MOVING THE MOUNTAIN

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Ronald Mann

Aldersgate Productions

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Foreword

IF YOU WANT a good read, you will find it here. The story of the writer as a prisoner of war, escaping over the Italian mountains, is in itself an exciting saga. But *Moving the Mountain* is much more that this. It is a story of spiritual birth and growth; of obedience to God's guidance as he makes his will known to a listening disciple; of friendships with people in all walks of life and in all parts of the world.

Ronald Mann's life has been – and is – one of intense activity, but he is no workaholic. His life has been enriched by his partnership of 40 years with his wife Mary and with his son John, and by his passion for painting. He is a great lover of nature and especially of the mountains – he can hardly keep away from the Lake District. His painting provides relaxation but he also views it as a way of expressing the wonder he feels.

He is driven by a passion – to share with others the riches which he has found in the Christian way of life. He longs that the Christian voice should be heard in all the media. Too many, he feels, are slow 'to provide first-class professional theatre which conveys Christian truth in such a way that it can entertain, enlighten, educate, and open the door to faith'. He wants to help our generation to find its soul. With that end in view, he envisages a steady production of plays which portray the deepest truths about a human being's journey through life. The media must be penetrated, in all its forms, by those insights without which human beings cannot live *whole* lives, cannot achieve their destiny. Why not the establishment of a Christian Arts Centre in London – 'a centre where new writers can be found, new productions encouraged', outreach to the media at home and abroad made possible? Mountains are there not *only* to be painted. Sometimes they are there to be moved. Sometimes to be tunnelled through.

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
We specialise in the wholly impossible.
Doing the things that no man can do.

Ronald is one of those specialists.

Donald Coggan

PART I

THE WAR YEARS

Chapter 1 ADVENTURE

'God bless you,' said the Franciscan as he turned to leave us at the start of the mountain track. He had led us from the prison hospital in Piacenza in northern Italy, through the Appennine village of Bettola and over a small bridge. 'Well, here you are,' he said. 'I think you'll find the mountain people friendly. Now it's up to you.'

That was a moment I'll never forget. The sound of running water, the scent of the trees and mountain air, and above all the fact that after 18 months in prison camps I was free. It was breathtaking. I felt the same kind of excitement that I had had as a child arriving for summer holidays at a new seaside town, eager to rush to the nearest beach. I was indeed 'surprised by joy'. In fact every time I tell of my escape, and that has been scores of times, I find that a lump comes in my throat remembering the sheer wonder of that moment.

It didn't matter that I was still in occupied territory and might be hunted down, recaptured, even shot. What mattered was that I was free and able to make my own decisions.

This arrival in the mountains was even more startling because, for almost a year before being taken prisoner, I'd been in the Western Desert. Although I loved the cleanness of the air and light there, and the sense of space, and the occasional delight of seeing a carpet of small flowers after a heavy dew, I did long for trees, mountains and running water.

THE WESTERN DESERT

I had joined the army in March 1940 as an ordinary private and been commissioned in the Royal Artillery in December of that year. By August of 1941 I was commanding a troop of anti-tank guns in the Libyan desert, but I was very inexperienced and knew it. The other commander was George Dunkerley who became a lifelong friend.

If you have to fight a war, a desert is not a bad place to do it; there are no civilians and there is a certain spirit in

then retreat with our guns, which were mounted on powerful trucks, and rely on the cloud of dust we created to protect us from the fire of their tanks.

It was on one of these manoeuvres that the truck I was on suddenly broke down, when the German tanks were just a hundred yards away on the other side of a sandhill. Not being in a position to take on a troop of tanks with one two-pounder gun, we removed the gun mechanism and ran to try and hide in some of the desert shrubs. These however proved inadequate cover and very soon we were being rounded up and taken prisoner. This was March 1943.

PRISONER OF WAR

A few months later I wrote in my diary, 'There is no describing the sickening and deadening sensation of being taken prisoner. One minute you are living in an active familiar world, granted a somewhat perilous one, and suddenly within the space of a few minutes (in my case seconds) everything is changed. You then see everything from the other side, and instead of watching the German tanks advancing, you are following on behind them. You are now with the Germans against whom you have been fighting and can talk with them. One of them said, "Bad luck being caught; I got caught last week but got away, but don't you try that," while others crowed, "Caught you on the run this time."

'But it is not the fact of being on the other side of the battle, or of meeting your enemies that strikes you most. It is the change from action to in-action, the change from giving orders to being carried about, not even ordered, but just moved like a load of ammunition or a bundle of empty petrol tins. Then there is the sickening game of "if", day in and day out, and especially night in and night out. You live the last scene over and over again. I pictured how it might have been if only I had given a different order, if I had only placed No 3 gun in a different position, if only that wretched half shaft on the truck had not broken, or had broken half a minute earlier or later, if only this or that.'

In the following months dreams of 'if only' went on and on, alternating with the thought of escape – both the escapes I might have made had I seized the available chances, generally rather wild ones, and the escape I was going to make. It was many years later that I realised the

primitive affair. However, after becoming somewhat delirious I was moved to a hospital wing and taken better care of.

After the three months we were put into the hold of a German cargo ship, with a hard biscuit (which we discovered was full of weevils) as rations, and set sail for Italy. During the night there seemed to be some commotion on the decks, and we sensed that the ship was changing direction. Eventually the engines stopped, and we guessed that we were in a harbour – probably Tunis. We searched for ways to open the big doors of the hold with wild ideas of getting out and swimming for the shore. It's probably a good thing that we didn't succeed, as in our weakened state it's doubtful whether we would have been able to swim very far.

NAPLES

So it was after three days, instead of the 24 hour trip we'd expected, that we arrived in Naples harbour somewhat hungry and certainly very dirty.

We were shepherded across the quay under the curious gaze of passers-by and on to a train, and then transported a few kilometres to another transit camp at Capua. There we joined other prisoners. In our compound we were about 200 officers crowded into four wooden huts in a space about 60 yards by 20 yards. We stayed here for another three months.

The main feature of this camp was that it was inhabited by the largest imaginable population of bed bugs. They would leave a line of bite marks on your legs if you were sitting on a chair, and at night creep out of the bed boards and attack you where they could, even dropping from the ceiling to join in the fun. We used to take the bed boards out during the day time and burn out of them with a match both the bugs and the eggs they had laid, but this gave a respite for a few days only.

We longed to get to a more permanent camp and also constantly thought of ways to escape. One plan I had was a very wild one. I would simply walk out through the main entrance during the night, when the sentry sat down and often dozed. I would make for the outer fence, which never seemed to be guarded nor looked particularly difficult to get through, and then once outside find a way back to Naples and board a neutral ship.

Fortunately for me three others planned and executed a

were the most delicious peaches. So a diet of a small piece of bread and fairly meagre other rations could be supplemented by a kilo, or sometimes more, of ripe peaches. You can imagine the effect on our insides.

REZZONELLO

After three months confined in this compound, we were at last taken to the north of Italy, to a place called Rezzonello in the hills near Piacenza where there were 150 officers and 150 other ranks. It was a castle, 200 years old, built in the form of a square with a quadrangle in the centre, and at each corner of the square a small tower. Previously it had been a nunnery, and our life within it could be compared to the monastic life. All connection with the outside was severed. Our only links were letters, the Italian officers and interpreters, an occasional wireless programme, and guarded walks through the country lanes. Our food was sparse enough for any ascetic, and our occupation for the most part study, lectures, reading and an occasional concert.

A prison camp is a separate community, and like all communities we had our head man, our committees for this and for that, our representatives, and our own laws and regulations. You might think that in such a restricted life rules would be unnecessary, but on the contrary, the more restricted and difficult the conditions, the more people are tempted to be anti-social and to grasp that little bit extra for themselves.

Another aspect that stands out in my memory is the mass feeling. I remember a batch of 20 officers coming in from another camp, all fairly recently captured, and all feeling very optimistic. It was only a matter of hours before the whole camp was expecting to be free within a very short time (with the exception of certain die-hards). A little bit of news, a good rumour, and the whole camp would begin to buzz. At one time five naval officers were sent away to be repatriated, and you could hear the hum of conversation, little groups of people talking, and the first words of the conversation were – 'What do you think of it?' or 'Have you heard what the Italian sanitary orderly said?' In the space of two or three days the excitement rose to a terrific pitch, then as suddenly as it had started, finished, and reaction set in. Rumours came in frequently of political activity in Italy that led us to believe that the Fascists were losing control, but so many rumours were

oneself in the world was a moral duty. So my life before the war was made up of working hard every day, including Saturday mornings, in the County Offices at Preston. Studying every evening as soon as I got home with a correspondence course, playing rugby every Saturday afternoon or tennis in the summer, and spending Sunday at church and with my friends.

There was no time at all for reading or much entertainment apart from church functions and occasional amateur dramatics. It was a hard working life without much space for the wider interests of literature, art, and music. In fact people who did become keen on these things were regarded as just a little bit odd.

In prison camp leisure was all we had, and so I began to taste the other riches of life beyond my career, attending lectures on a wide variety of subjects. In a camp of 600 officers, there were people with a wide range of knowledge and experience. I remember being fascinated by lectures that a regular army officer, an Oxford Greats scholar, gave over several weeks on Plato's *Republic*.

We also had our own art study group. There were two good professional artists who led our group, and we had amongst other things life classes and lessons in different painting techniques. From my school days I had always been very keen on painting, and so even in the first camp I would do pencil sketches of my fellow prisoners.

At this camp we were able to obtain water-colours and oils, and as well as the classes I began to concentrate on portraits. Everyone was delighted to sit for as long as I wished, so there were plenty of subjects. I used to choose whom I would like to paint and then watch him on the roll calls (which generally lasted three quarters of an hour) before finally deciding from which particular angle I would paint him and what I would try to portray of his character.

I lost sight of all these paintings when I escaped, but an oil painting of the scene out of the windows of the building at Fontanellato came back to me in a remarkable way. In 1944 I was staying for the weekend in the home of the fellow officer, Jasper Kerr, who had been in the prison hospital with me. (I had been moved there because I had badly damaged my right eye during a football game.)

Jasper had been repatriated because he had tuberculosis very badly, and was at that time in a sanatorium. As the conversation turned to painting one of his parents said, 'I wonder if you know anything about a painting we found in the bottom of Jasper's suitcase?' and then produced it. It

Reproduction of the author's oil painting from inside the prison camp at Fontanellato

there were five men missing. Word was sent up the line, and the two who had gone ahead were questioned again. They almost convinced the police at the station that they were Spanish workers, but as they were walking out of the office they were called back while the police checked with our camp, and so were recaptured.

Towards the summer of 1943 expectancy in the camp began to rise. First there was the Allied landing in Sicily, and after its completion the hope of a landing in Italy was always before us. Then there was the constant buzz of political activity and unrest in the country which eventually led to the overthrow of Mussolini. I remember the morning very well when someone came into the room very early and said Mussolini had gone. Only two or three were up at the time, but it was not long before everyone was sitting up in bed and discussing what they thought was a new rumour.

I went to the side of the building facing the Italian parade ground, and it was immediately obvious that something had happened. The Italians were standing about in small groups, and every time an officer appeared there was a stir of excitement and expectancy. It was not long before the radio loudspeaker in the square was turned on, and everyone waited excitedly for the news.

There were two messages, one from Badoglio and the other from the King, Victor Emmanuel III. The new regime was announced with Badoglio at the head of the government. The Italians were more excited than we were, singing and shouting, and all the Fascist slogans

were let out before the Germans took over. My old camp of Fontanellato was one of these. Others were less fortunate although some prisoners did escape from the trains when they were being taken to Germany. Some jumped from moving trains. Others pulled up boards and got down between the railway lines and waited there until the train moved on. The German High Command poured fresh troops into Italy. A parachute unit rescued Mussolini from the hotel high up on the Gran Sasso where he was being hidden. They quickly took control of the country, which was divided. Most people were for breaking with Germany, but a fanatical minority still clung to Mussolini and his Fascist ideas.

Very shortly they poured into Piacenza and also took over our hospital building.

One morning as I was spending a few moments quietly on my own, the thought came, 'Ask the Germans if you can go and see Robinson.' Robinson was a British soldier who had been working in our camp, and for whom the strain of prison camp had been too much. He had tried to commit suicide, and he was now being treated in a mental hospital, also in Piacenza.

Permission was given, and the next day I was driven, in the back of a well-covered truck, from our prison hospital to this mental hospital. The flap of the truck blew open and without anything particular in mind and largely out of habit, I made a mental note of the way the truck went, second right, first left, and so on.

At the mental hospital the Italian and French nuns who ran it were much more friendly towards me than towards the German guard. After a chat with the British soldier, who was somewhat better, I was driven back convinced that if I could only find a way out of the prison hospital, I could look for assistance to these nuns.

Chapter 2 ESCAPE

THREE DAYS later we found a loose bar in one of the second floor windows. Some of my friends urged caution and delay, arguing that I would be fitter later on. But we had heard rumours that we would be soon moved to Germany, and the insistent thought came into my mind, 'Go now. Go now.' In fact the camp was moved a few days later.

Jasper was eager to come, but I was very worried as he had a temperature and was far from well. I did not know at the time that he had tuberculosis. Fortunately I saw the Slav doctor about it, and he said it would be fatal for him to go and that within a few days he was quite likely to become dangerously infectious. The doctor was not keen to tell Jasper this, feeling it would not be good for him to know, but eventually because he was so determined to go with me we had to tell him. Fred Stokes, a tough Geordie guardsman, agreed to come with me.

It may seem surprising but the decision to break out of prison was a hard one. On the one hand there was the safe sad world of inside, where there was at least a bed, some food and some warmth, and a certain safety. On the other there was the danger of escape, of being killed, and the unknown hazards of cold and hunger, nowhere to sleep and no certainty or security. The hold of the known and the safe is always strong and not least in prison camp. For me, however, I was sure that this was right, and that it was God who had put the thought to go in my mind.

That evening I slipped away to the room on the second floor of the prison building where some of my friends were already making preparations. The room was in darkness, and one of my fellow prisoners was on top of two stacked tables, trying the bars at the top of the high windows. Meanwhile others quietly slipped into the dark room with sheets and began to tie them into a sheet rope. Along the corridor outside and down the stairs we had men watching to give us warning in case any of the guards inside the building should start to come in our direction.

The man balanced on top of the tables grunted and shoved – finally he whispered, 'It won't move.' He tried

and a few yards on turned sharply to the right into a small alley. We started to breath again. We were out. We were past the guards. We were free.

As we made our way towards the mental hospital, we knew we had about 15 minutes before curfew. As we turned into the main street, there were more people around, but they were all hurrying home and they didn't take any notice of us. Ten minutes had passed, and I began to wonder if I had remembered the way correctly. Would we find ourselves wandering around a hostile city full of troops who had orders to shoot anyone on the street after curfew? We walked on, and then suddenly the street widened, and there was the little square with the mental hospital over on the far corner.

We crossed over and knocked on the door. It was opened by one of the nuns whom I had met three days previously. I said, in my rather halting Italian, 'You remember me?' 'Yes,' she said and then suddenly, 'But what are you doing here?' When I said, 'We've escaped,' she clapped her hands with delight and took us inside to meet the other sisters and eventually the Mother Superior. After hearing our story, there was a hurried consultation and then we were taken into a guest room and slept peacefully and well.

Next morning, the medical superintendent came along, and in a mixture of French and Italian he told us he was sorry he couldn't keep us there until the Allies came, but that he would find us clothes and a guide up the mountains.

So it was all agreed, and after eating the best meal we had had in months, two delightful Franciscans came to our room. We put on the funny serge hospital suits they had brought us and packed up our belongings, and the food we had saved, into brown paper parcels. Towards dusk we left the hospital, and one of the Franciscans guided us across the town – he walking on the other side of the road – towards the railway station. Up and down the streets we passed, through which walked German soldiers, as well as Italian civilians. They were just enjoying their leisure in the early evening – and we rather enjoyed it, too, being so near to them and being unrecognized.

Ten years later I was in Italy and went to Piacenza to see if I could find this mental hospital again. I knocked at the door as I had done ten years previously. A sister opened it, and I said my piece about having been helped by them in 1943. She looked at me with great delight and said,

Everyone suddenly burst out singing
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark green fields – on; on
And out of sight.

Walking through Bettola with friends some years later

Chapter 3 THE MOUNTAINS

THERE was a crisp feel of mountain air, the sound of running water, a rough road under our feet, and around us a glorious, although largely unseen, expanse of mountain, forest and of sky. It felt like my own beloved Lakeland country. I remember murmuring to myself, 'Mountains, mountains, glorious mountains.' We were free. We could wander up this road, go as far as we liked. No more barbed wire, no more sentries, no more weary roll calls three times a day. For the first time in 18 months we didn't know exactly what tomorrow would be like. Our Franciscan friend left us with his blessing and the advice to get off the track as soon as possible.

We stopped and unwrapped our parcels and arranged the contents in a more easily portable fashion and then, almost jauntily, stepped out along the road.

Soon we left the houses behind and when we came to a solitary house we stopped to ask for a place to sleep but as there was no answer to our knocking we went on and at the first opportunity turned off the road. The muddy path we took wound up and up through thick trees until we almost despaired of finding a house and were somewhat dismayed at the thought of spending our first night sleeping in the woods.

