selfish, and that's why they get into wars. Owners are selfish and won't raise our wages. You and I are selfish, spending brass in the pub instead of taking it home."

"Oh, shut your gup," said George. "What's the gain to us if we do work harder, that's what I want to know."

"There we go again," grinned Will. "Don't you want to give a hand to the chaps defending this island? Look what they're doing for us. The harder we work the better chance they have got."

"What's the use of talking?" broke in George. "It's too late to try and change human nature, everyone knows that."

"Who says it's too late? Have you tried?" said Will.

George did not answer. Will was a fool. A psalm-singing fool. He was the selfish one, going around with his smiling face, upsetting other people. It was difficult though for George, working beside the new and cheerful Will day after day, not to succumb, little by little, to his influence. It was not that Will preached, it was not that Will argued, the fact was that the man was happy. And it was this happiness in contrast to his own wretchedness that brought realisation to George in the end. If Will could begin again, he could do the same. If understanding God did not mean black clothes on Sundays and a long face, but trying to make things right with your wife and speaking to your father after sixteen years of silence, then understanding God was something that everybody could do. It was funny, George thought, how much easier home life became after he talked things over with Hilda. She was gentle and sympathetic, when before she had been silent and hard. The shouting, the arguing, the nagging and crying, these things did not happen any more. Together they wrote to George's father, and the old man, deeply touched, came to live with them. All this did not happen in a day, it was spread over weeks and months; the miracle is that it happened at all.

The difference in George began to show in his work. Dishonesty and careless work is much more

dangerous down the mine than on the surface. A badly-placed pit-prop may mean a fall of the roof. Will and George started a new standard of thoroughness, although it meant working more slowly and getting less money. At first, naturally enough, it did not pay. But their reward came when the manager, realising that he could place the greatest confidence in both of them, entrusted them with work of special danger and difficulty, and paid them accordingly.

"You see what living this way means," said Will.

"Maybe," said George, "maybe. . . ." The test came soon enough. He and eighteen other men were put to removing steel-girders from old workings, so that the steel could be used again. This meant that the men had to prop up the workings with timber, and remove girders before the fall came. The work was definitely dangerous, and the men decided to ask for piece-rates through the Miners' Lodge. The demand was refused.

"Are you going to fight for it?" said Will.

"No," said George slowly, "there'll be no fighting. I'm going to try another way." He went to the office, after consulting his mates in the Miners' Lodge, and asked to speak to the manager.

"You're wasting your time here," said the manager.

"No," said George, "let me speak a moment. The demand for piece-rates has failed, I know

that. And I can understand why you refused it."

"Oh, you can?" said the manager, surprised.

"Piece-rates sometimes lead to hasty work," said George, "and hasty work is bad work, and bad work means danger for the mine and for all of us, one day. But there's another side of the question. There's danger in the job we're on now. The men are dissatisfied. Dissatisfied men do bad work too. Couldn't you meet us half-way and settle on a higher daily rate, instead of the piece-rate originally suggested?"

The manager hesitated. "Possibly," he said cautiously, "if you and your mates will guarantee a fixed amount of work in return."

"That's all right," said George, "I'll see to that."

He went back and appealed to the men to cooperate, and they agreed. The new rate of pay was fixed. George had won his first battle without fighting. For a few weeks all went smoothly. Then, one Saturday, there was a misunderstanding amongst the men about the hours of work and they knocked off an hour too soon. The manager ordered them to return on Sunday and put in the extra hour. Only two men out of the eighteen turned up. Next week, on pay-day, the men found that sixpence a day had been docked from their wages. It is illegal for a management to reduce the pay of the workers without giving notice, and an appeal was launched through the Miners' Lodge. The manager was difficult. The



situation looked ugly. Friction was slowing up production. Once again George was the men's spokesman.

"That lost hour last Saturday was a mistake," he said, "the chaps had not read the instructions. There was no shirking. They just did not know."

"I can't go into that," said the manager, "that's their look-out."

His manner was loud and blustering, he knew he had made a mistake.

"When the chaps didn't turn up on Sunday," said George quietly, "you were afraid it would make you look small. That was why you docked their pay this week, wasn't it? You wanted to get your own back?"

"Go to hell," said the manager.

"Yes," said George. He had barely shut the door of the office before the manager called him back.

"You are perfectly right," he said, "I apologise. You can tell your mates I'll forget the mistake last Saturday. I'm sure I can rely on you to see it won't happen again. Good morning."

That night in the "Black Boy" George winked at the landlord and smiled. "Garn," he said, "you and your hundred thousand years. . . ."

## *"Physician, Heal Thyself"*

---

IN A busy field hospital behind the British lines, a young surgeon fought for the life of a wounded soldier dying before him on the operating-table. It was a matter of hours before the poison from the wound would spread; and the surgeon decided to cut away the damaged poisoned tissues. He hardly dared hope for success; the method had never been tried before. Then slowly the colour returned to the drawn face, and the limb was saved. The staff of the hospital regarded the case as miraculous.

That was in 1915. To-day, this method of treating wounds, by the cutting away of damaged tissues, is universally accepted as the right one. Thousands of lives and limbs can be saved in 1940 that would have been lost in 1914, and this is largely due to the young surgeon who had courage enough to dare a new method twenty-five years ago.

What happened to him, the young doctor, who saved life amidst the blood and horror and chaos of the last war? Did he continue to save life in peace? His story is much the same as many others of his generation and profession. The return home, the setting up as a consultant in Harley Street, marriage, hard work, growing success, the year by year existence of a medical man who is determined to rise to the top of the tree and let nothing stand in his way. Ambition was satisfied. Twenty years after the war the surgeon was a man of early middle age, greying at the temples, and looked upon by colleagues and patients alike as that supposedly desirable thing, a successful man. So he was a successful man. But when he was alone, when the last patient had paid his fee and departed to the Rolls-Royce waiting in the street, the surgeon wondered.

Someone nearly two thousand years ago had said the words: "Physician, heal thyself." The surgeon looked about him; the comfort of his rooms, the pictures on the walls, the rich gifts from his patients. He thought of his country garden, his wife, his friends, his colleagues, and suddenly, for no reason, his mind flashed back to the scene behind the British lines over twenty years before, when, bending over the wounded soldier, he had cut away the damaged tissues.

Yes, he had saved his limb. Saved his life too. But what had that fellow gone back to, to what

world, to what drab, dull existence? Unemployment perhaps, a hard struggle to continue the life that had been saved, and then a broken home, despair? The surgeon stared in front of him. He thought of the hundreds of patients who had passed through his hands since then, and who suffered from a disease that he could not cure, the disease of unhappiness. This was something the surgeon's knife could never cut away. Unhappiness because of a deed once done, a word once spoken, a thought never admitted. What was it Barrie said were the three things that never came back to a man? The second chance, the spoken word, the lost opportunity . . . Unhappiness because a life was selfish, careless, the values gone awry; unhappiness because the old fundamental truths of good and evil had been forgotten, laughed at, laid aside.

Successful surgeon, yes. But because he had had no answer all these years to the basic problems of human nature he had failed in his profession and failed in his home. "Physician, heal thyself."

. . . . .

It was hard at first, starting all over again. There were so many superficial barriers to pull down. The relationship between himself and his wife—that had to be straightened out. He had become so used to treating her as the efficient wife who ran his house so perfectly that he had forgotten how

to talk to her. At first he was awkward, wretchedly shy. He thought if he told her about these doubts and fears that had been haunting him for so long she would laugh, or suggest a holiday. She did nothing of the sort. She listened. And when he had finished talking to her she had tears in her eyes. She told him how lonely she had been for fifteen years. Lonely because he had never talked to her like this before. The parties, the endless bridge, the frequent holidays abroad, were all straws at which she had clutched in a vain attempt to find a solution to life. Now she would not be lonely any more. They would work together to find that solution, and day by day the light would come a little clearer. So a new relationship grew up between the surgeon and his wife. And a new relationship, too, between himself and his colleagues and his patients.

He became a man of sympathy and insight, instead of being just a great surgeon. He found the answer to many of his patients' problems lay not in the operating-theatre, but in their own hearts. He drew away the poison in men and women, as once, many years before, he had cut away the poisoned tissues of a damaged limb. On the outbreak of the present war, the surgeon was appointed to be in charge of a Government hospital. The comfortable rooms in Harley Street were exchanged for the grimness of residential quarters,

the visitors in their Rolls-Royces for a constant stream of "out-patients."

One day an "out-patient" came to him complaining of pains and other symptoms. A thorough examination, including X-rays, had proved that there was nothing organically wrong. He had the man back to his rooms, made him talk. "There's nothing organically wrong with you, you know that," he told him quietly. "You are sick in your mind and in your heart."

Little by little the man gained confidence, little by little his story came to light. He was an electrician by trade, had got a job as soon as the war ended, and had done well for himself. He had married and brought up a family. His wife, who had always been delicate, depended very much upon him. Because of her ill-health he had given way to every whim, spoiled her and pampered her, with the result that he had neglected his children, and they had grown up without any affection for him. They were self-willed, sullen, there was no companionship between any of them. A few years ago business became bad in his firm and he lost his job. His wife was ill at the time, and he had not the courage to tell her. He went about looking for employment, and all the while he pretended to her that things were still the same.

His savings grew less and less. One or two jobs came his way from time to time, but never anything permanent. Finally he had to pawn his

watch and some of his clothes. Then his wife had to have an operation, the operation she had been threatened with for ten years. He had always told her it would never happen, and then it came, the thing she had dreaded for so long. At last she realised that this was something she had to go through alone. Her husband's pampering could not help her in the fear and pain of her crisis, and he had nothing else to give. In her sickness she turned from him, she saw him as an idol she had worshipped all these years in vain. The operation was successful. Her health was better than it had ever been before. But she did not love him any more. They were drifting apart. Here he was, forty-seven, without a job, without hope for the future, without faith in God or the love of his wife. "So you see, Doctor," he said at last, "I've just about decided to end it all."

The surgeon said nothing. They sat together in silence. And then, very gently, very quietly, the surgeon told the man something of his own failure a few years earlier, of his own unhappiness and despair. He told the man of other men and women who had since come to him, and how together the twisted lives had been made straight. "I can cure the body, but I can't cure the spirit," he said. "You and Almighty God have to do that between you. If you put right what you can put right, God will put right what you can't put right."

Once again the surgeon was silent, and in that silence, clear and strong, there came to the man a realisation of what he had to do. He knew he must tell his wife the truth. He saw how his own deceit and fear had brought about her fear. He saw how his possessiveness and her selfishness had driven away their children. He saw that the love they had borne for each other was a narrow, self-centred love, and because of this it had been without real foundation. He had kept the truth of his unemployment from her, not so much because it would cause her pain, but because she would learn how he had failed.

When he left the surgeon's rooms, shortly after midnight, he was calm and resolute. He was going to ask his wife's forgiveness, and he was going to tell her what he had done. And the surgeon, watching him walk out into the dark street, knew that he had something new to give the casualties of this war. He could draw away the poison in men and women as once, years before, he had cut away the poisoned tissues of a damaged limb behind the British lines.



## *Spitfire Megan*

---

MEGAN WILLIAMS is even more Welsh than her name, and that's saying something. If you had seen her during the coal strike in 1926 you would have turned and run. A lot of people did. They used to call her "Spitfire Megan" in those days, and if you were a "scab" it was not healthy to go near her. She led a gang of miners once and overturned a bus. She is a Councillor now in East London, and still pretty formidable, although she does not break up buses any more. But you would not expect her to apologise to anyone, right or wrong.