Eventually we saw a light in the distance and after a few more minutes climb we found ourselves outside a biggish farmhouse. At one side there was a light burning so I knocked at the little side door. It was opened by a young boy of about 15 years of age, and I said my piece, 'We are escaped prisoners of war. Have you a place where we can sleep the night?' He seemed to understand and went back into the room and brought an older chap. I again said my piece and he invited us into a small kitchen where there were several young people, three or four girls and two or three young fellows. We dragged our baggage in and thankfully sat down. The girls appeared very friendly and excited at having two English men with them. One of the fellows was friendly but the other seemed a bit frightened. They said they would have to ask the *padrone* (master) if

Visiting with friends, the first family to shelter the author – ten years later

were going to drink the milk and eat the bread separately, but they insisted that we break the bread into the milk and eat it like the bread and milk we sometimes had at home when we were ill. They put plenty of sugar in and it tasted very good. The woman never seemed to stop working, and her little girl, who seemed rather sullen and perhaps frightened, refused to smile at us and like her mother went on working. I had never seen people who seemed so poor as this before and had so little food to share, but when we stopped eating to take our breath they would encourage us with '*mangi, mangi*'. When we had finished the milk they brought us some cheese to eat with the bread and insisted on our eating until we could eat no more.

We found the cheese in these mountain villages very good. The only trouble was that it was unwise to look at it as it was swarming with maggots. We gathered that this kind with maggots sold for a higher price than that without.

A few minutes later the young boy from the farm re-appeared to guide us on our way. He had promised to accompany us for a part of the journey until we could see the village where some of our people were supposed to be living. We loaded ourselves with our kit, the boy insisting on carrying a part, and we started to climb up the hillside. The valley and the small town of Bettola we had left the previous night were hidden in a ground mist, but the hills stood out with an almost transparent clarity in the bright morning air. The hills were wooded, and the trees had only just started to turn. We could see something of the shape of the valley through which the river ran, where it was not covered in mist.

and are reasonably clear, but from then on until you get within about a mile of the next village you are left to your own devices. You are lucky if you hit the path that runs to the village you want to arrive at. The other footpaths all lead into the woods, where wood is cut, or into the fields.

However, it was not long before we found ourselves walking through fields, and so we ceased to worry about paths and made our way in the direction of a farm. We stopped frequently, for we tired quickly; but for all that we went light-heartedly and enjoyed every minute of the journey drinking in the wonder of the mountain scenery. It was about midday when we reached what we had thought to be a farm.

It proved to be a collection of houses with a smallish church in the centre. I had got the idea that every group of houses would be one farm with one master and a number of workmen, so on entering the village I asked for the *padrone*, thinking that there we would probably receive the best treatment. The oldest man of the three I spoke to said he was the *padrone,* and in response to my enquiry as to whether it would be possible for us to stay there, he answered with the nod of his head. He indicated that we should go along with a shrivelled little woman who had just come down between the houses, over the cobbles and mud which served as a street. We accompanied her and she told us that several of our people had passed through the village.

We approached a row of houses, about six in number, and followed her up a flight of stairs into one of them. This brought us into a bare room, similar to the last one, where there were several rather dirty little children playing. In the corner by the window was a girl of about 19 doing her hair. The woman, after giving us chairs, informed us that this was her daughter. I nodded my head by way of acknowledging the introduction, as I did not know the proper words to say, but she seemed too shy to greet us.

The old lady apologised to us for the dirty state of the house and said how difficult it was with young children to keep things in order. She started to sweep the rough asphalt floor. Everywhere she went she raised a swarm of flies. Presently the man we had first spoken to came in and the girl prepared the table for *pranzo*. The big copper pot which had been boiling over the open fire, suspended from an iron hook, was taken down and emptied into an enamel dish.

kitchen utensils and other things which they did not produce on their own land.

The parcel of food which the nuns at Piacenza had given me contained a big slab of salami. We asked them to have this for the evening meal, otherwise it might go bad. They took a lot of persuading and in return insisted on giving us cheese when we left the following day. We learned that meat to them was the height of luxury and a thing they only had when it was a very special *festa*.

It was that evening we saw *polenta* made for the first time. There was a great copper pot on the fire full of water. When the water was boiling a yellow flour was poured in and stirred all the time with a curved wooden stick. The flour was poured in very slowly, taking nearly half an hour before it was all in, by which time it had thickened into a very solid paste. They continued to stir for some time, scraping the mixture from the side and bottom with a sweep of the curved stick, the mixture bubbling and steaming all the time over the roaring wood fire. When the mixture was almost too solid to move, it was taken off the fire and poured on to a board where it set in a solid mass.

The girl asked if we used *polenta* in England and what we called it. I had never seen anything like it before, and so I looked the word up in my pocket dictionary and found that in English it is either called by the same name, polenta, or quick cake. Later I discovered that it was made from maize. When the *polenta* was set it was cut into slices, like thick bread, by means of a piece of string which was simply pulled down vertically at the side of the heap. We then took the portion which had been cut in our fingers. We were invited to taste it and found it to be a very tasteless mixture, but eaten with cheese for flavouring it was not too bad.

We asked them to brew us some tea and the old man had a cup with us but the rest of the family refused to taste it. They were very suspicious of anything new in the way of food, and tea, except in the cities, seemed to be uncommon.

The mother of the family was, of course, interested in our families and it was not long before they knew our ages, families and where we lived, how long we had been in the army and how long we had been away from home.

She, by the way, could not have been more than 45 to 50 years of age but these Italian mountain women, good looking and often pretty as girls, worked so hard that before they were 40 they looked like someone of 60 or 70. Most of

in trim for a journey. I had only the vaguest idea of what Italy was like beyond knowing that it was shaped like a leg. Although I had occasionally seen a map in the camp and had even copied one, I had really no idea that the Appennine chain ran right down the centre of the country and that the mountains were from over 3,000 to over 8,000 feet in height.

Although we had only been away from the hospital two and a half days, we were very keen to meet some of our own people. We'd been pitched head first into another world, a world of different values, of danger, a larger and more exciting world than our prison world. We felt very lost and insecure. We only understood half of what was said to us. We had little idea of how much danger there was and who we could trust. We'd been put on a train and sent to the mountains; all we knew was that somewhere to the west was Genoa and somewhere to the south-west, Spezia. And so as we went we kept our eyes open in the hope of meeting some of our own people so that we could learn more of what the situation was.

We set off from the village with the idea of following the river up into the higher mountains, that is in a south-west direction, and then going south-east among the higher mountains. We followed a path for a while, passed through another very small village and the path began to divide in the usual manner. The footpath became worse and worse and the mist thickened in all around us. After a while we struck what looked like cart tracks and so I became more hopeful, only to find ourselves in the middle of a wood. We had followed the tracks of the sleighs they use for collecting firewood.

We went on. It started to rain, and before many minutes had gone we found ourselves forcing our way through thick undergrowth. After about a quarter of an hour it got so thick that we could hardly move either forward or backwards. The way was barred by low branches, by creepers, by brambles and by everything prickly all bound together in a tangled mass. e were scratched. Our clothes, which were not of the strongest material, began to tear and rip, and we were very wet as well. I think we were very frightened, lost in a wood, soaking wet, feeling rather weak and completely uncertain about where we were, and wondering whether this whole escape had any possibility of success.

We turned to climb up the hill a bit hoping to strike clearer ground, but after scrambling up rocks we found

an English battalion of a north country regiment. I had a great friend in his battalion and so we were soon talking like old friends. He suggested that we leave the *osteria* and go with him; a lot of strangers came there, and it was not a good thing for it to get about that they were living there.

We went to the barn where he was living and he invited us to stay with him that night. He apologised for being rather inaccessible. He had told the villagers not to bring people to them, but bring news first, as in their first days there they had brought all sorts of people to see them. He told us there was another officer, Colonel Fanshaw from a cavalry regiment, who, with his batman was living in another barn nearby.

The whole camp in which they had been prisoners (Senior Officers' Camp, near Piacenza) had escaped at the Armistice called between Italy and the Allies. The first fortnight they had spent in the woods, living off the food they had brought with them, as they didn't know whether the Italian people were for or against them. When they were near this village the children with their flocks of sheep had discovered them and had brought them food. Eventually they had come down to the village, and as Colonel Fanshaw had hurt his knee they had decided to stay. One of the villagers had been in America and so they made him their agent, giving him an order on the bank, and each day they went to a different house for supper, *cena*, in the evening.

It was a small village, probably not more than a dozen families. The colonels had a certain amount of food with them that they used during the day. They had made themselves very comfortable and the villagers were all friendly. There was a larger village nearby and every other day Colonel Fanshaw, who was Roman Catholic, went down at dusk to the priest there and listened to his radio.

As we were talking one of the villagers brought news that the local police sergeant was coming up to the village. It seemed he was friendly, but to save him embarrassment they always went up to the fields when he visited the village.

We went out and met Colonel Fanshaw and his batman and made our way up the hill at the back. The barns were situated at the top of the village so that access to the fields and woods behind was very quick. In the fields we met an Italian woman, small, shrivelled and dressed in old black clothes, but to my amazement she started talking to us in English with a broad American accent. She was the wife of

We learnt many things from the two colonels before we left. They had a good map of the area and I was able to get a fair idea of the lie of the land. We learnt too that in this area doctors who were pro British were carrying a Red Cross on their right headlamp.

I remember too them telling me a story about our friend who had been in America. It appears that he had two lots of land, one in this village and the other near Bettola ten miles away. The man to whom he had let the second plot had been unable to pay his rent, and to meet his liability he had offered to give him one of his children. Our friend had refused because he had enough children to look after his sheep and to help with the work, but I don't think it struck him as being unusual.

We did not leave the following day until after lunch, as the village tailor was mending my trousers for me, but when we did leave it was with a certain amount of sadness, as it seemed we were leaving a village of friends.

The colonels had information that certain villages were friendly, and I had chosen one about two hours away that was in the general direction that I wished to take. The villagers pointed the way out to us and with our huge bundles on our backs we left them behind.

There were many fascinating encounters. One I remember well was with a tall good looking boy of about 15 who was wearing long plus-four trousers and looking after some sheep. He told us his father had been in America and invited us to go and meet him. The boy, asking us about our escape, was delighted to learn that the prison hospital we'd escaped from was in the very school building where he'd been educated in peacetime.

Later that day we were welcomed by his father and mother who, although quite well off now, were very typical mountain folk. Their own daughters and son were obviously being well educated and looked very smart but also were delighted in their mamma and papa. That night I heard an English radio programme for the first time in two years. I was quite excited to hear simply the words, 'This is the BBC'.

We decided to rest in that area for two or three days. The weather was dull. We were in the clouds. It was hard to realise that we were living between 2,000 and 3,000 feet above sea level, as we had done no really stiff climbs but just gone a little higher each day.

The sense of freedom which I had can best be described by comparing it with the disappearance of a toothache or a

gun in a race. It made you go. Later it became clear that this was the right decision. Those who went to Switzerland were interned for three years, and most of those who stayed in the villages were recaptured.

So we decided that the time had come to start our trek to the south. By now we had walked quite a bit, and our legs had lost their stiffness. We had eaten good food, more food than we had been used to during the previous two years, and our bodies were beginning to recover from the long months on short rations. We had lightened our packs and were getting used to carrying them. We believed at the time that, as the Allies would advance quickly, we would meet them halfway. In fact we had to walk some 700 miles before we reached the fighting line.

Chapter 4 THE TREK TO THE SOUTH

ON the ninth day after our escape, the 12th October, we seriously started our trek. It was no longer in a holiday spirit that we went, but with a simple determination to reach the Allies. The mist of the previous days, which had made us feel that it was almost winter, had disappeared, and the sun was shining. Although we'd had some directions from our friends, we soon lost our way and had to retrace our steps several times in order to reach a bridge over the river. It was a long way down, and then we realised just how high in the mountains were the villages we'd been staying in. These lower villages seemed to us dangerous, but we discovered that the Germans passed up the roads only occasionally and seldom left their trucks or explored either the mule tracks or the villages to which they led.

As we came to the road along the valley, we watched the bridge. One civilian car passed, but as nothing else was in sight, we jumped down on to the road, and with a certain nervousness crossed the bridge which was about 50 yards long. Our fear was that a German army vehicle would suddenly come round the corner of the road – less than a mile away – and catch us there in the middle of the bridge. All was well.

We were to have this experience of crossing a road or a bridge scores of times in the next months, and the further south we got and the nearer to the fighting the more dangerous it became.

The first few days were amongst the most difficult. The relationship between Fred and myself was a difficult one to work out. I was an officer, and he a guardsman, and although I'd made it clear to him that this didn't count now and we were in this together, he found it difficult to accept and also to say what he thought.

The first day after crossing that first bridge we had to make one of the steepest rock climbs of the journey. I enjoyed it, but Fred didn't like heights and although a countryman he was not keen on climbing. The day ended with us finding a rather unfriendly and frightened village. Eventually we were offered benches to sleep on in the

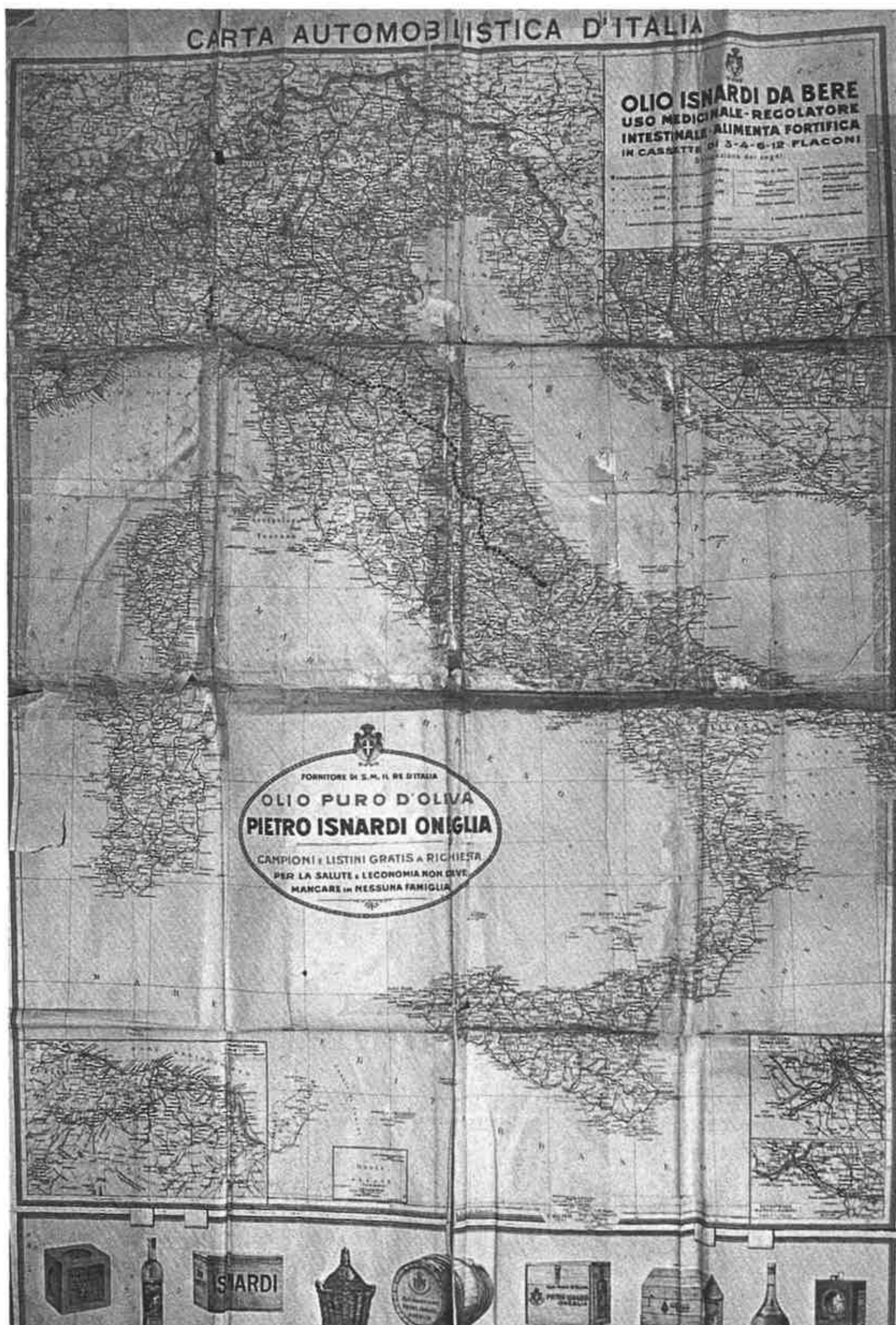
whole day. I think that it was God training me to live on those mountains, rather than telling me all the time what to do – although the general direction and line we should pursue were generally made plain.

Soon we came into chestnut country. In the evenings we would often sit round a fire helping a family to peel the chestnuts and at the same time eating large quantities of them. You were expected to eat 40 or 50 an evening – but it took us a little time to reach that level. One night when we had nowhere else to go, we slept on the floor of the roasting hut, a round brick building with a constant wood fire in the centre and slats above which the chestnuts were being roasted, and then eventually sold in the cities for high prices. By getting down flat on the floor we avoided getting too smoked ourselves. It was warm, but not to be recommended.