When war broke out Megan Williams decided at once that her family must be evacuated. They were a big party, and it took a lot of time and trouble to organise. There were her mother, and her daughter, and her son. There was also a daughter-in-law and a baby. She packed them all

off to her mother-in-law in Wales, and told them to stick it. And like thousands of similar ill-suited parties all over the country, they did—for a week.

Then the grumbles began. Letters came by every post. "I can't stand it," said the daughter-in-law. "Nothing I say or do is right. The old lady here criticises me every time I open my mouth, and I'm moving to-morrow."

Letter number two. "It's very hard on me," said Megan's mother, "to fall in with other people's ways at my time of life. Your mother-in-law does not consult me at all, and I'm made to feel no one in this household."

Letter number three. "Your mother and the rest don't appreciate a thing I do for them," said the mother-in-law. "Here's the house upside down to make them comfortable, and now they talk of moving next door. I'm sure they can please themselves. I don't ask for thanks."

Letter number four. "I get the worst of it as usual," said the son. "Yap, yap, yap, all day long. It's enough to drive anyone crazy. I'm just about fed up."

Letter number five, signed by all: "We're coming home."

Megan Williams was mad. After all the trouble she had taken to get the family out of danger, this was the way they treated her. Of course the only thing was to go down to Wales straight away,

though she could ill afford the time, and give the family hell.

The journey was long and tiring. Megan had plenty of time to think it over. Her anger cooled. You can't keep red-hot hour after hour in a slow-moving train. She took the letters out of her handbag and re-read them. "Come on, be honest," she said to herself. "What is it in these letters which makes me mad?" She took out a pencil, turned over the last envelope and started to work it out. "Your pride is hurt because you've been made to look a fool. Apologise." "Hey! Not so fast!" said Megan to the insistent voice. "Apologise for what? I may be partly to blame, but if I apologise they'll think it is all my fault. They'll come home too! That would never do."

Then she stopped arguing and let her better self—God if you will—direct her again, took up her pencil and wrote slowly and rather reluctantly: "You do owe them an apology. You have dominated their lives. Talk over all the difficulties frankly with them and let them decide what to do."

Megan Williams had a cup of tea after that, and felt much better. "It's wonderful what a cup of tea can do," said a fellow passenger. "That's right," said Megan, but she was not thinking of the tea.

It was raining when she arrived at the little Welsh station, and there was no porter to carry

her bag. Spitfire Megan shouldered it herself. Things like that don't matter very much when you carry two hundred pounds around every day of your life. Her mother met her on the doorstep of the house. "Now Meg, I want you to hear my side of all this before you hear your mother-in-law," she began. "I really must say, of all the . . ."

"All right, Mother," said Megan, "don't you fret yourself. The whole thing has been my fault from the very first. I'm sorry and that's all there is to it. I don't want to listen to any tales, but I suggest we all get together and straighten things out. I've got you all into this mess, and I want to try and get you out of it."

Her mother stared at her for a moment, unbelieving, and then her face crumpled up and she burst into tears. "Why Meg," she said, "why Meg . . ." The first apology had been made. Megan had risked making a fool of herself, and still survived. After that apologies became infectious. The whole family sat round the table for supper. Megan's daughter-in-law said she would move back into the house if the old lady would have her. The old lady was delighted. Megan raked up every difficult problem and thrashed it out over the supper table. It was funny how easy it was when all joined in the discussion instead of whispering in corners. "Come on," said Megan, "bring everything out of the dust-bin on to the muck-heap, where the light can get at it." And

the light turned the rubbish into dust and the dust dissolved.

When Megan Williams caught the train two days later everything was running smoothly. The rancour and resentment had disappeared. "Just fizzled out," said Megan to her friend in London. "Funny, wasn't it? Fancy me apologising to Mother! I didn't know myself."

"I don't suppose you did, and that was the cause of the trouble," said her friend. Megan Williams eyed her suspiciously. She was not quite certain if she was being made fun of or not. There was not a trace of a smile on the face of the friend. Megan was reassured.

"You know," said Megan, "I wonder what would have happened in the old days of the strikes if I'd apologised to the scabs and the scabs had apologised to me."

"Yes," said the friend, "I wonder."

## *London, 1940?*

---

THE snow lay thick upon the ground, for it was winter. The city lights were dim, and the sound of traffic muffled. The curtains were drawn closely across the windows of the house. In the large drawing-room the lights were brilliant, and as Anna's mother said: "You would not know there was a war." The party was the usual success, plenty to eat, plenty to drink; the only pity was that Anna's father could not be one of them, but his leave had expired, and he had returned to the front. Conversation, of course, was almost entirely upon the general situation.

"What do *you* think is going to happen?" "My dear, anything may happen with politicians like ours . . ." "Of course the Generals are to blame . . ." "Well, good heavens, Germany started the war, didn't she?" "The damned intellectuals are at the bottom of all our troubles . . ." "Person-

ally, I don't give a curse *what* happens; I shall leave the country to stew in its own juice . . ." A shrug of the shoulders, laughter, and then more discussion, more arguments, more shifting of the blame and finding of fault—while in the background the corks popped out of the champagne bottles.

Well, what of it? Is that a picture of London, 1940? No, it's Petrograd, 1917, just before the bloodiest revolution of all time broke out, and the end of a mighty empire had come. . . .

Some months later Anna watched her family, who had owned and ruled the province for centuries, being herded into cattle-trucks on their way to Siberia. She saw the revolutionaries cut the old portraits from the drawing-room walls, pour ink upon the chairs and sofas.

"Why do you do it?" she asked them.

One man laughed. "We must all be equal now," he said. "If we can't be equally rich we can at least be equally poor."

Destruction for the sake of destruction. What blind unhappy impulse drove the Bolshevik soldier to his useless pitiful act? Years of resentment, of poverty, of physical and spiritual hunger, so that when his hour came he had no other thought but to drag down to his own level those who had not known hunger, who had not experienced poverty.