By this time we were getting used to the habits and practices of the mountain folk. We knew that if we wanted a drink of water we went to one of the buckets and drank out of the big copper ladle. We learnt not to look surprised if the man or even the woman of the house spat into the fire or on to the floor. They nearly always put a table cloth on the table for us, although in many houses we could see that it was not the usual practice. The plates, cutlery and cooking pots always seemed to be kept clean. One night we slept for the first time with the cows, and we discovered that from the point of view of warmth it couldn't be beaten. The only trouble with the cowshed was that all the cows had bells round their necks and so for the first two or three hours, and intermittently through the night, our rest was accompanied by the jingle of bells. Our bed that night was of dry leaves and the only disadvantage was that among them were some of the prickly outer coverings of chestnuts. If you happened to lie on one you knew about it pretty quickly.

I was gradually becoming a connoisseur of barns, and one of the undesirable features I discovered was hay. Firstly it was not as warm as straw, secondly it was dirty and thirdly it crept in your clothes, sticking to everything, tickling your skin all day and taking about a half hour each morning to get rid of the worst of it.

In these early days of our trek we met a school master who gave us a motoring map of Italy. This was a very great help. Although it didn't mark any of the mule tracks, we knew that any village that was marked on the map and so had a road running through it, was to be avoided. It



Motoring map used by the author during his escape. The dotted line shows the route he took.

but explained that these people were afraid that we were Germans pretending to be English in order to find out which villages were giving help to prisoners, and maybe also to discover by this method whether prisoners were hiding in the area. This English speaking man was some kind of merchant who had spent a lot of time in all parts of England. He advised us to go into Tuscany and told us that the people there were often very fair skinned, the reason being that when Caesar was in Britain he used troops from that part and a lot of them took English wives. He said they were friendly and intelligent, and we came to regard Tuscany as almost the promised land. This family proved to be very helpful to us, and we got our boots studded there.

The following morning a young fellow accompanied us a good way on our journey and gave us directions on which way to go. But we found ourselves rather too near a large village, almost a small town, and so changed direction. We had already walked three hours when we met two young men who were obviously going in the same direction as we were. We were slightly suspicious of them, particularly as one of them was wearing a black tab on his suit. Everything black we associated with the Fascists and everything Fascist was suspect. However, we talked with them for a while and discovered that they were police who, not wishing to serve under the Fascist government, were making their way home. Their village was exactly in our direction and so they invited us to come with them saying we could stay the night there and then they would put us on the right track the following day.

It was a long climb without tracks or sight of villages and certainly on our own it would have taken us a whole day's walking, but with them it took only four or five hours. We arrived at a little village overlooking a larger village and a railway line. The father of the policeman we stayed with had been in America and was very pleased to see us. Like so many Italians who had been in America he had learnt to drink too freely and gave us the impression of being rather drunk. They were a kind family. Already they had two Italian soldiers from Naples living with them who were unable to reach their homes. They gave us the best food they could and as we were hungry we took full advantage of it. We slept that night on two forms in the kitchen and in spite of their hardness slept well.

We were unable to cross the river and railway directly below as there was a large village and a railway station

that we nearly always encountered friends and a place to sleep, we began to feel a carefreeness as if we were on a walking holiday, with no fixed destination but with a list of villages from the family we'd stayed with the previous night, to guide us in the right direction.

I have a vivid memory of one day when it poured with rain all morning as we climbed up a mule track going over a pass. By the time we got to the top we were soaking wet with the rain, and soaking also inside with sweat. As the rain cleared and a wind got up we went down the mountainside, and to our surprise and delight, by the time we got to the valley we were completely dry again.

The food varied in different parts, but all the mountain folk were generous. The way they ate *polenta* here was different from the north. It was quite an experience. The Indian corn was boiled up on the fire and then poured on to a large pastry board on top of the kitchen table. Then it was rolled out so it was about a quarter to a third of an inch thick and sprinkled with a little tomato conserve and cheese. Then we sat round the table and were given a fork and each of us worked our way towards the centre, with cries of '*mangi, mangi,* eat up,' because we were slower than the rest of the family.

On one part of the journey we found that the people had run out of salt. They usually got it from the south which was now separated from the north by the fighting. We realised, for the first time, just how horrible food tasted without any salt.

It was two days after we had left the strange house on the hill that we had perhaps the most terrifying experience of our journey. At three o'clock in the afternoon we found ourselves in a rather frightened valley. The Germans had been round that day searching for prisoners and escaped Italian soldiers, and even though they were only a handful, they were enough to put fear into the hearts of the villagers for miles around. In front of us was a long high mountain and we were told that half way up, concealed in a hidden valley, were two villages. (In my diary I called one of them 'G' and I have no idea now what it stood for.) The reports as to how long it would take us to walk varied from one to three hours, and when in the late afternoon a low cloud covered the mountainside Fred was for finding a place in the valley for the night. I thought this would be too difficult and dangerous in the present circumstances as most of the villages were very near the provincial road. So after some discussion we decided to make for 'G'. It was

excused themselves: they must accompany their mules and wood piles.

I took this as a challenge. We didn't want any unwilling hospitality; we would find 'G' in spite of the mist and rain and the dark or we'd stay out in the woods. We turned back and started climbing as fast and as hard as we could. The rain soaked into our clothes and perspiration soaked our underclothes and even our shirts. And then we found ourselves back at the observation post. On top of the hill about 200 yards up a very steep bank we could dimly see another hut. I decided to go along the ridge beside the hut and if I thought that the village lay on the other side I would call to Fred to join me; otherwise I would return and we would spend the night in the hut. It would be better there than completely in the open, although it would have been terrible to pass a night in a hut without windows or doors and little chance of making a fire. Added to this we were soaked, hungry and thirsty, and although we had some food with us there was no water near.

I reached the top and followed one path for a short distance but soon decided it was only the track that ran alongside the telegraph wire, and would take us into the next valley after about four or five hours. I stopped on the ridge and listened, and I felt more than heard the sound of a village down in the valley below and the sound of a dog barking. I signalled to Fred to join me and he came up thankfully, as the idea of a night in the hut pleased him less the longer he stayed there. We could now hear nothing from below. It must have been a fortunate puff of wind that brought that sound to me, but all the same we started to scramble down the mountainside.

We got into a waterway and by following this down we felt sure we would join a track. It was dark now and we ran down over the loose stones and running water, heedless of the risk of a sprained or broken ankle. Down, down we ran, recklessly, and it was with very great relief that we saw the woods thin out around us and the water course take on the semblance of a track. Soon it broadened out into a proper mountain track, a track of loose stones and running water and we hurtled down that with rather less pain to our ankles. After about half an hour of this breathless running and scrambling we came across signs of habitation, fenced fields, hay stacks and firmer roadways. Another ten minutes and we found ourselves outside a little village; sure enough, it proved to be 'G'.

The day's nightmare was over. The first person we met

ecstasy to sleep in sheets again. A thick mist came down the next day and lasted for six days, so we decided to accept their pressing invitation to stay.

I was also able to find a cobbler in the village below, and after I'd offered him a pound note, he 'discovered' that he had a piece of leather and could put new soles on my boots (which were thin) and sew up the uppers which were coming apart. He did a wonderful job with them.

I wrote in my diary: 'It was November 1st when we left this comfortable spot, with great protests from the young couple as they wanted us to stay. The sun was shining with the warmth and brilliance of an English summer day. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and not a breath of wind disturbed the small lake below the village which reflected the blues and browns of the opposite hills with a wonderful clarity, transforming the colour in the reflection to unbelievable tints, and forming a contrast to the reflected blue of the sky in the nearest part of the water. The trees were beginning to turn to shades of brown and gold. But the heat seemed to give off energy rather than absorb it.'

Our first objective had been to get beyond the Bologna-Florence railway line. We hoped, when that far down the leg of Italy, to get news of our troop movements and to decide whether to make for the east coast or the west.

That first day out from our rest we travelled faster and with greater assurance than ever before, for now we were fit, and we had the map.

The next day there was a thick mist, and after crossing a road we climbed up and eventually over the shoulder of Mount Cimone. When we got above the mist we experienced that wonderful feeling of being above the clouds and watching them as they swirled around the valleys.

We were now among the high mountains, and I described in my diary one incident when we were on top of a steep ridge, and had started to make our way down a very steep slope. We had dropped only 200 or 300 feet when we heard the voice of a child calling us from the left hand cliff above us and a quarter of a mile away. In the clear mountain air sound carries quite easily, and so even at that distance we were able to carry on a conversation. She warned us there was no way down in the direction we were going, but to the left there was a path. So we climbed up to where she was. She was a little girl of not more than ten years of age. We asked her if she was all alone, and she said she was. Every day she came up from her home lower in the valley, loosed the sheep and cattle from their

and the Germans seemed to be everywhere. This was Tuscany and not quite the dream place we'd envisaged. Also the Tuscan accent, although delightful, was at first more difficult to understand.

This was, I think, our worst day, possibly because we had had no breakfast. It was pouring with rain, and everyone was afraid. In the end all was well. We met a man who seemed rather frightened to begin with, but who gave us a good dinner and found us a bed for the night with a family who kept what they called the English room, as a number of escaped prisoners had passed this way.

Their son accompanied us for two hours the next morning and then gave us directions for the next day or so. Once more we found ourselves in the mountains and there was a friendly atmosphere again and more food. It was easier to find our way.

We had a narrow escape, however, whilst crossing what we thought was a secondary road. Suddenly a lorry came round the corner, and although we scrambled to the side, we were in full view. Fortunately they were all Italian workmen in the back. It was then that we realised that this was the national road through the mountains, over the La Futa pass linking Bologna and Florence.

The next days we were on Mount Falterone, which is really a group of mountains spread over a 15 by seven mile radius. The following weeks were nearly all spent traversing these mountain ranges, Monte Fumaiola, Monte Nerone and Monte Catria, not far from Gubbio, where Francis of Assisi tamed the wolf that was terrorising the village.

The earlier part of our journey I was able to write about later whilst hiding near the fighting line, but my notes finished at Falterone. So for this next part of the journey I have to rely on my memory 50 years on. It is mainly of mountains, great beauty, lonely farm houses, and occasionally having to cross valleys. The mountains here were barer than in the north, and so there weren't many villages, just the occasional farm house. We would come across bands of Italians forming themselves into guerrilla bands, but at this stage there didn't seem to be much action. I think that came later.

GRAN SASSO

As we came nearer the fighting line, the situation changed. We had to stay in the higher mountains, as the valleys and even the higher villages were full of troops. So we were forced to go up into the deep snows of the Gran Sasso

Chapter 5 FRASCARA

THE GROTTO which Vittorio made for us had an entrance four or five feet deep so you had to go on hands and knees to get into it. This led to an area under a rock which was six feet by six, and in which you could just stand up. He made it with great care, with props to hold up the entrance and several lashings of branches which skilfully concealed the way in. He made a rough frame on which he put a mattress and fixed a chimney and fireplace and even a shelf on the wall for our candles and odds and ends. He put a canvas over the top of the roof so that water wouldn't drop on to us, a place for a washbowl, a place for a bag of apples and nuts and a couple of water bottles, and even a nail to hang coats on. As he was making it he would stand back and consider how best to arrange it. He looked upon it as a work of art, and so it was. As there was already quite a large hole under the rock he completed the whole thing very quickly. He took the risk of having us in the house during the two days of construction.

The cave was on a terraced hillside above the tiny hamlet of Frascara which consisted of just 15 families. The grotto was so well hidden on one of many terraces that we often had difficulty in finding it ourselves.

Vittorio and his wife Anna were wonderful to us, bringing up food for our breakfast and lunch. In the evening we would go down to their house, which was on the edge of the hillside, for a meal with the family, Vittorio, Anna, and Elisa aged eight. I wrote in my diary: 'After the meal Vittorio escorts us back to the grotto. There is a new moon now but for the last fortnight it has been very dark. He takes my arm and leads me as if I were a child. I hold out a stick and Fred comes scrambling on behind.

'When we get to the grotto he lights a candle and if it's cold he lights a fire too. Nothing is too much trouble, and the food is the best he can get. If there is no meat in the evening he is full of apologies. We are indeed fortunate. He is also very careful in not letting it be known outside the village that we are here.'

Opposite: Plate 2 – Langdale Pikes

the 15 families of the village and the fact that there was no road to the village. Any vehicle that stopped on the road half a mile away was an immediate signal for us to get up into the woods.

On December 23rd I wrote in my journal: 'Last night I felt rather depressed after one of my host's friends had been in and expressed the opinion that the country between us and our troops was too difficult for an advance during the winter, and that unless there was another landing it would probably be May before our troops arrived. The news rather bore this out as there has been practically no movement for ten days, and all the fighting has been on the coast. The thought of living like this for nearly six months does not fill me with enthusiasm. I feel like making an immediate attempt to cross the line, although it is probably at best a five-to-one chance against getting through. However, as it is useless to make an attempt when the moon is down, we would have to wait until the beginning of next month for the new moon. It's Christmas Eve. I am thinking of all the food we would eat at home and the presents. But perhaps it isn't such a bad thing to celebrate Christmas in a grotto without all these things.

'At this moment my daily prayer of this verse was answered:

> I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies
> No sudden rending of the veil of clay
> No angel visitant, no opening skies
> But take the dimness of my soul away!

'The clouds are low and grey, unusual for this country, and the steep slope across the river is dark and foreboding, with the black desolate mountains behind, half shrouded in mist, like some Miltonic picture of the universe. The light is fading, and all the villages scattered about the valley seem quiet, not desolate, but as if everyone is at home sitting beside the fire. I am thinking again of Siegfried Sassoon's poem:

> Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted
> And beauty came like the setting sun
> and my heart was moved with tears, and gloom
> vanished away
> O but everyone was a bird, and the song was
> wordless
> And the singing will never be done.

'Out of a picture, dull and darkening and rather

at 12 noon, and at 1.00 we had a colossal meal. It started with *pastasciuta,* a great plateful, followed by lamb boiled in tomato juice with bread, then kidney, etc., and afterwards roasted lamb and lettuce. The lamb was one of his own, only one and a half months old, and it was beautifully tender. After the meal we had a fifth of a small bar of chocolate, which tasted very good, and then a cup of tea without either sugar or milk.'

'28th December: We have just had a very pleasant interlude – a visit from two American girls – one married to an Italian who is in America, and the other single. They were caught here when America came into the war. They live in Fagnano Alto which is higher up the hillside than our grotto. As their house is the closest to us it is rather comforting to know that they had not noticed us. They said they had seen smoke but hadn't thought much about it.

'They didn't know anything about us being here, but had just called to see Vittorio and Anna. One of them happened to say, "Where are the English now?" meaning the Allied troops. Vittorio, thinking they meant us, put his finger to his lips and then proceeded to produce us from the next room, to which we always escape when there are visitors from another village. They themselves being American citizens are often suspected of being spies.

'We were delighted to meet them and to have a conversation in English.'

'4th February 1944: Yesterday I got up early, washed and shaved off the beard which I had grown (razor blades are hard to come by). I dressed myself in Vittorio's best suit, took off my eye shield and started off to go to the fair in Fontecchio. It was strange to see this village, in which I have been living for two months, for the first time. Actually it is the best built village I've been in. All quite nice houses, the reason being that all except the Massara family and one other have been in America.

'I walked along the path through the fields, greeted the people I passed and was greeted in return without suspicion or undue interest. I remembered John Buchan's book *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in which he says the best disguise is to think and believe yourself the person you are pretending to be. So I thought myself into being a young Italian going to the fair. All the same, as I approached the village and saw groups of people standing about, I wasn't entirely free from nervousness.

'Butch, my host's dog, had followed me, and as I walked down the slope to the road where the people were

'Later he took me into his sister's house, and soon we were joined by Elisa and Anna. Anna told me that the girl of the village I had smiled at had said to her that she had seen a young man at the fair who was rather like the English fellow who lived at their house. We drank some imitation coffee and then all together went up to another part of the village where they were selling earthenware cooking pots. I went into the place and examined the stuff and then with the rest of the menfolk waited outside. It was rather like shopping with my mother or sister in England.

'Wait. Wait. Wait. There were two men standing talking a few yards away, and I thought I heard one of them whisper, "I think that *giovanotto* (young man) there is an American." They stared a little curiously, but I am not sure that I heard them correctly. Later I met the American girl from Fagnano Alto again. She was surprised to see me and rather nervous, telling me to be careful as it was easy to see that with my fair skin and blue eyes I wasn't an Italian. We had lunch at Anna's sister's house and in the late afternoon left Fontecchio and walked home together along the main road and then across the fields to Frascara. To some of the villagers it seems a very foolish thing to do and perhaps they are right, but the information I gathered may be very useful in the next few weeks. A man who goes too carefully never does anything worthwhile.

'Down the valley towards the front line I can get glimpses of snow-covered tops. It is very tantalising, and I wonder what it would have been like if we'd gone on. Apart from the distant rumbling of bombs and very occasionally gunfire, and the odd flight of planes heard overhead, one would never know that there was a war on and that the front line was only 40 miles away.

* * * * *

'Later. Four of our planes flew very low yesterday and dropped bombs quite near. I think they must have hit an ammunition lorry or train because there were continual explosions afterwards.

* * * * *

'The last three days have been very strenuous. We went up to the hills behind the village, nearly two hours walk in the snow and cut out patches in the snow in order to signal to our aircraft. This took a lot of digging, but they showed up well. Three Spitfires passed overhead at about 500 feet but gave no sign of having seen them.

escaped English prisoners." The man replied that they were living in a hut in the mountains.

'The two Germans then produced weapons, revealed their identity to the man and said, "You will accompany us to their place of hiding." The man, very frightened, took them up to the hut and knocked on the door. It was opened by a captain who was greeted by several rounds of lead. He died immediately, and the wounded lieutenant was taken prisoner. The next day, by sheer coincidence (a mistake on the part of a British pilot), the house of the man who had given them away was machine gunned, and one of the family was wounded.'

Chapter 6 OVER THE MAIELLA

ONE DAY after almost three months in Frascara we heard, 'There's an American coming to see you.' We were immediately anxious. So many were caught by that phrase. Expecting to welcome another escaped prisoner, they were met by a German dressed in civilian clothes who, by pretending to be a British or American, had been led to them and so had taken them prisoner again.

So we prepared for him and placed ourselves behind doors armed with heavy sticks, to take a good look at him and hear his voice before meeting him. There was no mistaking him as he entered. He was as American as they come, with a lively spirit – a fighter pilot who had 'dropped out of the sky'.

Roane and I became friends and we decided to get over the line together. Fred's boots had long since given out and all our efforts to signal the RAF to drop boots for us had failed, so sadly he had to stay behind. Later I heard from him that after many narrow escapes he had been freed as the Allies advanced. Although from completely different backgrounds we had become good companions. We wrote once or twice but my last letter was returned 'not known at this address'. I was very sorry to lose touch with him as we had been through all these adventures together.

The only place Roane and I thought worth trying was the Maiella, a mountain range lying under six feet of snow that year and with one ski patrol (we understood) for the whole 15 miles of mountain, and on the other side – the Allies.

Diary, 14th March: 'The parting from Frascara and from Vittorio, Anna, and Eliza was rather like leaving home. Ever since I have talked about going, they have besieged me with all the reasons for staying. Everyone in the village, where we have felt so much at home, has been very kind. The school teacher who lived next door went round every family, and all of them subscribed to give us a present of money. We'd never had any money before, apart from two English pounds that I'd kept, and in fact

unprepared for a climb of that kind and far too noisy. They were mostly middle class – two officers, a solicitor, and an engineer. Two were Sicilians, two were from Rome, and the rest from this area, nine in all. Two were wearing shoes and thin socks, and several were carrying suitcases. It was more like a party going on a picnic than an attempt to cross a front line. We asked them where the guide was and rather gathered that he was somewhere ahead.

We had been travelling for about an hour when we found that there was in fact no guide and that all they knew of the mountains had been learned from a very inadequate map. Roane and I did not think of turning back but decided that we would keep our eyes wide open and go off on our own if we did not like the way things were shaping.

We climbed up along a steep valley following a narrow footpath. It was a clear moonless night, and we could just make out where the path ran along an upward curving ledge on the steep side. I walked behind Roane so that his white socks would give me some help where to put my feet. With only one eye functioning I found this rather difficult to judge. After less than an hour's walking we had our first rest, and after about another half hour we reached the snow. That meant another rest while the Italians debated whether we should go on or not. At every stop there was always someone who wanted to make a fire.

It was a fascinating climb, especially as we got higher amongst the snow and could see the steep white glistening slopes shining out as a contrast to the dark, starlit sky. Presently we left the path and climbed up a slope to cross a narrow snow-covered mountain road. We could see the lights of the last civilian-occupied village. Once across the road we were assured that all danger from the Germans was past. The next hour's climb was steep, but the frozen snow covered by an inch of soft snow was easy climbing.

We reached the top of this slope, and there stretching above us, like a sheet on a clothes line, we could see the long ridge of mountains. We were able to pick out the very slight dip through which it was proposed that we should pass. It had the rather ominous name of Grotto del Uomo Morto (Dead Man's Gully). Between us and the white ridge we could see trees, and the whole thing looked close and easy. But we knew this was an illusion; mountains over 8,000 feet under deep snow were not going to be child's play. Once we reached the woods we started the

estimated. Paolo was leading the way. Roane and I remained at the back, as we were far from sharing the Italians' confidence that the mountain was our only barrier to freedom, and we thought this was the safest place.

We had only gone a few minutes when Roane said that he smelt smoke. Further up he said that he could see ski marks in the snow above the belt of trees. At this stage Paolo was tired and he called out for Roane to go up and lead. As it turned out, this was very fortunate. After about another quarter of an hour, Roane motioned for everyone to stop and be quiet. He was still well ahead of us, and he started to come back. In spite of his warning the Italians started calling and shouting to each other, and it took rather angry words on my part to stop them.

Roane made his way back, a slow process in the deep snow, and spoke to the group, telling them about the smoke which could now be smelt by everyone. Also the ski marks were more apparent and finally we could hear voices. The party decided to go on, but we said we would follow at an interval and handed the engineer his case, which we had carried for him all the time. Paolo hardly knew what to do, but eventually decided to go on with the others. I think he was influenced by the thought that to be caught with two ex-POWs was too risky. We started to dig holes in the snow to hide in, then decided it would be safer to scramble over to the left, going towards the dip on the mountain ridge. The original idea had been to go straight up through the trees, and when we reached the harder snow to make along to the left.

We lost sight of the party when we got amongst the trees because of a dip in the ground. A few minutes later Roane pointed them out to me again. We stopped to watch them and to get our breath, and decided there must be Germans with them as we thought there were more than ten.

The party was divided into three groups, but as we could not see all the group at once, we were not quite sure of it. Pepi, one of the Italians we had made friends with, was in the nearest group about 150 yards away and Roane in a fit of madness called out to him. I quickly hushed him, as by now it was obvious something was up. Fortunately, Pepi did not hear, nor apparently did anyone else.

A moment or two later we saw that one of the three parties had stopped at a snow dugout, and we could now pick out the white-clothed German ski troops. We were in snow and the trees between us were few. I am not sure of

This was not a long or steep slope but shortly afterwards, when we reached a longer steep slope to cross, we really felt nervous. It was just about this time that Roane spotted a party of about 50 or 60 people going up the ski track. A moment later we saw another party of about the same size down in the valley below moving like ants in the direction in which we guessed the ski track would end.

Although both of us wanted to tackle this last part of the Maiella, knowing that we were within a few miles of the Allies, we were now aware also that the slopes were icy and that there were more Germans on the mountain than we had realised.

We rested for a moment on this icy slope whilst we considered what to do. I quietly prayed for direction. The thought came like a flash, 'Go back. Go back.' Roane quickly agreed, and we started back. It was 18 hours' walk in deep snow before we reached the foot of the mountain again. We spent the night in a hayloft, dead to the world with tiredness.

As we woke in the morning we discovered that a party waiting to go over the Maiella had shared the loft with us. We met one of this party, an Italian would-be escapee over the mountains, and he told us there was a professor in Sulmona who organised parties. I followed him into Sulmona to find the *professore*.

Right past the German headquarters, down some side streets to a courtyard and up some steps we went, to the third floor, with my guide always 50 yards ahead, it being too risky for him to be with me. After a hurried consultation at the door he left, and I approached the *professore* not knowing whether this was a trap, and he not knowing whether to trust me. Soon we both felt confident, and very shortly I was hurrying back to the base of the mountains to find Roane, who had spent the day in a cave, and to bring him to Sulmona to join a party leaving for the Maiella that night.

It was interesting that walking into Sulmona I had walked unhurriedly like a peasant, and no one had commented. This time hurrying and taking long strides, several people working in the fields had called out '*Inglese, Americano*' even though my clothes were exactly the same. I darkened Roane's hair with mud, taught him to walk as a peasant, and into Sulmona we went.

As we passed the German headquarters, two Italian boys greeted him and, guessing who he was, walked with him, which was a good shield for him. Soon we were off,

taken a party over this way. He said that he knew the mountains well.

Next, one of the two guides who had gone to the village returned, and explained that they had been stopped by the Germans. He had been able to bluff his way out, but his colleague had been taken off to a concentration camp.

At nine o'clock we set off. Everything inspired confidence. The guides, three in all, were amazingly efficient, one in front, one in the middle, and the last at the rear. And this time there was no deep snow to plough through. They knew where the snow was hard and, except for bad patches for a few hundred yards, we walked in less than a foot of soft snow. It had been cloudy all day, and although the clouds looked thinner now there was a nasty cold wind.

The guides said it would take five hours from here to make the top and between six and seven hours to the other side where our troops were. We were on a moderately steep slope at this part, but travelling was slow as the big South African's legs were giving him trouble. Eventually Roane and the tall guide Paolo had to help him along. This went on for over half an hour and our pace became dreadfully slow.

Finally the South African had to stop and after a conference we decided that he would have to go back. He was a game fellow and except for his legs felt fit enough, but it was plain that undernourishment was doing its work and that he would never make it. His friend offered to go back with him, but he would not hear of it. I felt very guilty leaving him there half way up the mountainside, but there seemed no alternative. I gave him all the money I had, two English pounds and some lire, and it was arranged that he should go back to the last village and wait there until the guides returned, getting all the food he could and building up his strength for the next party. We never heard what happened to him.

About ten minutes after we left him the stiff climb began. I have always been fond of climbing and heights have never worried me in the slightest, but this was new and different. Mario went first, digging into the frozen snow with his boots, trudging about 15 paces slanting up to the left and then to the right. He had chosen a place sheltered from the wind so that the icy snow was softer, but even so the footholds were not very deep. This is the part of the Maiella which I described earlier as looking like a sheet on a clothes line, and the angle of the mountain at

wandering over the tops for something like half an hour in what had now become a blizzard, stopping every few yards to let the others catch up. The guide's course seemed to have become a bit irregular. During the climb I had remarked to Roane that Mario must be brilliant to find his way in the dark and in mist over a snow capped top. Now I suspected he had lost his way, but it was some time before he would admit it.

Just after this the party stopped again, and Roane and I went back to find that one of the South Africans had collapsed. We set about rubbing him, hands, face and neck, and after a short time he began to come round. The only thing possible was to keep walking, for if we stopped for more than a few minutes it was very doubtful if we would survive. Paolo took on the job of helping him along, and I helped his friend, the other South African, who was in a similar state. We had only stumbled a few yards through the snow before he collapsed.

We gathered a few people round and rubbed him back to life. He could not see as his eyes were frozen tight. His frozen hands were like lumps of raw meat. I put a glove on one of his hands and put the other through my mack to try and keep them from frost bite. My own hands were kept alive by putting one in my pocket and the other under his arm as I half carried him along.

The Scotsman, who was also nearly exhausted, came along and took the other side of him, and so we stumbled on. At every step we rubbed life back into the two poor chaps, and then we half carried them on. It kept us warm too, and our supply of energy seemed unlimited. I remember reviewing the situation in my mind and thinking I could keep walking till morning, and if I kept moving I shouldn't die. I had given up hope of the two South Africans pulling through unless we could find shelter from the wind.

At about half past three they both collapsed completely. We gathered a few of the party around one of the South Africans, to keep the wind off him, and started the rubbing again. I put my cheek against his frozen cheek and with my body rubbed against his and got the Italians to do the same. He came round and could hardly talk, but his constant question was for his friend. I kept replying, with very false confidence, that his friend was all right, and that he himself would pull through. In actual fact I believed at the time that his friend was dying. He had fallen into the snow like a log, and the other Italians were round him

mountain but descended steadily until the mist began to get thinner.

I shall never forget seeing a snow-covered rocky ridge appearing through the mist in front of us. It was the first time we had seen any shape since the previous night, and we rather expected that Mario would be able to tell us where we were. However, it was too much to hope that he knew every rock, and so we went on steadily bearing downwards. Eventually we began to see the form of hills around us, and Mario once more knew where we were.

We were still half carrying the two South Africans, but daylight and the hope of freedom had given them a new lease of life, and in the hours that followed they were bolstered up and kept going by this hope.

Eventually we dropped down into a steep sided valley, and by this time the weather was clear. We went cautiously for fear of enemy patrols and when within sight of a road sent one of the Italians forward to reconnoitre. He waved us on, and we reached the road and looked down on to a ruined village.

Every building, including the church, was a wreck, and it was deserted. The bridge over the river had been blown up, and the road itself destroyed at every possible point. We didn't know in which direction we would find our troops and in which the Germans. We sent one man ahead who said he could identify the tyre marks. He came back and said the Allies were to the left. We clambered off the road. We had no alternative, as the tunnel through which it ran had been destroyed.

After some scrambling we reached the road on the left side. There were tyre marks here, and Roane swore that they were made by American tyres. The destroyed village lay down the hillside to our right, and we watched it carefully as we went towards Palumbaro. All we saw were two people in Italian uniform who might have been on either side, and one whom we thought might be an Indian.

When in sight of Palumbaro we stopped again, and one of the Italians went forward and asked a little girl who was there, British or Germans, she replied British, or at least Indians, and on we went. We were right in the village before we were stopped by an Italian with a rifle who wanted to know who we were. He took us along to the Indian lieutenant who was in the village, and almost in a stupor we introduced ourselves and asked for a cup of tea.

Moments like that, a moment I had dreamed of for two years, are always something of an anti-climax. It was

edge of their chairs. When I had finished, a soldier came up to me and asked, 'Have you ever been in touch with Moral Re-Armament?' Eagerly I said, 'Yes, I have,' and with a warm shake of the hand he said, 'Well, I have worked with Moral Re-Armament too.'

To me it seemed the fulfilment of the direction I had had to get back to my friends in MRA, and it was eagerly that I asked for all the news of what had been happening. As I mentioned earlier, before the war I had met the Oxford Group, later known as Moral Re-Armament or MRA, who had introduced me to the idea of listening to God which had proved to be so important to me in my escape. For more than two years I had had no news. The Nazis had persecuted the people of MRA because of their uncompromising stand against them and my family, knowing this, had always carefully avoided any mention of it in letters in case it would put me in danger. My friend showed me some new books that had been published, and I believe that it was from him that I first learnt of the remarkable change in the journalist Peter Howard, who had gone to meet people of MRA in order to attack them. For me, however, the meeting meant very much more than just getting news of my friends, important though that was. It made me surer than ever of the way God was leading, that within a few days of getting through the lines I had been led straight to this man.

Shortly after, I left Italy and sailed for England landing at Glasgow docks. Two weeks later I was at last walking through the front door of my home. I must have pictured that moment of arriving a hundred times. It was always the finale of every marvellous escape that I'd dreamt up. Walking through that front door was the climax, and now it had really happened.

PART II

HOME AGAIN

Chapter 7 ENGLAND

It was wonderful to be home again with my mother, father and sister, and all my relations and friends at Fleetwood. This fishing port in Morecambe Bay is where I'd been born and brought up and where my family had lived for four generations.

My great grandfather, who came from Mousehole near Lands End in Cornwall, held a Captain's ticket and had been appointed first mate on the Fleetwood-Belfast service when it started. So he had decided to settle in Fleetwood, then a very small town. He brought his wife and my grandfather aged one, in a small fishing smack, sailing all the way up the west coast with his precious cargo. I suppose it was the most economical way of transporting family and household goods.

The family grew with the town. My grandfather became deputy controller of the port and was active in local politics, becoming the chairman of the Fleetwood Council, whilst the port became the third largest fishing centre in Britain with 120 trawlers going out into the Irish Sea and as far north as Iceland.

With his Cornish Methodist roots he was also prominent in establishing the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. So my upbringing was strongly Methodist. The chapel was the centre of our lives, not only on Sunday, when we went four times to Sunday School and chapel services; we also went regularly to different activities during the week. I don't remember resenting it, as all our friends did the same, and even after chapel on a Sunday evening we would all gather in our home for sandwiches and to sing hymns around the piano.

Fleetwood was in many ways a place with two separate identities. There was the part where we lived towards the west which was middle class – teachers, bank clerks, office workers, trawler owners, with a smattering of doctors, dentists, lawyers and solicitors. Some of its social life revolved around our Methodist tennis club. Then there was the area centred around the fishing industry, the trawlermen, the dock workers and fish merchants, and all that went with it. The trawlers went out for two to three weeks

1933-34: Playing for Fleetwood Grammar School in the rugby 1st XV

holidays. We would let our house, which was on the promenade, for the month of August and so be able to take wonderful holidays in North Wales, Cornwall, or the Isle of Man. It was on these holidays that we met up with the Children's Special Service Mission run by Scripture Union. For me it was a new world. There we met children from public schools and the undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge who ran these holiday events. They were people of a kind I hadn't met before – charming and cultured. One ill-effect was that I longed to go to a public school, which we couldn't possibly afford, and began to try and lose my Fleetwood accent. But more than that it seemed that for the first time I met people whose Christianity was joyful and contagious. This was particularly true when we went for four summers to Port St Mary in the Isle of Man. The enterprise there, which consisted of short lively services on the beach, swimming parties, games and expeditions, was run by a Dublin solicitor called Matheson, whose joyous Christianity became a pattern for me. His love of God and overflowing care for people has remained in my mind ever since. This gave me the desire to be a Christian, but it wasn't until I met the Oxford Group in 1934 that I understood what it meant.

This meeting happened through one of our Methodist ministers from Blackpool, Cecil Rose, who came occasionally to have lunch with us. He was a rather cool intellectual type who quite suddenly became different. He told us it was because he had read a book called *For Sinners Only* about the Oxford Group. My sister Dorothy and I were intrigued, and accepted an invitation to a weekend gathering in the nearby town of Cleveleys. My sister and I were

We lived in a world where these realities, and also the realities of feelings and emotions, were kept under cover. I still feel a certain reticence myself about some of these things. I know my son suffered at school because I never talked to him fully about sex – presuming that this would have been told him by his teachers.