Anna, deprived of lands and parents, was left to

bring up her five younger brothers and sisters. She was lucky to escape with her life. Later she married Peter, one of the deposed Baltic barons, and they settled on a small farm in Latvia, on the borders of Estonia.

Rather different from the house in Petrograd, 1917. . . . Picture a little village, its square ankle-deep in mud, and leading from the village a rough cart-track that took you to the farmhouse itself, where the white-washed walls were black, where the doors were crazy things of wood hastily nailed together, where the chickens scratched for scraps in the entrance, and where the cook was a Russian countess, dressed in rags.

There was no popping of corks now, no caviare. Supper was a frugal meal, consisting of kale, tea and cherry jam. The only bath was a cold one, under the pump in the yard outside. And Anna, nursing her new baby, waited for Peter while he drove the farm-cart back from the village seven kilometres away, borrowing half-a-farthing from an old woman on his way to buy a rope to mend a broken trace.

You might say that the Bolshevik soldier had had his revenge. Here were two people who had been rich, and were now poor. They had been full once, and now they were hungry. They had been driven from their homes, uprooted and unwanted, and they belonged nowhere. All the prides, aristocratic, cultural, linguistic and racial, made barriers



between them and their neighbours, so that they were seized with the resentment that had seized the Bolshevik soldier, and wished others to suffer because they suffered themselves.

Then, little by little, Anna looked into her heart. She thought back to the time when she had lived in Petrograd. Were the Bolsheviks alone to blame? Had her family, and the class to which they belonged, ever made any attempt to study the problems of poverty, sickness and discontent? Were their personal lives unselfish, honest, even moral? The poor of Russia were hungry for bread, and received not a crumb. They were hungry for life, its meaning and its purpose, and no direction had been given them. The privileged class, to which Anna and her family belonged, had not shared their wealth or their culture, nor practised the Christianity their churches preached, but lived a life of happy-go-lucky irresponsibility, and doing so, dug their own graves.

As Anna came to a full realisation of the past, her resentment gave way to shame. In a moment of honesty, she found herself praying simply—to be able to make amends for the failures of the past. Self-pity fell away after that, and there came a new understanding of the despised and neglected Latvians among whom she lived. To those around she became a source of new courage and hope—and even the Cabinet Minister who occu-

piated her confiscated ancestral home, felt it when she met him some time later. He said: "You have shown me what the revolution never gave us—the only strength by which Latvia can live."

"Whatever happens in the future," Anna said to her husband, "we'll not give way to despair. We shall have faith to endure."

In the autumn of 1939 they were among the first families from Latvia to be taken by the Nazis into the new Poland. Once again they were uprooted, once again every earthly possession was torn from them. They are housed in the evacuated property of some ejected Pole. But this time Peter and Anna are not bitter, nor are they afraid. Wherever they go they will carry a message of hope, and faith, and love, a message which will encourage and inspire their fellow-sufferers, and which—if they had possessed it twenty years ago—might have turned the course of history.

The snow lies thick upon the ground, for it is winter. The city lights are dim, and the sound of traffic muffled. The curtains are drawn closely across the windows of the house. In the large drawing-room the lights are brilliant, and as Mary's mother says: "You would not know there was a war." The party is the usual success, plenty to eat, plenty to drink, the only pity is that Mary's father cannot be one of them, but his leave has ex-

pired and he had to return to the front. Conversation of course is almost entirely upon the general situation. "What do *you* think is going to happen?"

London, 1940. . . .

## *Mrs. Hill and the Soldiers*

---

MRS. HILL lived with her invalid husband, a retired Army Colonel, in a village in the heart of the Midlands.

Shortly after Christmas, the district was invaded by a mass of troops, who may be called the Nth Army Corps. Every empty house in the neighbourhood was commandeered, and the quiet village was soon full of khaki figures, while the air rang with the unfamiliar North-country accent.

At first Mrs. Hill was filled with dismay. The peace of the village would be destroyed, the men would leave litter about, damage would be done. The first reaction was swiftly overcome, and thrust aside as ungenerous. If these men were willing to risk their lives for her sake, and had left home, and work, and family because of it, the least she could do was to make some contribution in return. Ever since the war started she had wanted to

do something for the country and it looked as though the chance had been given her at last.

Mrs. Hill summoned up her courage, and went down to Headquarters to see the C.O.

"If you could possibly manage tea occasionally and hot baths?" he suggested with some diffidence, having had experience with friendly locals before, and Mrs. Hill told him quickly that nothing would be easier.

The C.O. seemed relieved. "I'd better make you godmother to about twenty-four men who are billeted in that empty house 'Fairlawn', not far from you," he said. "Perhaps you would call in there some time. They are rather a tough crowd. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not," Mrs. Hill answered, but as she walked towards "Fairlawn" she was conscious of that nervous pain reminiscent of past visits to the dentist.

The tough crowd turned out to be a forlorn little group, who were trying to deal with a frozen pipe that had burst. It was bitterly cold and there was no heating in the billet. One man had just heard that his son was dangerously ill. Another had had some teeth out, and was in great discomfort. Mrs. Hill threw aside formality and reserve. She went home, returning immediately with some light food, tea, papers and magazines, and some mouthwash for the man with the toothache. She told them that hot baths were always available at

her house, and there were arm-chairs, books, papers and a roaring fire in the billiard-room.

"Come up, any of you, whenever you feel like it," she told them, "I shan't entertain you or anything like that, I just want you to feel the place is there when you want it."

She had won their confidence, and from then on the men used to drop in for baths, or to read and write letters. They were impressed by the quiet home atmosphere, and by the absence of any "forced" entertainment for their benefit. Mrs. Hill would wander into the billiard-room with tea and sandwiches, and then sit down and talk, asking about their homes and families; and at once they would feel at ease with her, there was no stiffness, no stupid "class feeling".