The other factor in my life was that many of our good Methodist disciplines had become doctrines. We were brought up to believe that drinking a glass of beer was as bad as telling a lie – or that playing a game on Sunday was as bad as a dirty joke, although in fact a dirty joke would never have even been referred to directly. This all contributed to the sense of a barrier, a wall, behind which we could be secure.

It was because of this background, loving but strict, that I found it almost impossible to talk to my parents about my girl friend, my difficulties with sex and also the small deceits I'd practised. Such was the strength of my upbringing that I would never tell a lie, but I would find ways of avoiding telling the whole truth.

So this thought I'd written down on that park bench, to be honest with my parents, was the greatest hurdle. For several days I agonised as to whether I would obey. In fact it was the only time in my life when I walked in my sleep, such was the conflict.

Finally I decided to take this first step. I remember standing outside the living room and praying to be given the strength to be honest. It was much more frightening than climbing through the second-storey window of the prison camp in the dark, not knowing whether I would go crashing to the ground or be shot at by the guards. Equally I didn't know what the reaction of my parents would be. However, the result was almost unbelievable.

My mother was an active church worker, but she had never, to my knowledge, talked about matters of faith. She said to me that day, 'I would like to find the faith you've found,' and I think in subsequent years she did find something of that. My father, who was a man of real faith, responded wholeheartedly. Later he started to tell me things about his own life and his faith which he'd never told anyone – certainly not my mother. He was a help to me as I started then to put right other things in my life.

Although the barrier was breached it was always a difficult decision for me to share with them the deeper and real things in my life. But this was a turning point. I became

Opposite: Plate 4 – Cumbrian river

Chapter 8 1944

RETURNING in 1944 I was struck again by what a red-brick, new-looking place Fleetwood was, without many trees. But there were three glorious things about it which I rejoiced in – the seashore with the pools of water reflecting the breakwater, the colour of the sand and the pebbles. Then there were the sunsets, which seem to me even now more varied and delightful than any I have seen anywhere else in the world. And finally the view across Morecambe Bay, which on a clear day gave a panoramic view of the whole range of the Lakeland hills. This was particularly spectacular when the more distant ones were covered in snow.

I had always longed to find a way to express what I felt about these things. I had tried to do it in poetry, but wasn't very successful. It was only later that I found that I could express something of what I felt in painting. One of my paintings, which I have never put up for sale, was done along the coast there about 35 years ago. I was walking along the sea wall that extends to the west of the town along the sandhills – the area used to be the shooting range and is now the golf course. There were no houses for several miles. It's the wildest and most unspoilt spot on that coast and a favourite place for skylarks. On this particular November day everything was grey. The sea was grey. The sky was grey. Even the atmosphere felt grey. It was the kind of day when you feel there will never be any colour again in the world.

As I walked along the sea wall, suddenly the clouds began to open, and it was as if the world was seeing a new gentle dawn. The sand which had seemed dull became a reddish golden colour, the pebbles a lovely blue grey, and the sky a delicate tint of very light blue and pale gold with a touch of red in the clouds at the horizon, as it was towards evening.

By chance or by habit, I had my paints with me, and I quickly went below the sea wall on to the pebbles, took out my pad and put down in rapid and simple strokes what I saw and what I felt. The light lasted about half an hour, but that was all I needed. It was one of those rare

gradually it became an aspiration to master the technique necessary to put on paper my deepest feelings and emotions.

People sometimes say to me, 'Oh, aren't you lucky to have such a gift!' I say, 'Yes, I am, but whatever gift I have is 30 per cent gift and 70 per cent hard work and discipline in learning the skills.'

I think that there exists in all human beings a sense of wonder at the world around: the seas, the mountains, the trees, and the animals and people. And for each there may well be a way, undiscovered as yet, in which that wonder can be conveyed. It can be in painting, in sculpture, in music, in poetry, or in prose, in a novel or a play, but also in carpentry, building or creating a home. Perhaps the important thing is to find the gift and to spend the time and thought in developing whatever particular latent talent is there.

Cardinal Hume writes, 'Beauty is one of the means by which we are led to God. It is the beautiful which can arouse in us "wonder".'

Chapter 9 LONDON AND 'THE FORGOTTEN FACTOR'

MY NEXT step after Fleetwood and the Lake District was to go to London and meet the people who were carrying on the work of MRA there. They were few, as most had gone into the armed forces. One or two of them I knew, but my touch with the Oxford Group before the war had been quite a slight one, even though the things I had learnt from people who had met the Group had played such an important part in my life.

At the same time I had to report to the army for duty. The conviction had grown in me that I should get into a part of the army where I could have some part in training people for peacetime. So I suggested that they should post me to the Army Education Corps. The senior officers interviewing me for the posting looked very doubtful: you had to have a university degree to be eligible, and I'd left school with a very ordinary school certificate; you had to be over 30 years of age, and I was 26; you also had to be below category A in health, and although I'd lost the sight of my right eye, I was still in Grade A. However my conviction was strong, and their flexibility was admirable: so after some consideration I was transferred from the artillery to the Education Corps.

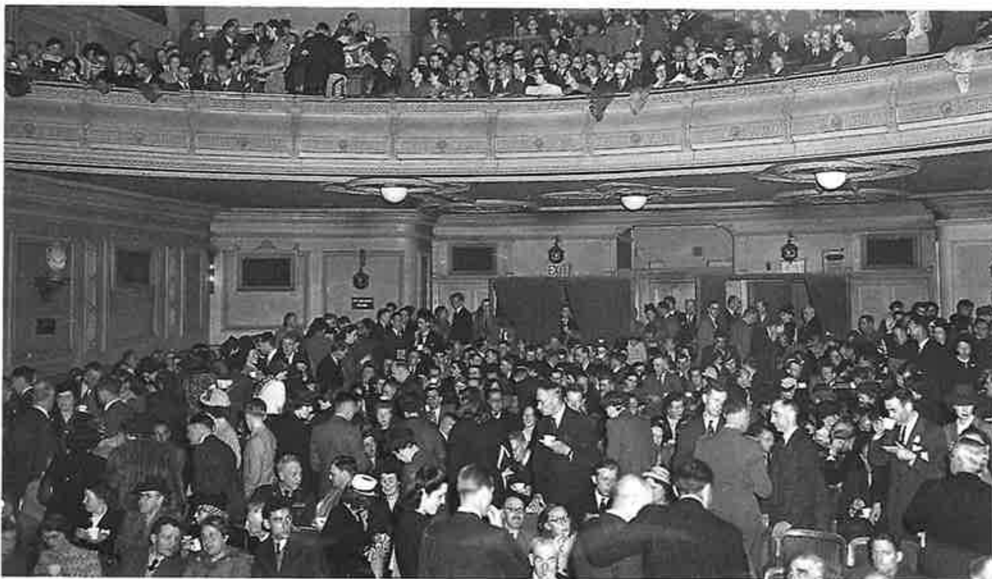
It started with a period in London when I was able to stay at the MRA headquarters. This was most valuable training in MRA and its objectives, and afforded the opportunity to learn all that had happened during the war years.

I was then posted to be on the staff of the Army Education School at Wakefield. Because I'd had some training in accountancy, I was given the task of training shorthand typists to teach their subject to the troops. Someone said rather cynically, 'We, who are not teachers, are training people who don't want to teach to teach people who don't want to learn.'

All the same I enjoyed it, but the important new development at this time, which became a factor in the pattern

to do so, but I did agree and arranged to stay for many weeks in Baysbrown, a lonely farm house in the Lake District, near my two painter friends Heaton Cooper and Bernard Eyre-Walker. This was one of those unplanned incidents that was very important for the future, for as a result painting became a major part of my life.

Bullcroft Colliery Photo: P Sisam



After touring the mining areas, 'The Forgotten Factor' came to the Westminster Theatre and attracted large delegations of miners

Chapter 10 THE LANGDALE VALLEY

EACH DAY, during that winter of 1947, I would go out with either Bernard or Heaton, who lived in the next valley of Grasmere, and watch them at work. Then I would make my own attempts, and they would be very generous in giving time and thought to me.

These two men had very different approaches to their painting. Bernard, a gentle and philosophical man, would approach a subject with the feeling that it was so wonderful that he couldn't possibly express it in a painting. He would be almost in awe of it. Also he would be very meticulous in finding just the right position from which to tackle it. I've known him to walk round for an hour in order to find the appropriate foreground and to wait for the light and sky to match the subject.

His paintings are therefore very sensitive. He was also colour blind in reds, and so his work came over with rather subdued colours but with great delicacy of feeling. He used to say to me, 'Don't paint until there is something you really want to say, something you must say. It's no good just painting a scene. If there is something before you – the light on the fells, the reflections in a lake, or the windswept clouds, whatever it is that strikes you, say that.'

I also learnt from him that if you sit down to try and capture the particular aspect which caught your attention, you should stick to that. Then if, whilst painting, something else strikes you (as it nearly always will) don't put that in as well, or you will generally end up by spoiling or neutralising your principle point.

Despite this perfectionist attitude, he would sometimes say, 'There is nothing particularly wonderful about the light today, but let's go down to the other end of Elterwater where the Brathay comes out of the lake. There is always something to paint there.' And there nearly always was.

Heaton, on the other hand, would be so excited by what he saw that he would sit down at the earliest moment and with great strokes of bold colour make his statement. His

ruffled water. How to avoid muddiness. And to learn by patiently watching, asking, and experimenting, which pigments to use to get the shades you want. Bernard taught me to start off with just eight or nine pigments, and when I had mastered them to expand my palette further. I was amazed at how many different shades it is possible to get from a limited range. I also learnt to look at the sky and the shadows of the day, and to decide which basic blue to use – cobalt, ultramarine or Windsor blue, and the advantage of sticking to that blue in the shadows throughout the painting.

Having eventually mastered these rules, it is possible to break them in order to get particular effects. I could go on and on – the use of a razor blade when painting a ruffled surface of a stream, the need to watch the flow of a stream and get its rhythm rather than trying to paint each little movement, but above all to watch, and watch, then watch again. *(Plate no 5: facing page 150)*

That winter the snow lay thick on the fells for many weeks. For the hill farmers it was very difficult, as they had to climb up in the deep snow and often dig the sheep out when they were completely buried in the drifts. In fact many sheep, even of the tough Herdwick breed, were lost.

From a painter's view, it was glorious. Covered by snow, the mountains' shapes were wonderfully revealed, undistracted by the colours of the fells. I fell in love with snow landscapes, with the freshness and clarity of the shadows from the deep cobalt or purple in the foreground to the delicate blues in the distance.

I remember painting a snow scene in Switzerland which I gave to a good friend. I felt that in some ways it portrayed absolute purity. Understanding purity has been for me a journey. Growing up with the idea that anything to do with sex was dirty, I had slowly to realise that sex was holy, one of the many gifts of God which he can give or withhold – and that both the giving and withholding are gifts – and that there are many other aspects to purity.

Bernard and Heaton were so different in temperament that although they sometimes went out to paint together, they seldom chose the same subject; so a joint expedition hardly ever worked out, and they would generally end up in different parts of the fells and make their own way home without meeting up again.

Both men were a great encouragement in every way and especially regarding these first serious attempts of mine at

that my grandmother's family came from the southern part of Lakeland. She and her husband had been married at Cartmel Priory, and my grandfather had been a stone mason who had carved some of the statues in the Whitehaven church.

Chapter 11 AMERICA – AND MARRIAGE

AFTER this time in the Lake District I had a very generous invitation from some American MRA friends to spend some time over there. They felt it would be both good experience, and also that with good food away from the rationing in Britain I would regain strength.

In the end I stayed three years. I found myself touring with plays and musicals, often speaking to clubs and gatherings and also involved with training young people. I learnt a lot. I also met there, in Los Angeles, the wonderful girl who was to become my wife. She was English, from a landowning family, who had been working in a factory in Birmingham during the war and had contracted TB. She, like myself, had been invited to work with MRA in America.

At first Mary was just one of many delightful younger people there drawn from many countries. Then something happened. A colleague and I who were taking some responsibility for the work received a telegram from our friends in San Francisco, where they were presenting a play, asking for more people to go and help them and mentioning amongst others, Mary Evans. We were at a party at the time. I was going up on the overnight train, and after a brief consultation we decided that Mary couldn't really be spared. When I got back a few weeks later this 'quiet English girl' said to me, with flames shooting out of her eyes, 'How dare you decide what I should do and without even mentioning the invitation to me, and then you go up there yourself!' I began to get a very different idea of this 'quiet English girl'.

Whenever I tell about this incident she will add, 'Yes, and I still haven't been to San Francisco.'

It was shortly after this when the completely unexpected thought came into my mind, when I was having a time of quiet, 'One day you will marry Mary Evans.' It was a surprise because I had in mind a short list of girls whom I thought I would like to marry, and Mary wasn't one of them. They were girls whom I thought were possibly more dynamic – I discovered later how wrong I was.

to everyone no matter who they were. I realised that she was a very special person and gradually I knew I was falling in love with her. However, I didn't feel that the time was ripe to tell her what I felt. God knew what was going on in her heart and would tell me the right time to propose.

As it worked out, Mary and I were in different parts of the world for the next year or two, heavily involved in different campaigns. Sometimes I wavered from the idea of Mary. I remember one time when a young Swiss student came to work with us and I became infatuated with her. One day the thought came to me, 'She is not the one for you', and the infatuation just disappeared like mist when the sun comes up. So much for the current belief, 'I'm in love – I can't do anything about it.'

Mary joined us in Italy in 1952 to help with putting on Alan Thornhill's play *The Forgotten Factor* in Italian. It became clear to me that she was meant to be my life partner.

I used to dream of how I would propose to her on the bridge over the stream in the grounds of her home at Whitbourne, which I had previously visited, or in some equally romantic setting. Actually, I went over to Birmingham and proposed in the sitting room of the friends she was staying with – but it was an even more romantic moment than I had dreamt of. I really didn't know what she felt. I was over the moon when she gave a wholehearted 'yes', and told me that since those days in California she had been in love with me.

The following day we took the bus to her home in Herefordshire, talking about our future but we kept breaking into Italian to say what we felt – *carissima* or *bellissima* are much more expressive in Italian than English, and also we thought that probably the other people in the bus wouldn't understand.

We were married on June 13th that year on a beautiful day in the lovely eleventh century church at Whitbourne in Herefordshire with the reception at her family home, Whitbourne Hall.

At the beginning of our marriage I think it is true to say that I was the dominant partner, but gradually I learnt that Mary's insight was something I needed and if I didn't stop and listen I should regret it. I also realised that Mary made many more lasting friendships than I did and that I had much to learn from her in that.

So often when I've been engaged in some project which I've been determined to carry through she has sensed that

all was not well, and has taught me to stop and look again at what I am doing and my motives. I believe that God put us together for His purposes and for our joy.

Our growing together has developed in so many different ways. I had discovered before we were married that we both loved walking in the countryside or in the mountains. What I hadn't known was how different we were in the things we noticed.

I would be walking along entranced with the formation of clouds, the light on the hills or the shape of trees, when Mary would say, 'Oh there's a greenfinch. I haven't seen one of those around here before,' or suddenly spot some flower hiding in the hedgerow. I'm still amazed how she can see these minute and enchanting things whilst walking along. What has happened of course is that she has become more aware of landscape, shapes, and sky, and I have learnt to love and appreciate flowers and birds and small plants.

In our earlier years, whilst I painted, Mary would climb the nearest mountain top and this only stopped about eight years ago. I was painting near the side of the road leading towards Crummock Water (a spectacular view) and for practically the first time I had finished my painting before she reappeared. It's the only time I've been worried and wondered if I should call out the Mountain Rescue people. There was no one else on the fells that evening. Before I could do that, however, I spotted her coming down the snow-covered slopes of Grasmoor, soaking wet having slithered down the snow in order to find her way back. Since then she has taken up photography! She has a very good eye for taking a picture, and they are really splendid.

Our backgrounds also show up in our attitude to aches and pains. If I have something wrong I say so – sometimes too soon and too often. Mary's tradition is that you must not mention aches and pains unless they are at the stage where you must have a doctor (or an undertaker), and even then you must underplay it. I've discovered this is a common trait in all her family, with some of the spouses complaining that they never know what is going on. Again Mary has become more willing (sometimes after cross-questioning) to admit that she isn't well. Equally I think I have learnt not to squeal and moan at every discomfort.

Another area where we have grown together is in our approach to our Christian faith. Mary was brought up as

the ruler of the province (Kengtung) in the Shan States. John had been very helpful to them when the ruler had been assassinated, and so she had generously taken in Nang Hom and her mother and looked after them when John was killed. Mary started to write and got wonderful letters back in schoolgirl English; this was followed by sending Nang Hom parcels and photographs, a correspondence that continued for 20 years.

It wasn't possible in those years to visit that part of Burma – inside the Golden Triangle – but in 1986, when Nang Hom and her husband and children had moved to another part of the Shan States, Mary with her brother Robin took an adventurous journey to see her. After an overnight train ride from Rangoon and five hours in the back of a 'bus' (a truck with side seats in it), they had a wonderful meeting with their niece.

Since then, Burma has been an area of the world Mary has taken a great interest in, meeting with Burmese here in the UK and trying to get permission – unsuccessfully so far – for Nang Hom or some of her family to visit England.