Mrs. Hill began to guess something of the fear and anxiety that lay hidden at the back of many of their minds. First the fear of death itself, of pain, of the horrors of war they would shortly be called upon to face. And then the anxiety about those they had left at home. "Suppose anything happens to me," would be the eternal question, "how's my missus going to manage?" There were countless other problems too. Financial worries: "My mother's been and got into debt, it's the rent again," or "Lil's in a stew over the furniture we got on the instalment plan; she's had a nasty letter from the firm". And the personal private family differences: "I can't make my girl out. She's al-

ways off with some new fellow these days according to what I hear from home," or "Well, what's it matter if I do go and get knocked out? My Dad's jawed me ever since I was a kid, I don't ever want to go home again".

Mrs. Hill listened to each of these stories and gave the best advice and sympathy, but she knew, from her own experience, that all the fear, the worries and the anxieties expressed by the men were common to every man and woman, of every class, of every race, who had grown up without faith in their Creator. She knew that when self is put first and foremost in life, fear, anxiety and unhappiness march side by side—but that there is another way.

So in her quiet, simple, unaffected way, she told the "tough crowd" from the Nth Army Corps stories from her own experience, while they sat in the billiard-room, and drank her tea and smoked her cigarettes. The response she had from them amazed her. They wanted to help, they wanted to learn how to live, and needed a standard to live up to.

After a time one of them, nicknamed "Coppernob" for his flaming hair, said to her: "We've been talking about your way of living. Some of the fellows want to hear more about it. What say we throw a party and you tell us?"

"All right," said Mrs. Hill, "and I'll get some of my friends to help. Make it next Saturday."

That Saturday evening some fifty of the company jammed the drawing-room. Some of Mrs. Hill's friends were speaking. There was a private from another unit, a naval lieutenant back from a convoy, an ex-agitator from the near-by aircraft works, who had restored stolen tools and become a loyal workman.

Then there was a phonograph record, in which a Canadian cowboy sang a catchy tune. It was all about a conversation he had with his wise "Old Horsey", and the men called for it again and again, and began singing the choruses. "Old Horsey" said:

"The trouble with the world is the folks that  
live in it,  
They've all learn'd to get an' they've never  
learn'd to give in it;  
You'll never build a world, a decent sort of  
world,  
You'll never build a world that way."

So the cowboy said that that was the way we were made, and he guessed we'd have to stay that way. But "Old Horsey" didn't agree, for the third verse went:

"'You're wrong,' says my wise old horsey,  
'If you're willin', God'll change you right  
away.  
He'll tidy up your life so your friends won't  
know you,



And He'll help you change the world by a  
plan He'll show you,  
But you've gotta be willin'—an' absolutely  
willin'—  
For God to hold the reins His way.' ”

The song seemed to sum it all up for Coppernob and his friends. They got hold of Mrs. Hill and her friends and talked to them quietly in any spare corner they could find. Coppernob came to Mrs. Hill, much worried about a small theft. He had swindled his late firm of two or three pounds before joining the army. Mrs. Hill suggested that he should follow the advice of “Old Horsey” and let God tidy up his life. “But how?” said Coppernob. “Why not try ‘listenin’ to God’,” said Mrs. Hill. “We could do it now.” He agreed and the thought that came was that he should write to the firm and make up the money gradually from his pay.

A few days later, he had a sympathetic letter from the firm and came to Mrs. Hill beaming all over his face.

“I feel free now,” he said, “the thing nagged at me like toothache.”

“Remember the mouthwash I brought you the first day?” laughed Mrs. Hill.

“Aye,” said Coppernob, “but writing that letter did me a darn sight more good than any bloomin’ mouthwash!”

As the days went by the change began to show all round. Corporal had lost his fear of what would happen to the family with the breadwinner away. Charlie had made up the quarrel with his mother. Jack had cut out swearing. The dude of the company was not stand-offish any more. The lance-corporal stopped being bossy.

Then there was Fred the miner, tough, hard as nails and bitter. He used to come in half-seas over night after night, and talked freely of deserting. "Wise Old Horsey" seemed to take his fancy. He would slip into Mrs. Hill's, take the phonograph to a corner without a word to the others, and put on "Horsey" over and over again. The company noticed that he went off the drink after that, and there was no more talk of quitting.

Mrs. Hill was no angel, she was an ordinary woman. The soldiers were not saints, they were ordinary men. But because she had the courage to break down the barriers of class, of shyness, of fear and ridicule, she had enriched the lives of all these men she had welcomed to the house, and her own life as well. And the C.O. complimented her on their heightened morale.

Just before Easter the Nth Army Corps were ordered abroad. Mrs. Hill stood at her gate and watched them march past. Her "tough crowd" looked very young, and full of enthusiasm. The sun was shining on their faces. She wondered if she would ever see any of them again. Later she

looked at the disorder in the house. The billiard-room floor scratched with the marks of heavy hob-nailed boots, the table marked and cut, cigarette burns on the carpet. In the bathroom several of the new tiles were broken. Twelve in all. The exact number of those who had found a new life in her house during the three months they had been in the village. Mrs. Hill decided that she would never replace the broken tiles. They would serve as a symbol, and a reminder.

. . . . .

Mrs. Hill said good-bye to her "tough crowd" at the end of March. Since then they have been through the campaign in Flanders, and every one of the twelve symbolised by the broken tiles in the bathroom has come back safely. Curiously enough, their new "concentration area" is not many miles from the village where they had spent the winter months, and they have found time to go over and see their late "godmother".

"Well, Mrs. Hill," grinned Coppernob, "here I am again, like a bad penny. What was it like, d'you say? There ain't no words bad enough to describe it, and as you know me, that's saying a blinkin' lot! I don't mind admitting, Mrs. Hill, that at first when I found myself in the thick of it I forgot all about the talks we'd had. The Almighty was just something to swear by, like he'd always been. I was blooming well scared stiff. And

then I remembered. I said my prayers just like a kid and handed everything over, just as I'd learnt to do here. Blimey—I stopped being afraid. I knew everything was O.K. and I got through the rest of that fortnight of absolute hell without being afraid again."