In no other aspect of life have I been so grateful for the leading of the Holy Spirit as in our marriage. I think that one essential ingredient lies in the fact that we were both individually committed to trying to find God's will and do it. When times have been difficult, and these occurred from time to time especially in our early life together, we would stop and seek together for the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We have come to regard difficulties, not as disasters, but as something the good Lord has allowed so that we can learn from them, change and grow. In fact that seems to be one very good reason for putting us together, so that two very imperfect characters could have the chance to develop.

In the 40 years we've been married we've become more in love and developed a greater relish for life all the time. If Mary has been away for a day or two or even a few hours, I am so excited and delighted that she is back. This, to us, is a wonder, and I was glad to have a letter the other day from our best man, Will Kneale. 'You have truly a marvellous wife', he wrote, '. . . I assisted at your wedding 40 years ago, and was as close to you as could be at that time. . . . Yet who could have visualised what you were to grow into together and create in your home and far beyond its walls. We had a glimpse of this at your ruby wedding celebration.'

Chapter 12 ITALY

Six and a half years after my escape I was crossing the Italian frontier again. It was in the dark days of 1950, and Italy had just come through a civil war. Especially in the north, people had been tortured and shot by the fanatical minority of Fascists who carried on to the end. Then the tables had been turned; partisans had occupied the towns and strung up Mussolini and his mistress in Piazza Loreto in Milan, then taken their revenge on many who had collaborated with the old regime. In many places there was hardly a family who had not had someone killed in this civil war, and the ferment of bitterness and fear that remained made it very doubtful as to whether Italy would remain free or whether the Red dictatorship, which was already imposing its will on many towns and communities, would take over the whole country. This time I was going to Italy as a free man and not a hunted one, and to a free country. An atmosphere of intense fear and hatred at times seemed to dominate the country just as completely as an army of occupation. Despite this I was very glad to be going back. There was also the chance to try and repay the debt to those Italians who had risked their lives for me.

That summer I had come back to Europe from America to attend the Moral Re-Armament conference taking place at Caux in Switzerland. Caux in those post-war years seemed like a dream world to the thousands who poured in from Germany, France, Austria and Italy. Here, in one of the most beautiful spots in the world, a thousand people from every race and class and kind spent time under the same roof planning to create something new in the world, and they were enjoying it. The verve and the music and the plays which were being created there seemed like a new renaissance.

At the time I arrived, the first groups of Italian workers came to Caux from Sesto San Giovanni, known as Little Stalingrad, from Legnano, from Bologna, from Genoa and from Milan. These Italian workers had been brought up under Fascism and had lived through war, defeat, and then civil war. Then there had been four years with poverty and hunger always just round the corner; now they

The Caux Conference Centre

Photo: Mike Blundell

Italians in the crowded meeting hall with, in left foreground, Princess Castelbarco

Dr Costa, President of Confindustria, with other members of his executive

with the black marketeers making their whispered deals at the next table. There we would plan our own next moves. None of us felt that God had deserted us, but we sometimes wondered why it needed to be so hard and rough.

I suppose it was only six months later that we realised why we had to go through such a rough time. By then some of these hard-core Communist revolutionaries had become our close friends. They said, 'Caux was marvellous. It was like a dream to us – a classless society, the new world. But, we said, it's Utopia. There, where there is enough food and comfort and lovely surroundings, it's possible to do right and to care, but faced with cold and hunger and overcrowding and fear and discrimination and unemployment, it is impossible. And then you came and you lived amongst us, not as saints, but as men who admitted your faults and who were often wrong, but who stuck to your determination to do God's will in spite of deprivation and cold and discomfort, and in spite of a lack of welcome from some who could have helped. Now we know that this is an idea that really works.'

And so, day by day, we trained these few men in the rudiments of the ideas of Caux. We met them early in the morning before work and listened together in order to try and find God's plan. We met their friends with them and cared for them together, visiting them in their homes. Every tram route in the area became familiar to us, as well as the towns around.

Our team was greatly strengthened in these early stages by the arrival of three stalwart young Swiss women – Lucie Perranoud, Claire Locher and Hanni Weidemann. Not only did they share the rigours of our life with great resilience but also they brought with them warm-hearted qualities and the gift of languages. They were all fluent in Italian.

It was at this stage that there came a very big improvement in our living conditions. Walking through the centre of Milan one day we encountered a *marchesa*, one of the Milan aristocracy who had been to Caux. She greeted us warmly and was delighted that we were in Milan. She asked where we were living, and as she grasped the uncertainty of our lives, 'of no fixed abode', and nowhere to meet she said, 'But I have a *palazzo* (a town house) in the centre of the city. It is very dilapidated and filthy and is going to be pulled down, but you could have it in the meantime.' Right away she took us to see this building with reception rooms and several wings – unbelievably

After this the work began to reach out to Florence, Genoa, Trieste, Bologna, and Rome. We met many of the leaders of Italy, amongst them that great statesman de Gasperi, who as Prime Minister gave such inspired leadership in those years. Giuseppe Saragat, the leader of the Social Democrats and later President of Italy, also became a friend.

In 1957 our son John was born. Mary went to England where he was born at a Birmingham hospital. John and Mary spent the first six months at her home at Whitbourne, and after the christening in the lovely church we all returned to Italy where John became a part of all we were doing.

We used plays and films, one written by Angelo Pasetto, others translated from English, and although our main work was with individuals, we realised that plays were a particularly effective way of reaching the Italian people.

When we were staying at Montecatini in Tuscany with Dr Buchman, there was a great furore in the press. An industrialist called Marinotti had closed a factory in Florence because it was not profitable without any consultation with the workers. La Pira, the Mayor of Florence and a leading figure in the Christian Democrat party, fomented a good bit of opposition to this, and as a result the government in Rome took away Marinotti's passport. Dr Buchman was always keen to try and deal with the immediate as well as the long term and felt we should meet Marinotti. This happened quite quickly through a Dutch industrialist, and when he heard what we were doing in Italian industry he invited us to take *The Forgotten Factor* to Torviscosa in Udine. There he had cleared land during the Mussolini era and developed a large area to grow the raw materials needed for his textiles. He had built a factory in the middle of it to manufacture artificial fabrics. Later he quarrelled with Mussolini and had to leave the country rapidly. Now, after the war, he was one of the leading industrialists of the country.

We accepted the invitation and went with the cast of *The Forgotten Factor* to Torviscosa, where we were guests of the company. It was a complete company town where everything – houses, schools, hospital and church – was owned by the company. When Marinotti came, the flag was put up in the central square, and all was spruced up for his visit. They had a large theatre in the centre, and on the Saturday night it was packed to the roof with some 1,500 of the factory and agricultural workers. Marinotti duly

'The Forgotten Factor' with Angelo Pasetto, Lelio Griselli, Paolo Marchetti, Commendatore Baldini and Mariella Zipponi

The Torviscosa complex

'wrong' yet again in ourselves is countered by the ever more certain knowledge of God's love and forgiveness, so that the discovery of previously unrecognised sin becomes also a cause for rejoicing in the grace of God. Gradually I learnt not to send out the cavalry squadrons of defence every time I felt the citadel of self was in danger, but to welcome further liberation.

During these years we took many of our Italian friends to conferences in the USA, Switzerland, and Britain. Because of the dramatic circumstances and the flair of the Italians, they always made a great impact. I think we became rather pleased with ourselves. At a certain point we realised that we needed to take stock and look at our work in Italy, and also individually to be sure what our calling was. For me it meant venturing into new fields.

Whatever our shortcomings I believe we did affect people's lives, and personally I was grateful for the chance to try and repay the debt I owed to the Italian people, some of whom had risked their lives for me.

During these years with this big campaign in the northern cities of Italy, the mountains of the Abruzzi seemed far away. Now I felt I had neglected my friends Vittorio, Anna and Elisa Massara and I must try to go and see them. It was almost twenty years since I'd been hidden and helped by them.

TWENTY YEARS LATER

I wrote in my diary after my visit:

'The train from Sulmona to L'Aquila stopped at the little station right there in the fields by the river. I could see the village up there on the mountainside looking as grey and distant as ever. The walk up took longer than I thought – two and a half miles uphill seems longer when you are nearly 50. The village was very quiet, no one around at all. It was Sunday morning, and they were probably all at Mass. I found Vittorio and Anna's house without any difficulty; after all, the village was only 17 houses on each side of a single track. The house had been largely rebuilt and looked neat and new. An old lady came up the track. I asked her if Vittorio and Anna were at home. "No", she said in the local dialect, "They are at their daughter's in L'Aquila," but she didn't know the address.

'I went to the house opposite and wondered if I knew the people there. A girl in her thirties opened it, and I

the family were eating. Without saying who I was she showed me in. There was Vittorio, still the same Vittorio, a little greyer and older, but the same. He said in that most courteous manner of the Italian mountain folk, "Favourite – will you join us?" Elisa said, "It's Rinaldo." Anna, a little older and greyer, jumped up and kissed me on both cheeks, Vittorio too. Then they introduced me to Elisa's husband. I was home.

'They were in the middle of dinner, so quickly they moved, put on more food for me, so much that I nearly burst, and then the years rolled back and we re-lived again all the events that had bound our lives together. They told me, too, of the five other English soldiers whom they had sheltered for many weeks after I had left, one seriously wounded. And then, "You are the only one who ever wrote or remembered." I felt like the one leper in the ten who had come back to thank Christ – except that it was after 20 years.

'I must stay, I must cancel my plans, I must come back with my family, they said. Anyhow I stayed the night. In the morning Vittorio showed me the town. We walked through the streets together. After a while silently. I remembered how he had asked me to help him emigrate. I had tried but failed to find the right thing. I wished now I had tried harder, although he had himself eventually found work in Venezuela and done quite well. Eventually I said, "I have always been sorry I couldn't help more to find you work." He waved his hand eloquently saying, "All that is past now." I said, "The only thing I did manage to find was that opportunity in Australia." He said, "Yes, but that would have involved too much money to get there." But he understood that I would have liked to have done more and understood how, in the travelling life I have lived, it had been difficult. I knew he understood, and I was glad and at peace. I said, "There are some debts one can never repay and this is one." He waved his arms again in a deprecating way. He knew that I meant it, and he knew that it was true.

'Next day we went back to "our village". All the old friends came to greet me. Anna made much of the fact that I had always written at Easter and Christmas, though in fact it was not even every year; and of the packages I sent, which were few. In the way of all ordinary folk she recounted every detail to the neighbours of my arrival the day before, and they all said, "You must come and stay." Then we went up to the terraced hillside and found the

Chapter 13 SOUTH AMERICA

AFTER my time in Italy I had increased conviction that the presenting of God's truth through the arts of theatre and film was supremely important.

My father was very ill at this time. I was able to return home to spend the last days of his life with him. He was a man with a very real and deep faith. When the doctor told us that he wouldn't recover, we decided that he should be told this, so the doctor went up to his bedroom to tell him.

A little later I went to his bedroom, and he said, 'You know what the doctor said. He said, "Mr Mann, you are a good man, and I think you would like to know that you won't get up from your bed again".' I asked my father, 'Did this surprise you?' and he replied, 'You mean that he said I was a good man?', and laughed.

After my father died, Mary and I were invited to South America to help with the promotion of a Japanese play called *The Tiger*. It was almost a pageant and was drawing crowds of 10,000 or more, so it had had to move out of theatres into the football stadiums. We left our son, then aged four, to be looked after by a good friend, Kristin Squire. Mary stayed nine months, and I was there for 18 months.

When the company of *The Tiger* left I found myself staying on to help with the distribution of a film called *The Crowning Experience*, starring Muriel Smith, who had played the lead in *Carmen Jones* and then in *Carmen* with the Royal Opera Company in London. It was a musical based on the life of Mary McLeod Bethune, a pioneer in education for black people in the USA, and dealt movingly and trenchantly with colour prejudice. We were a small group left behind, but our conviction was to reach a million people every week. We decided that eight copies of the film, which had been excellently dubbed into Portuguese, should be circulated, and that it should be backed by TV programmes as well as newspaper articles in all the main papers.

At the time the agreement was signed with a distributor, I was staying with Colonel Pessoa – an air force officer

dozen nationally known figures had been formed. This included Marshall Dutra – whom you could call the Churchill of Brazil – and others representing government, military, industry and media, including the legendary figure Chateaubriand. He was the man who had been largely responsible for creating the Brazilian Air Force and was now the owner of *El Cruzeiro* (the *Life* magazine of South America), five television stations and many of the leading newspapers of the country.

So a telegram went off signed by those men inviting Muriel to come down for the launching of the film. She accepted, promising to arrive after finishing the film she was making.

So began a very extensive tour of the country, with interviews and recitals on TV and commercials (free) about

Muriel Smith

Photo: Weber, Luzern

steal, but I do get things done!' We showed *The Crowning Experience* in the Governor's palace for himself and his associates. He was very shaken by it and at the end came up with his wife to talk with Muriel and myself. The first thing Muriel said was, 'How are you going to cure corruption in the state?' I thought his wife would disappear through the floor. He, however, took it seriously, and we had a long talk. The next day he went and made peace with his great enemy, the head of the main newspaper of the state. Again, as in Italy, one doesn't know what long term effects all this has had.

Before I went to South America it was virtually an unknown continent to me. I began to realise what a powerful country Brazil was becoming and was constantly surprised and delighted at the energy and enterprise of its people. Flying half way up the coast from Rio to Recife, I discovered it was the same distance as from London to Istanbul. It wasn't just the size and the richness of resources, but also the contrast between the very rich and the very poor that struck me.

This was particularly focused in the northern area around Recife. The state of Pernambuco, which was largely in the hands of big landowners, was generally dependent on a single crop and became a disaster area if that crop failed. The field workers would then have to travel 2,000 miles to the south in order to find work and survive. They would settle in the *favelas* of Rio or Sao Paulo, often starting another family there, and send back what they could to their wives and children in the north.

I was friendly with an agricultural engineer and asked him one day what quantity of financial aid would be needed to stop these periodical disasters. 'We don't need any aid,' he replied and took me to a map of the state on the wall of his office. He pointed to one area and said, 'In that large estate there is no hunger and no one migrates. The owners have invested their considerable wealth in irrigation and diversification of crops, and the area is prosperous. If the other landowners did the same, and they all could, the state would be transformed.' It emphasised what we already thought, that a change of heart was the key to solving the problems of poverty, hunger and deprivation.

For me personally this was a very important time. Our decision to make these bold moves with the film distribution and TV programmes and with controversial figures like this Governor, were seriously questioned by one of

PART III

BRITAIN 1962 – 1994

Chapter 14 MOVING THE MOUNTAIN

THERE was an old man in China who lived by a mountain that blocked his view and so he determined to move it stone by stone. To those who laughed at him he said, 'My sons and their sons will carry stones. The mountain will be moved.'

I once said to a Christian friend who is a well known film actor, 'I sometimes feel as if I am trying to move a mountain with a teaspoon!' He was rather surprised and asked, 'What mountain?' I replied, 'It's the mountain of false values, of gross materialism, secularism and permissiveness which blocks the view of God's wonderful purposes for mankind.'

It's from this mountain that there descends an avalanche of greed, which undermines the efforts to relieve the desperate poverty which continues to mar our world.

It's from this mountain that, through satellite and video, polluted streams flow out to newly liberated countries with false images and distorted values.

I came back to Britain with a growing sense that moving this mountain was my particular calling. This proved to be as great an adventure as the escape from prison camp.

I think I was aware that it is one thing to have a calling and another to equip oneself to fulfil it. Without being fully aware of where it would lead, I was naturally drawn to the Westminster Theatre.

I had given my army gratuity at the end of the war to help buy this theatre, and in 1961 a new phase had started. Until that time it had either been let out to other companies, or used to perform plays by people committed to MRA, of very good standard but mostly by people without professional training.

The one professional taking part in these plays was the well-known actress Phyllis Konstam. She, with her husband Bunny Austin, the tennis star, played a key part in the whole development of theatre by MRA from its beginnings in America.

Largely on the initiative of Peter Howard, Westminster Productions was formed with the aim of presenting plays

Children at a performance in the Westminster Theatre

Photo: Fabian Hodel

including finance, choosing a director, appointing a designer, and casting the actors. Then they would show how a director works with the cast in rehearsal and give a glimpse into costume design, lighting, and sound. In the afternoon the children would see the play we were presenting at that time and follow it with a discussion of the issues raised in the play. This discussion period was often the most fruitful time of the day. Joy Weeks, a drama teacher, continued this work and over the years 200,000 children and staff have attended the 'Day'.

One of my colleagues, David Phillimore, did very effective work in getting tourist agencies to book their organised parties into the theatre – often arranging supper parties before the show. He made friends with their London offices as well as visiting them in the United States, which resulted in a steady flow of tourists.

As regards drawing in the general public, we were less successful. The task wasn't helped by the fact that the critics generally ignored what we were doing, viewing it as all Christian propaganda. So it was difficult to keep the theatre going, and the fact that the period during which we produced our own plays lasted eight years owes a great deal to the determination of Kenneth Belden, and to Louis Fleming and his skill in getting productions together. Stanley Kiaer, as secretary of the company, played a vital part in undergirding the whole operation and Don

Chapter 15 THE NEXT STAGE

ONE day Alan Thornhill, one of whose plays we were presenting at the time, said to me, 'Do you think that if the artistic and dramatic quality of our productions was ten per cent higher, it would affect the size of the audiences?' I had to admit that it would. Although the issues dealt with in our productions were very relevant to the country, and clearly presented an alternative to the philosophy of permissiveness and nihilism which was too often the popular diet of the time, they weren't always of sufficient theatrical and artistic standard to match their rivals. I knew that presenting goodness on the stage was much more difficult than presenting evil and that presenting the truth you believe in might not always be popular. However difficult this might be, I felt that this should be our aim, to present these truths with the very highest theatrical and artistic standards to match what was being done at the National Theatre with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and at other theatres.