The men told Mrs. Hill that the most remarkable of the party had been Fred. Fred, the sullen miner, who in the winter months in the village had talked so frankly of deserting. "Fred never let up, not once," said one of them. "He kept us going all the time." It seemed that on one occasion during the retreat to the coast they had been subjected to very heavy raids. The dive-bombers came low, spattering machine-gun fire, and bombs were dropping all round them. The company took cover while the enemy aircraft screamed overhead.

"And what do you think?" said the lance-corporal, "there was Fred, as cool as ice-cream, listening to God in all that blasted din. I tell you, I got up close to him. 'What's the orders?' I asked. 'Don't be afeared, and look after the chaps,' said Fred, 'and I'm not afeard. Now you try.'"

"And did you?" said Mrs. Hill.

"Sure," grinned the lance-corporal, "I waited a minute, and something said to me, 'Don't get het up.' And then we got the chaps singing 'Wise Old Horsey'.

"Just then a fellow came up beside us, who'd got cut off from the rest of his lot. Different com-

pany to us. 'What's that you're singing?' he said. 'I've never heard it before. I like it.'

"'We ain't very honest, and we ain't very lovin',

An' times we're pretty dirty, an' times we're pretty shovin'.'

"'That's right,' Fred told him, 'it's a darn good song. It tells you how God'll look after you if you give Him the chance.'

"'And blimey,'" laughed the lance-corporal, "in five minutes Fred had got that chap quiet and confident, and he'd been shaking like a jelly when we saw him first. It just shows you, doesn't it?"

## *In a London Air-Raid Shelter*

---

Mrs. BROMLEY is a Londoner born and bred, and proud of it. She lives near the famous old tavern, the Elephant and Castle, and has done so now for eight years. Her husband was in the fruit trade and fought in Flanders during the 1914-1918 war. He was wounded just before the Armistice and came back to her a sick man. He found her greatly changed from the smiling girl he had married. Four years of anxiety had brought lines to her forehead that had not been there before, and the air-raids had woken fears in her that she admitted to no one, not even to him.

When he died seven years later, he left her alone with no relatives to help, and no pension, and three children to bring up in a callous, "every-man-for-himself" post-war world.

Mrs. Bromley was not one to give way. She adored her children, and was determined they

should have every chance in life, even if she broke herself in the process. It was then that she started those long arduous hours of "char-ing". She would go off at eight in the morning, trudge back to cook the children's dinner, and then set out again, often not returning till half-past ten at night. It was little wonder that she became thin and pale and that the fight for her children's existence should make her possessive, jealous, even resentful at times, as they grew older and therefore less dependent upon her love and care. She had given up everything in life for them, and often she felt they gave her little in return, they took it all for granted.

It seemed to her that the final blow came when Nellie married against her wishes. She would not listen to advice. She insisted on going her own way. Mother and daughter had many a bitter scene, and though Mrs. Bromley knew that young Bob was a ne'er-do-well, that he drank, that he never kept a steady job, Nellie went to him.

"I've slaved for Nellie all these years," Mrs. Bromley told herself.

"I've brought her up so that she should marry well and have the chances that I never had—and now it's wasted, gone for nothing."

She felt as though she had lost all faith and meaning in life. She became thinner still, and paler, and a little more hollow-eyed.

A few months before the present war broke out Mrs. Bromley went to work in a new office. Scrubbing and cleaning was a mechanical process to her now, the old individual pride in her work was a thing of the past. She never noticed her employers, and they never noticed her. She was only "the char".

In the new office, however, the people seemed different. They stopped to say good-morning, and treated her as a person and not as a machine, and even asked if she had a family. One girl-typist in particular, just about Nellie's age, told her on the first day that the staff in the office tried to work together as a team. "You see," she said, "we listen to God about our work."

Nothing more was said for some time, but Mrs. Bromley, usually sharp and on the defensive, little by little began to relax in this new atmosphere. She began to talk about her life, and about her children. She told the typist about Nellie. Very gently, very tactfully, the typist showed her that Nellie too might have her point of view. The possessive mother makes the rebellious daughter. If Mrs. Bromley had sympathised with Nellie instead of scolding her, if she had looked for the best in young Bob instead of the worst, she might have started the young couple on the right road to mutual happiness, instead of making both of them suspicious and resentful.



"I know and understand," said the typist shyly, "because I have been through the same thing myself."

Mrs. Bromley went home from work that day feeling strangely moved and humble. She felt she wanted to start all over again, and love her children in another way. She wanted to help Nellie and Bob, and the baby that was on the way. As she turned the corner of the street she saw a news-boy, and his flapping, waving poster: "Nazis Massing on Polish Frontier". It was the twenty-seventh day of August, 1939.

. . . . .

The first year of the present war passed, and Mrs. Bromley was still working in the office in the West End. She was happier and more cheerful than she had been the year before, in spite of rationing, and black-outs, and the rise in prices. "It's because the family seem closer to me somehow," she told the typist, "now I've stopped nagging at them and worrying about them, they come and tell me things of their own accord. Funny, isn't it? As for Bob—well, we seem to get on better now. Nellie loves him and he loves her, that's the main thing. And that baby—well, I know he's my grandson and I shouldn't be silly, but he's the image of my husband all over again."

"So your troubles are solved?" smiled the typist.

"Looks like it," said Mrs. Bromley.

And then the air raids started.

Mrs. Bromley's street near the Elephant and Castle was among the first to be hit. That night she and the boys went to a crowded shelter under a warehouse. The noise of the exploding bombs was terrifying. The people were huddled together, men, women and children. One or two women became hysterical, and the babies cried. The old terrors of the last war were born again, as Mrs. Bromley listened to the bombs, her heart thumping, her mind distracted. She felt helpless, frightened, there was nothing she could do. If a bomb fell directly on the warehouse they would all be caught, like rats in a trap.