By 1969 we were no longer able to go on presenting our own productions. Peter Howard, one of the principal playwrights over that period, had died, and it was getting difficult to find the plays, to fill the seats, and find the finances. So once again the policy became to let the theatre for suitable productions. It was obvious that, if we were to succeed in affecting the values and thinking of the country, then we had to find new writers and wider support.

I even tried my hand at a play myself. It was based on some of the characters I knew in prison camp, an allegory on the question of freedom. I entered it for a competition, and very much to my surprise it won a prize. Henry Cass, the well known director, read it and suggested a play-reading of it with a professional cast. Although well received, I didn't really think that it had a future, nor did I see my role as a playwright. However, I think that it helped me to understand something of the art and the difficulties of writing for theatre, which is so different from other writing.

This was 1970 and we had stopped running our own

available, certainly the theatre, which so often sets the trend for TV, but also the whole of the media. I felt that if we didn't tackle this high ground, it meant that we weren't in earnest. A seemingly impossible job, but one to be aimed at.

The task of trying to portray Christian truth and values is a testing one. Obviously, to be effective, what one wants to convey must not be something merely placed in the mouth of one of the characters in a play; it has to be integral to the story itself. It must be an experience for the audience as they live through the action on stage or in a film.

One play I saw at that time was Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* performed at the National. I went with a certain pre-judgement about it, having heard that it had a political motivation. But I found myself deeply involved with the character of John Proctor, wonderfully played by Colin Blakely. I lived through his dilemma as he faced the choice of admitting his affair with a young woman, and thereby losing his whole reputation in that close-knit community, while knowing that by hiding the truth he would be furthering the great wrongs that were being done. To me it conveyed a very moving message on the importance of honesty and integrity.

Many people say that there is something wrong in trying to convey a message through a play or film, and that it isn't art to do so. The fact is that in any play worth anything, there is some message involved. It may simply be that there is nothing in life worth stating, worth giving a message about, or that money, or sex, or power is the thing that really matters; or as with many of Shakespeare's plays, it may be cautionary, showing the inevitable result of unlimited ambition, jealousy or greed.

The glib presentation when everything works out well in the end is generally not very convincing, for so few people share that experience. The story of a man or a woman who chooses a certain course of action, and the struggle they go through, is both exciting and believable. There are so many stories past and present of this kind of struggle, and they do make good theatre.

Chapter 16 INTEGRITY

I REALISED that to be equipped for the calling also involved an inner transformation and the importance of integrity and wholeness. At most stages of my life I had had two faces. In school days there was the one at school and quite a different one at home and at church. When I joined the army I made a deliberate attempt to assume the speech and attitude of an officer. I have often said jokingly that I got my commission through growing the right kind of moustache. However, when I was posted to the Northumberland Hussars it was more difficult. Our adjutant was the Duke of Northumberland and nearly all of the officers were landowners. It was clearly impossible for me to pretend to be of the hunting, shooting and fishing fraternity, and I began to realise that people were more likely to respect me if I was fully identified with my own background rather than trying to put on an act.

Later on, when I was living at the MRA centre in London and going out each day to my job in Army Education, I remember having consciously to switch my attitude as I returned to where I was living. It wasn't so much that I compromised my principles but that there was a different group of people to please. In the following years I looked up to, admired and tried to copy many of those who were giving leadership in MRA. Forty of us, went over to the USA at this time, and I recall being suddenly struck by the fact that these were not super men and women to be idolised or looked up to, but people who needed thought and care just like everyone else.

In those post-war years the work of MRA depended a great deal on the wonderful leadership given by Frank Buchman and Peter Howard. I know now that we often failed them by not giving them the vigorous and questioning fellowship that everyone needs. One result of this was a tendency to go overboard on any particular issue they stressed. For instance the Communist influence in the trades unions and many areas of life was a very real danger, but in our enthusiasm we began to see 'a red under every bed'. More importantly it meant we paid less

part in a combined operation. Those who do this live life fully, taking risks and of course making mistakes, but enjoy the excitement and fullness of a life committed to big tasks.

The integrity of our lives, with our every relationship based on our relationship with the Creator, is, I believe, all important.

Chapter 17 BECOMING AN IMPRESARIO

Becoming an impresario was a major step. I had learnt in the 1950s and 1960s that the ways of the Holy Spirit are unexpected and generally started with obedience to a simple thought. In 1973 I saw an amateur production of a new musical about John Wesley called *Ride! Ride!* by Alan Thornhill with music by Penelope Thwaites. Alan had been encouraged to write this musical by two of our most prominent Methodist figures – Maldwyn Edwards and Benson Perkins. Shortly afterwards I was having my usual time of quiet in the morning, when the thought came into my mind, 'The Methodist Church will take this musical to the whole country.' I didn't take it too seriously, but I happened to mention the thought to some of my colleagues. One of them said, 'Well, if you think it might come from the good Lord, hadn't you better do something about it?'

So I wrote to Leslie Marsh, the Secretary of the Methodist Drama Committee who had been responsible for the amateur production, and he and Dr John Gibbs, the Chairman of the committee and a leading figure in the church who shared my vision of Christian theatre, came to lunch and talked over the possibilities. This led to another production put on by John and Sheila Gibbs in South Wales and taken to that year's Methodist Conference.

A year later we met at the Methodist Central Hall with many of the leaders of Methodism to discuss the idea of a professional production. There was an interesting division of opinion. Some said if we could find the money we should go ahead and do a professional production. Others said it is what God wants; we should go ahead, and the money will come. John Gibbs then made it very practical by committing his family trust to give £10,000; I promised I would raise another £10,000.

I had no idea how I would do this, but Mary and I started by visiting the district chairmen of the Methodist Church in the major centres of the country. Everywhere they said, 'Yes, it should be done, but not just in London; bring it here to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool,

and booked the theatres. We again saw the Methodist district chairmen and asked them to appoint one of their most active and competent people to get to work and fill the theatres we had booked. They were all large theatres, with capacities of between 10,000 and 20,000 for the week's run. Some of these men proved to be exceptionally brilliant; in some cases the theatres were filled by parties for the entire week before the run started.

Although I had had by now a dozen years of experience in theatre, especially in marketing, it was a bold step, and some considered it a foolish one, to take on a national tour of a big musical with a top director. But it was a very necessary step in fulfilling my calling. The skills to be learnt were many: budgeting; negotiating percentages and ticket prices with theatre managers; choosing a director and fixing his fees and percentages; finding a musical director, set and costume designers, a lighting and sound designer; and then appointing a company manager and stage manager, who are so important in creating the right spirit in the cast. Finally auditioning the cast and choosing the musicians with all the union rules involved – and arranging the tour itself. I had to learn all this quickly but was greatly helped by Bill Cameron-Johnson, who designed a really wonderful set for the show, and by my friend Hugh Williams who took on the task of production manager.

Hugh, who from the 1960s has also shared fully this commitment to 'move the mountain', had started to work with MRA after leaving Oxford. His first task had been as ASM (Assistant Stage Manager) for some of the plays – ASM is the lowest form of life in the theatre, making cups of tea and doing the odd jobs – quite a step down for an Oxford graduate. Since then he has tackled every aspect of theatre – as stage manager, company manager, production manager, actor, director, producer and especially writing for theatre.

His friendship, and that of his wife Dell, has been a constant strength over the years. We have shared most experiences – including both developing heart trouble and having operations at the same time and having been through various ups and downs together. Our most recent crisis was when in 1993 Dell's cancer was diagnosed. Fortunately after a successful operation and chemo-therapy, it has been cleared up.

Without Hugh I couldn't possibly have coped with *Ride! Ride!*. Also it was a help to have Nancy Ruthven and Chris Channer, both accomplished actresses, in the cast and both

'Ride! Ride!' – Peter Coe (above) directing
starring Gordon Gostelow, Caroline Villiers, Brendon Barry

and then said to them, 'You are all experienced professional actors, and you know that your task is to interpret for an audience the ideas and purpose of the author and producer. I trust your integrity in this, and so I'm not

The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester at the Royal Premiere of 'Ride! Ride!'

often whilst on horseback. I was struck by his insistence that the newly converted should stick together, often quoting the words, 'Unless you bind people together you are making a rope of sand.' Wesley's other passion was that his followers should study the Bible and other books, and then rigorously apply their new-found faith to their communities and in their work place. Reading Bready's book *England Before and After Wesley* I came to understand the great social transformation that he engendered, and the fact that the abolition of the slave trade, the enactment of the factory laws, and the formation of trades unions, all owed a great deal to this one man's work and passion.

We toured 11 cities on what is known as the No 1 Circuit, at the most prestigious theatres, and then played 11 weeks at the Westminster, starting with a gala performance attended by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Some of the press applauded the play; others didn't, but the *Guardian* called it, 'One of the most astonishing theatrical events we are likely to see this year.' Over 100,000 people saw it. What delighted us most were the stories of people's lives being affected by it, such as the minister who wrote to the *Methodist Recorder* saying that his whole ministry had been renewed.

Opposite: Plate 6 – 'Clothed in Light'

People still talk to me about *Ride! Ride!* and the effect it had on them. Many leaders of the other churches came to see it, and when we asked them, 'Is this what the Church should be doing?', they agreed heartily. So our board became ecumenical, with Anglicans, Roman Catholics, United Reformed Church, and Baptists added to it.

It was only later that I realised where the Holy Spirit was leading us. It had happened so naturally. All the different denominations had become our partners. There was no longer a question of one group doing it alone.The whole Church, was being drawn into this task. We stated our aim simply: 'To provide first class professional theatre which conveys Christian truth in such a way that it can entertain, enlighten, educate, and open the door to faith.' However it seems to take time for churchmen to understand the importance of what we are trying to do. I recall one leading churchman who came to see *Ride! Ride!*. He was delighted with it and we talked quite often with him about our aim. A year later when he came to see Hugh Williams's play *Fire*, he turned to me at the end and said, 'You know, Mr Mann, this is a way of getting the Christian Gospel across!'

From 1976 until 1990 we were in almost continuous production with a great variety of shows, ranging from plays about the lives of St Francis and St Paul to modern dramas dealing with current issues such as euthanasia. There were also many children's plays.

During these years I often got what my wife Mary calls 'productionitis', waking up very early in the morning wondering how we were going to get through this or that crisis. Constant risk-taking and being always in need of a miracle, financial or otherwise, I discovered, helped one's faith to grow. If you are out on a limb, having to pray your way through difficulties but still surviving, it brings a reliance on the direction of the Holy Spirit just as the dangers and uncertainties I had encountered during my escape had done. Perhaps the most telling examples of this have been to do with finance. In present values we have had to find almost a million pounds for this work, but it has always come, often at the last moment.

* * * * *

For 12 years I was a member of the prestigious Society of West End Managers, and I had to learn what is involved in being a theatrical producer, an impresario.

told us that she returned to her Catholic faith because of it. I became aware through this, and other mistakes I made, of certain things in my own nature. As a schoolboy I was a long-distance runner and generally won. At rugby I was always able to keep moving right to the end, and in the army I won the mountain races. So I was always loath to give up on anything I started. This can be a valuable quality, but often it has meant that I haven't stopped long enough to ask God, 'I know this started with what I believed was an inspired thought, but do I still go on, or is there a new direction? It has led to major mistakes, which when you are presenting plays, affect a lot of people. I have come to feel what our grandparents called a conviction of sin – and I hope I've learnt the lesson. I've been much helped in this by my wife, Mary, who gently points out that 'the drive is on'. Fortunately God forgives and often uses our mistakes.

As well as the script of the play, the next most important factor is the director. His task is to transfer the written word into a live spectacle on a stage. His integrity and faithfulness is of prime importance. He has to visualise how the play will look up there on a stage: the action, the sets, costumes and lighting. It depends largely on him and his collaboration with the designers whether his vision will be fulfilled.

Finally his choice of actors, generally made with the producer, is vital. Wrong casting has ruined more plays than probably anything else. I've known us to go through a list of as many as 30 names, talking to them or their agents before being able to cast a leading part. Having chosen the cast, the director has to draw the depth from inside the actor so that the character becomes three dimensional.

One example of this was with the play *Fire*, by Hugh Williams, a modern drama about a director who tries to live out his newly-found Christian faith in the difficult world of the professional theatre. In order to have a well-known name – someone who had a reputation in films – we miscast one of the four parts and so weakened what could have been a very powerful play.

Different directors have different approaches and skills. Some, especially those who specialise in musicals, depend a great deal on the visual, others on the words. Some are skilled in bringing new meaning to a classic, others are at their best delving into the meaning of a completely new play. The director's personal beliefs may not always be

we have always been in need of £10,000, often much more, with no knowledge of where it was to come from, but the certainty that if we didn't find it we would be faced with insolvency. This is where prayer comes in, along with making our needs known. There was also the need for long-term work with trusts. One large trust, whom we thought would back us initially, didn't do so, saying that their purpose was evangelism, indicating that they didn't see this as having anything to do with this purpose. The secretary of the trust viewed the matter positively, so he began to bring in some of the trustees to lunch with us so that they could understand that the kind of theatre we were doing could be considered as pre-evangelism – turning over the ground so that the seed could be sown. They became one of our greatest supporters. We invited members of trusts to see our productions so that they could evaluate our worth for themselves. We had to learn to care for them as people, and not just as a source of income, and I'm glad to say that many have become personal friends.

The most difficult and important part of producing is marketing and publicity. It has been said that half the money spent on publicity is wasted, but no one knows which half.

I remember a phone conversation with the producer, Cameron Mackintosh, after the tour of *Ride! Ride!*. At the time he was struggling to find his way, but he has since become the most successful producer in the business, with musicals running in most of the capitals of the world. (At the moment he has five musicals in London, including *Les Miserables* in the West End, and has just endowed a chair for theatre studies in Oxford.) 'How on earth did you fill those theatres?' he asked, and then answered his own question, 'Of course, you have your mafia!' From that time on we called our Aldersgate mailing list the 'Mafia file'.

The great fascination of producing is to watch the development of a single idea through commissioning an author to write the play, then through all the stages until you are there on the first night, watching the audience pour into the theatre.

Of course not every play succeeds as you hoped it would, and I don't know how often we managed to raise the artistic and dramatic standard of the play in the way that Alan Thornhill had hoped.

It is said in theatre circles that a producer will run out of steam and creative ideas after about eight years. Producing

Chapter 18 FINDING ALLIES

I THINK it's a common experience, when one starts on a calling, to feel somewhat alone. Then suddenly you find allies in the task – people with a similar or even greater commitment. This happened continuously to me through those years. One of the first allies was Nigel Goodwin*. Nigel is an unforgettable character not just for his colourful dress, favouring greens and purples, but above all for the way he pours himself out to everyone he meets, whether it be ordinary folk or international stars of stage and screen. Many of these have become close personal friends who rely greatly on him for help and inspiration.

He started life as an actor, brought up in a divided home without any background of faith. In his twenties he had his own 'heart-warming experience of Christ'. He then took two years out of the theatre world at a Bible college. Then he felt a strong calling to care for actors and artists of other disciplines working in their professional fields.

Along with Cliff Richard and David Winter, who later became head of religious broadcasting for the BBC, Nigel formed the Arts Centre Group in London, and subsequently other groups round the country, so that Christians in the midst of the stress of their professional lives would have support and become as he often says, thoroughly Christian, thoroughly professional. Since then he has extended this work all round the world and formed Genesis Arts Trust to make it possible. We invited Nigel to join our Aldersgate Board, and with his inside knowledge of the theatre world and of a great many actors, this was invaluable.

Perhaps his main contribution was a deeper one. I discovered that in any gathering he seemed to sense where there was a need and sought to find a way to meet it. It might be someone who was discouraged or in difficulties,

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*The biography of Nigel Goodwin, *Arts and Minds,* was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1994.

say this?' Instead of this he found himself saying, 'Yes, I do!' The boy looked astounded. He later told Daniel that he had had no intention of saying these words, but that they had suddenly come to him.

Daniel, being a man of integrity, prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, which began a change in his life not only affecting this boy but also the staff and his whole future. He told us that for the first time he really understood the love of God.

We became close friends. We sensed that here was a man of God who also had a great gift as a playwright, and who had been led to us.

It was shortly after this meeting, when searching for a subject for a play, that I remembered having read many years before C S Lewis's book *Surprised by Joy*, the fascinating story of a man who had become a Christian largely through his intellect. It wasn't until his wife, whom he married late in life, died of cancer, that after a period of deep distress and doubt, his faith became also a matter of the heart and emotion. Could it work as a play?

I talked with David William, who had directed a play for us, and asked him what he thought of the idea. He responded enthusiastically; he had studied under C S Lewis at Oxford and added, 'If I were you, I would ask Daniel Pearce to write it.' He had already read some of Daniel's work.

So *Song of the Lion*, as it was called, was born. Perhaps more than any other play, I felt it achieved what we had set out to do. It was a production which seemed to reach

Daniel Pearce

'The term is over... The holidays have begun... The dream is ended... This is the morning...'