Next morning she arrived at the office, white and shaken. The friendly typist made her rest, and brought her a cup of tea. She too had passed a wretched night, but she seemed unshaken.

Mrs. Bromley told her what she had suffered, and told her too how the old fears of the last war had crowded upon her once again.

"If I have to go through many more nights like that, I shall put an end to myself," she said desperately.

One by one the other members of the staff arrived at the office, some from districts as badly bombed as the Elephant and Castle. They all had a smile for Mrs. Bromley, and a word of encouragement. She began to get back her balance. She turned to the little typist, Nellie's contemporary.

"How do you keep so calm?" she said. "What is it you do? I want to be the same."

The typist smiled, "I only ask God to take care of my fears and worries, my family, my home, and my whole life. And when I've given myself completely I know He won't let me down. He will tell me what to do."

"Would He tell me too?" asked Mrs. Bromley doubtfully. "I've never been one for church and such-like, maybe God wouldn't take no notice of me."

"Why not try, to-night?" said the typist.

"Maybe I will, Miss," said Mrs. Bromley, "maybe I will."

It was just after half-past nine when the siren wailed. Mrs. Bromley's first instinct was to cry out, and rush to the door. Then she remembered her conversation of the afternoon. She sat down, she prayed for the first time for many years.

"Please, Lord," she said, "show me what to do."

For a moment she was aware of nothing but her own beating heart, and the screaming siren, and then the sound died away, and a stillness took its place. She felt calmer, steadier, and a thought came into her mind. "I must collect the boys and go quietly to the shelter at the end of the street. Never mind about myself. Other people are frightened. I must help them. The babies were terrified last night. If the wardens moved them into that

inner room of the shelter, they would sleep soundly, away from the noise of the grownups."

Mrs. Bromley got up, and put on her overcoat, and slung her gas-mask over her shoulders. "I'm not afraid," she thought triumphantly, "I'm not afraid."

The boys joined her, and Nellie and the baby, and they went to the shelter. The first thing Mrs. Bromley did was to put her idea about the babies to the two wardens. "That's a brain-wave, Missus," said one of them, "we'll get it done right away." The babies were moved, Mrs. Bromley helping the mothers, and when they were settled comfortably the first bombs began to fall. "We can make a cheerier sound than that," said Mrs. Bromley. "What about one of the good old Cockney songs to start off?"

Soon the whole party were swinging out "Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag." Song after song echoed through the shelter; then Mrs Bromley struck up one of the old hymns, and it was as they were finishing that the crash came. The lights went out. A girl started screaming, and there was a rush for the exit. One of the wardens shouted from above "All right, don't move anyone. A bomb has hit one wing of the warehouse. Don't move, I say."

Mrs. Bromley held the screaming girl in her arms. "Don't be afraid," she said, "God's looking after us whatever happens." Slowly the chatter

and hubbub died away. The girl ceased crying. Someone in the shelter produced two candles and a box of matches. There was something reassuring in the tramp of feet above the shelter, and the wardens calling directions. Mrs. Bromley, who had looked into the inner room, came back smiling. "The babies are all sound asleep," she said. The faces stared back to her in the dim candlelight. "Thank God," said a man, his voice oddly jerky and strained. There was silence, and then away in the distance, high and steady, the all-clear sounded.

The Elephant and Castle has had many bombings since then. Every night for a month at least one bomb has fallen within a hundred yards of Mrs. Bromley and her home. Every morning she goes up from her shelter into the crisp autumn air wondering if her house still stands. But she is not anxious any more, she is not afraid.

"We're none of us going to give way, not down our street," she told the typist at the office, "our shelter is bomb-proof and panic-proof these days. Yes, and propaganda-proof too. Some silly chaps came round with pamphlets, but we saw them off all right. 'Go on,' I told them, 'we're all in the same boat this war. They get bombs on Buckingham Palace same as we do here. The King and Queen have to trust in God, and that's what we're doing at the Elephant and Castle.'"

"And anyway," she added to the typist, "even if my house is blown up He'll find a place for me somewhere. His plan for the family and the world won't stop just because of that, and if it's my turn to go West—why, there'll be work for me somewhere alongside of my Jim, I know that."

When the typist passed down the passage five minutes later, just after the first siren of the day had sounded, she saw Mrs. Bromley with a pail of soapy water and a gigantic scrubbing brush starting work on the long flight of stone steps that led from the basement to the attic. Her hair was screwed back, and her mouth was pursed. Those steps were going to be cleaned and cleaned as they had never been cleaned before.

She began to hum, "There'll always be an England."

## *Epilogue*

---

THE stories you have just read were written during the spring of this year. It is now winter. In the last few months we have seen the nations of Europe fall one by one, not merely victims to overwhelming force, but captives to their own doubts and fears.

Two thousand years ago the peoples of the world were told, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The undying truth of this saying has been proved in full and unhappy measure in our world to-day. A nation is not a tangible thing, not a building of bricks and mortar that will crash to ruins at the first strong blow. It is an echo of the past, and a whisper from the future, the whole bound together with the lives, the hopes and the endeavours of many millions of men and women.

The strength of the nation is the morale of the people, and it is only when their hearts fail them

and they permit the Fifth Column of Doubt, Suspicion, Personal Safety, and most insidious spy of all—Indifference—to invade the citadel, that the nation will crumple. It is not only the enemy from without that the men and women of our country have to defeat—but the enemy from within. The secret of high morale lies in personal victory over every selfish thought, every narrow prejudice that creeps stealthily into our hearts and minds in times of trouble.

The simple stories you have read in this book show how men and women have conquered the enemy from within, and are now armed with faith and fortitude to face the future. You may wish to do the same, but like Mr. Faint-Heart in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and many others too, you are doubtful of success.