I know people for whom this was a very deep experience.

Howard Bird, who had come to us as stage manager for *Song of the Lion* and, during his stay over several years, become a convinced Christian, told us that Vanessa Ford, whom he had worked with, had been trying to get the rights for C S Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* but had failed. Could I help?

The executors and agents of C S Lewis had been enthusiastic about *Song of the Lion*, so a meeting was arranged and because of this good will and the Westminster's reputation for its schools' programme and children's shows, the permission was granted. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was produced by Aldersgate and Westminster Productions, with Vanessa Ford Productions.

This was such a success at the Westminster that Vanessa Ford, who had considerable experience of touring, took it all around the country. This was followed by two other plays based on the Narnia books which reached, in the next five years about a million and a half children and their families.

What pleased me most about it was that when I talked to the children after the performances and asked them who was their favourite character, they would generally say, 'Oh Aslan, good old Aslan'. Aslan is the lion who comes to save Narnia from the evil White Witch. He is a 'Christ figure'. To make goodness attractive on the stage is the most difficult task, and in these plays it succeeded. The play also worked for people on different levels. For many it was just a good adventure story, for others a symbol of the battle between good and evil, while for yet others it was a parallel with the redemption of Christ.

We worked with Vanessa and her husband Glyn (who did the stage adaptation of the book) for five years. It wasn't always easy, but Stanley Kiaer, representing Westminster Productions, and I did enjoy working with this dynamic young woman.

I don't think it's too much to claim that it was largely due to the success of these productions that the TV film of *Shadowlands* was created. The head of religious broadcasting for the BBC described *Shadowlands* as having done more to present Christianity to the British public than anything else.

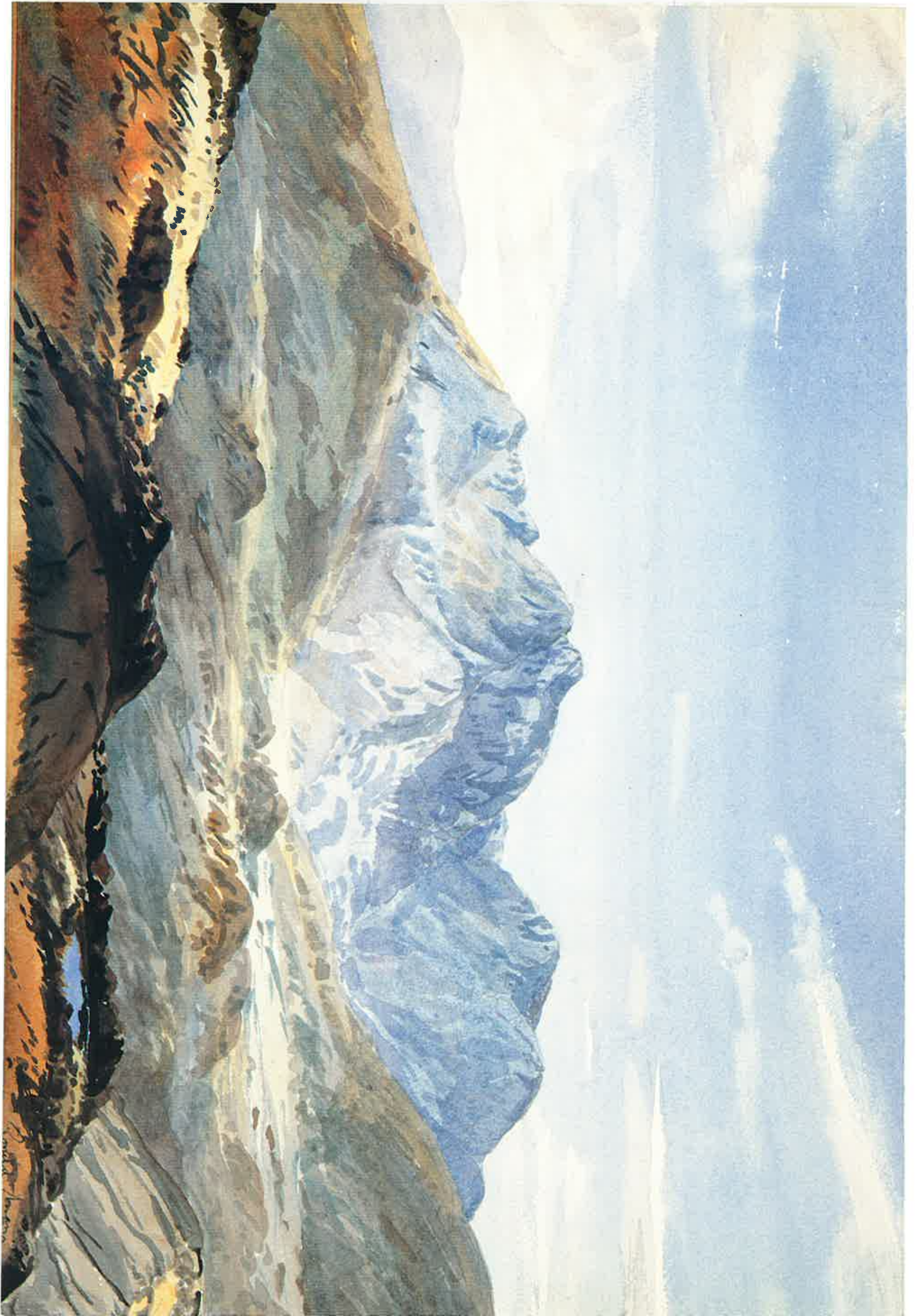
Shadowlands on TV was followed by the play, which ran

The Lion , the Witch and the Wardrobe

These lessons were reinforced by an invitation to see a play at the Bridge Park community centre in North London. I was impressed by the play but even more by the extraordinary story of the men running the centre, Leonard Johnson and Lawrence Fearon, who had both served prison sentences and then had a very real Christian experience. They had gone on to help create this £6 million community centre, Bridge Park, to meet the needs of their deprived community. We became close friends. They came to the MRA centres at Tirley Garth and Caux and so Mary and I became involved in friendships with many people who are grappling with the inner city problems.

Another ally on the road was Malcolm Muggeridge. He had collaborated with Alan Thornhill in writing a play about euthanasia called *Sentenced to Life!*, and they approached me about producing it.

We undertook the task and a fascinating friendship began. At that time Malcolm was very much in the public eye, so we were able to get a great deal of media coverage. When we held a reception for the press, people flocked in to hear what it was all about.



With Heaton Cooper at the side of Crummock Water

1992, and I asked, 'Where would you like to go?' 'Crummock', he replied, 'although I'm not sure I can manage the walk down from Low Park to the lake side.' However, he did manage it, and sat in the very cold wind to do yet another painting. Looking up Crummock is Rannerdale Knott and Green and Great Gable at the far end. For both of us this is a treasured spot. Heaton spent his honeymoon there, and it was the place where I met up again with him and Ophelia when I got back from prison camp. I'm never tired of painting it in all its different moods, but especially with snow on the fells.

On this particular day we called in to see the friends who live in Low Park, Bob and Margot Watkins. It's been almost a tradition in the past years to call in on Margot's mother, Beth Alexander, who would entertain us in an old-world, gracious manner to tea. *Plate no 12* was painted during one of our stays there. They have become close friends, especially as Bob's twin brother whom I met in London became the Treasurer of both Aldersgate and the Christian Arts Trust.

Sometimes when I've asked Heaton, 'Where shall we go?' he has said Coniston, which is special to him because he was brought up there. So we've painted together many times from the east side of the lake or from Torver looking towards Coniston, Old Man and Dow Crag. What is always surprising is the different feel that each of us gets even when painting from a similar angle, but we both sell them equally well, although not surprisingly Heaton gets much higher prices.

wonder and of worship. The painting part of my life has supplied much of those elements, when one becomes conscious of the hand behind it all, the other dimension to life which was so vivid to George Leonard. I am always greatly heartened when people say to me that a painting they have bought provides something of that element in their lives.

Heaton Cooper opening an exhibition at the Westminster Theatre

Photo: D Loughman

Chapter 23 ADVENTURE OF FAITH

IT WILL soon be 50 years since I resigned my secure job with the Lancashire County Council, my only financial security being a small army disability pension because of my damaged eye.

Since then I haven't received any salary and yet we've survived. Whilst in the USA and South America and in Italy we pooled our resources, sharing what we had individually and living on money given for the work we were doing. In Italy we were quite often short of funds and had to live very frugally. With St Paul I can say, 'I know what it is to be brought low, and I know what it is to have plenty.'

When Mary and I and our son John arrived back in England in 1963 we had £2,000 of savings, and our only income was the interest from this and my pension. As we had nowhere to live we were most grateful that some friends of ours, Dr and Mrs Mackay, offered us, rent-free, the first floor of their home in Wimbledon. After Dr Mackay died we helped to look after his widow for a year or two. Then his son and family felt that they should move in and look after their mother.

We then had a very clear thought, in a time of quiet, that we should buy a house, and that we should invite my sister Dorothy and my mother to join us, when my sister retired from her headmistress's job four years later.

Dorothy and Mother were very pleased at the thought that we should make a family home together. So Dorothy came down to London and said that she would take on finding half the money needed.

After looking at one or two houses we went to see a house in West Wimbledon, a three-storey, four-bedroomed, semi-detached that was up for sale. Immediately we felt this was the right house and because there was someone else already eager to buy it, we had to make up our minds quickly – the same day that we saw it.

This was an act of faith because although Dorothy could get a mortgage for her share of the property, we had no possibility of that or of finding the money needed. However, our clear thought was to tell the agent that we would

friends, especially in the theatre world, are sceptical when I tell them I've received no salary (and hardly any expenses) from MRA. Although I was offered a salary when we formed Aldersgate, I didn't accept it as I knew we would never survive as a company if I took a producer's salary from it. But this is how it has worked out. Earnings from my painting, although mostly given away for productions, have enabled us to pay for further painting trips. For those who remain sceptical, I say that this has also been the experience of many of my friends today as well as the experience of many over the centuries.

Perhaps the greatest joy is the constant flow of people through our house in both large parties and small, which I believe already gives the home its particular character. Some call it an oasis. One of our biggest delights is to entertain our West Indian friends from Bridge Park and our friends from Broadwater Farm.

LISTENING

The decision I made 60 years ago to take time each day to listen to God has been a tremendous aid. Perhaps my journey of faith is summed up in the words of Whittier's hymn:

> All as God wills, who wisely heeds
> To give or to withhold,
> And knoweth more of all my needs
> Than all my prayers have told.
>
> Enough that blessings undeserved
> Have marked my erring track;
> That whereso'er my feet have swerved,
> His chastening turned me back;
>
> That care and trial seem at last,
> Through memory's sunset air,
> Like mountain ranges overpast,
> In purple distance fair;
>
> And so the shadows fall apart,
> And so the west winds play;
> And all the windows of my heart
> I open to the day.

Appendix 1 THE VISION LIVES ON

Mgr Leonard wrote in the *Westminster Theatre News*:

'A vision once shared has a life of its own. It might be frustrated by adverse circumstances for a while, but it survives and continues to inspire. When the time is right it can blossom again into fresh forms and new beauty.

'Those of us who have struggled against the odds to create a vibrant and viable Christian theatre in the heart of London are gripped by such a vision. Now, with the utmost reluctance, Westminster Productions has been forced to abandon for a while its present dream ...

'The board members of Westminster Productions came from widely different backgrounds but shared a common dream. It grew out of forty years of brave and often lonely pioneering by Moral Re-armament. The movement's enthusiasm and faith shaped the theatre. It was the significance of drama in the battle to win minds and hearts. Of recent years, MRA recognised that new situations require new solutions. Generously – sacrificially even – it entrusted its theatre, and provided considerable financial backing, to a new board representing all the mainstream Christian churches. For that Westminster Productions will remain forever grateful.

'Our board believed – and still unrepentantly does – that to help our generation find its soul it must be offered a theatre and a school of writing and performance which celebrate and enrich the human spirit. We did not set out to moralise or berate; we saw little value in merely recounting improving stories; our aim remains that of affirming all that is truly and profoundly human.

'Naturally any avowedly Christian theatre is fiercely resented by those who feel threatened by its convictions. It would be naive to expect critical acclaim from today's liberal and permissive establishment. Unfortunately we also failed to convince committed Christians of the crucial importance of imagination and creativity in the service of truth...

'Failure, however, is never fatal. Fellowship forged in a shared endeavour will survive ...

'At the moment God's purposes remain unclear. But the vision lives on.'

Appendix 2 THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS

The author was producer, co-producer or promoter of the following plays.

ALDERSGATE PRODUCTIONS LTD

Year	Production	Dates
1976	*Ride! Ride!* book and lyrics by Alan Thornhill with Gordon Gostelow, Caroline Villiers, Brendan Barry. Music by Penelope Thwaites Directed by Peter Coe (Touring previously from March 2 to Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Bradford, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Bristol, Southampton.)	May 20 - June 24
1977	*Three Christian Plays* Presented by Aldersgate Productions in collaboration with the Greater London Churches Council.	
	Fire by Hugh Steadman Williams	March 8 - 28
	One Friday by Edmund Banyard with Ruth Madoc	March 29 - April 16
	Brother Francis by Peter Albery & William Fry Theatre Roundabout Production	April 19 - May 7
1978	*Sentenced To Life* by Malcolm Muggeridge and Alan Thornhill Directed by David William	May 17 - July 22
1980	*Song of the Lion* by Daniel Pearce based on the life and writings of C S Lewis with Hugh Manning as C S Lewis Produced by Ronald Mann and John Gibbs. Directed by David William (Premiere at the Ludlow Festival then toured Oxford Cambridge, Ipswich, Birmingham, Chichester Festival, Brighton.)	September 25 - October 18
1981	*Song of the Lion* Reopened at Westminster Theatre	January 15 - February 7
1981-82	*Gavin and the Monster* by Hugh Steadman Williams Music by Kathleen Johnson Directed by Denise Coffey	November 17 - January 23
1984-85	*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C S Lewis Adapted for stage by Glyn Robbins Directed by Richard Williams	November 20 - January 15

1963-64	*The Diplomats* by Peter Howard	December 31 165 performances
1964	*Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill* – a modern murder story by Peter Howard (This play has since been filmed for television.)	May 28 212 performances
1964-65 1st Year	*Give a Dog a Bone* – pantomime with book and lyrics by Peter Howard Music by George Fraser Design by W Cameron Johnson Costumes by Dorothy Phillips	Christmas
1965	*Mr Wilberforce MP* – historical play by Alan Thornhill Design by W Cameron Johnson. (Toured to: Newcastle, Hull, Manchester, Bradford, Belfast, Cardiff, Bath.) (277 schools sent parties to see this play.)	February 11 195 performances
1965-66	*Give a Dog a Bone* (2nd year) (For two months over Christmas season)	December 9
1966	*The Dictator's Slippers* by Peter Howard and *The Ladder* by Peter Howard	April 7-May 23
1966/67	*Give a Dog a Bone* (3rd year) (For two months over Christmas season) (Filmed under direction of Henry Cass in 1966)	December 8
1967	*Happy Deathday* by Peter Howard For eight weeks	February 9
1967	*Annie* – musical with book and lyrics by Alan Thornhill with Bill Kenwright, Angela Richards. Music by William L Reed	July 27 - December 9
1967-68	*Give a Dog a Bone* (4th year)	December 14 -January 27
1968	*Annie* (continued)	February 1 -August 31
1968	*Bishop's Move* by Alan Thornhill Directed by Henry Cass Design by W Cameron Johnson	September 12 - Dec 7
1968-69	*Give a Dog a Bone* (5th year) (For two months over Christmas season)	December 12
1969	*Hide Out* by Alan Thornhill	March 7 - May 24

	Musical Director: John Burrows Directed by John Dryden (This then toured UK, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, USA and Philippines.)	
1979	*Stranger in the House* by Hugh Steadman Williams with John Locke and Chris Channer Directed by Nancy Ruthven	September 10 - October 5
1980	*Ragman* by Edmund Banyard Music by Frances Campbell	February 25 - March 22
1980	*Mr Wilberforce MP* by Alan Thornhill (Produced for A Day of London Theatre)	September 23 - October 18
1981	*The Namesake* by Nancy Ruthven From the novels by C Walter Hodges Music by Kathleen Johnson and William L Reed	March 3 - 28
1981	*Jonas* by Daniel Pearce (Produced for A Day of London Theatre)	October 6 - 24
1981-82	*Gavin and the Monster* by Hugh Steadman Williams Music by Kathleen Johnson Directed by Denise Coffey Co-producer: Aldersgate Productions Ltd	November 17 - January 23
1982	*An Inspector Calls* by J B Priestley with Chris Channer, Philip Tyndale-Biscoe. Directed by John Blatchley (Produced for A Day of London Theatre)	March 2 -27
1987	*An Inspector Calls* by J B Priestley with Tom Baker, Peter Baldwin, Pauline Jameson, Charlotte Attenborough. Co-producer: Aldersgate Productions Ltd (For three months)	May 6
1989	*An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde Directed by Patrick Sandford	April 18 - November 25
1990	*Temptation* by Vaclav Havel Translated from the Czech by George Theiner with Sylvester McCoy, Frank Middlemass, Aden Gillett, Rula Lenska. Directed by James Roose-Evans Produced by Hugh Steadman Williams	June 6 - July 14