Battles are never easy, and the battle against human selfishness will be the hardest of all to win. If we had to depend only upon ourselves it never would be won. Jesus Christ told his disciples "With man it is impossible, but not with God." Can these words have any practical meaning for us to-day?

The men and women in the stories you have read answer "Yes". You will have noticed that their lives are not spectacular, and they are not heroes or heroines, but ordinary work-a-day people like you or me. They are not struggling in their own strength to reach impossible heights of



perfection, but one and all have *received power* which has enabled them to tackle the hundred and one problems of personal and public life to which hitherto they had found no answer.

The most cynical of us, the most doubtful, the most frail, can receive the same power, and like Finnish Saimi, find strength and wise direction. What was it exactly that these very ordinary people did? First of all they were honest with themselves. They turned the searchlight of truth upon their thoughts, their actions and their daily lives, and realised their faults and their mistakes. They ceased flattering self-comparison with their neighbours and their relatives, and measured themselves up against Christ's absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love instead.

Megan saw she was a dictator in the home; George that drink and dishonesty were only attempts to escape from his own defeat; Saimi that dominating citizens do not make free nations; the surgeon that the search for success ends in emptiness; Anna that misfortune is no excuse for bitterness and self-pity. Because of these faults their lives were neither rich nor happy. But recognising these mistakes, each and all were led to a course of action—an apology, a decision to restore for the past and make a new start for the future. Having cleared from their hearts the clogging instincts of selfishness, dishonesty, and ugly-thinking, they

were ready, swept and clean, to receive power and direction.

How did that power come? There was no clap of thunder from the heavens, no parting of the clouds. Power first came to Saimi, as it did to all of them, when she discovered that the still small voice known to the prophets of old and to the great leaders of the past, was no legendary thing of fairy-tale, but a living reality; that everyone can be directed by that still small voice which is the voice of God. She was not told, any more than the others were, to preach from the roof-tops, to wave a sword, to undertake some super-human and impossible task in the hopes of saving humanity. The counsel was super-practical as well as super-natural. She was told to love her family before herself. A small thing. Possibly a difficult thing. Yet from those first efforts of love and sympathy towards her husband and her sons came the greater love of her people, her country, and her God.

Little by little the people of the stories learnt how to live, how to work, how to plan from day to day, so that the unending questions that continually poured from them . . . "What can we say?" "What can we do?" "What decision shall we make?"—all the vexatious problems that beset them—found at last their answer.

How did they learn?

They came to understand that prayer—and

some of them had never known prayer at all—was not just a matter of petition and supplication, like a begging-letter to an indifferent millionaire, but a time of silence when they could give all they knew of themselves, to all they knew of God, and so hear His voice. Mrs. Bromley knew little about herself, and rather less of God, but the first time she was silent and listened, asking for strength and understanding to be given her, strength and understanding came. The woman who might have spread panic in that London air-raid shelter, brought peace to it instead.

Mrs. Bromley, like you and me, will continue to make mistakes. She may slip back for the moment into the old standards of self before selflessness, and so open the way again to fear, closing it to God. The enemy from within is a tireless foe, and like all aggressors he is most dangerous and ready to attack when the defenders relax into a false complacency.

The happy warrior and the most successful, is he who is fully disciplined, ready and alert for what may come, and whose trained ear receives and understands an order as swiftly as his commander gives it. We can be warriors too, knowing that the drill is hard, the training difficult, and the pack upon our shoulders heavy at times, but if we have faith in our commander and unhesitating trust in his decisions we shall prove valiant fighters on the field of battle.

The raw recruit may grumble that his mornings are spent, not in fighting foes, but in cleaning his equipment. When he is fully trained, and faces enemy fire, he realises that "spit and polish," so often mocked at by himself and his companions, have proved the foundation of his training, and that by living up to the high standards of his regiment, he has fitted himself for battle. The cleaning up of our lives, our thoughts and of our wishes can be the foundation of our training too; selflessness, honesty, and love, our proud tradition. The soldier receives his orders for the day in silence, he notes them down, then acts upon them. We can do the same, planning our day methodically and carefully under our commander's direction, testing the thoughts that come by his standards, and acting upon those which we know to be his wishes.

And when our moments of trial are upon us, when we stand as the sentry does, awaiting the challenge from the dark, we shall remember, as he does, that the lives of ourselves and our fellows depend upon our watchfulness, that the soldier who sleeps at his post may cost his country victory.

Life for you and me, and for the people in the stories, is a pure gift, a thing to cherish or discard, and the world we live in is no prison house but a place of supreme adventure, for free men and free women. When we say that we are ready

to fight for freedom, shall we mean by this that we would fight for the old way of living, the complacent go-as-you-please attitude to our neighbours, the what-do-I-get-out-of-it outlook upon work and play, trade and profession? Or will freedom mean the unshackling of old habits, bad customs, and worn deeds, freedom from anxiety, selfishness, and evil-thinking, freedom of understanding between men and nations? One word for two meanings, and the future of mankind will depend upon our interpretation.

The choice lies before us, the challenge has been rung. We shall need an Ally, and our call will not be in vain. The God who created order out of chaos, who fashioned our minds and our bodies, and planted in us the seed of understanding that cannot be destroyed, will perform this miracle of the spirit, this change of the human heart. He will show us how we can direct all our instincts and our longings into actions that will make a richer, fuller life, not only for ourselves and our contemporaries, but for those children who come after us, the first reapers of the harvest we shall sow, the first explorers in a new and changing world.

I want to thank  
all the workers for Moral Re-Armament  
among whom are the living characters in  
these stories, and especially an American,  
Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman,  
whose initial vision for Moral Re-Arma-  
ment made possible their work. What  
they are doing up and down the country  
in helping men and women to solve their  
problems, and prepare for whatever lies  
ahead, will prove to be of national  
importance in the days to come.

D. du M.