

“BUNNY” AUSTIN married Phyllis Konstam in 1931. The press headline was “The Wedding of the Year”. Austin was a member of the British team that won the Davis Cup four years running (1933-36) and in 1938 was ranked number two in the tennis world. Phyllis Konstam was a star of the West End stage.

When a tennis star marries an actress the stage is set for high drama.

Here is the story of such a marriage that began in glamour, continued in clash and controversy, and ended in a depth of purpose and love undreamt of at the beginning.

I found it very moving, very beautiful and very honest.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

By the same author
BITS AND PIECES
LAWN TENNIS MADE EASY
UNDER THE HEAVENS
FRANK BUCHMAN AS I KNEW HIM

With Phyllis Konstam
A MIXED DOUBLE

To Phyll with love

H.W. (BUNNY) AUSTIN

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First Letter

MY DARLING PHYLL,

I never thought how much I'd miss you; how much I'd miss just being with you, or when we were away from each other receiving your letters, or being able to ring you and hear your voice on the other end of the line, your voice which was always such a buoy to my spirits.

I was quite unprepared for your going. Of course I knew neither of us could live for ever. But I thought we might celebrate our golden wedding, and then I would go. It never occurred to me that you might go first. You were so vital, so full of life, and physically as well as spiritually you seemed strong. You used to walk well — sometimes better than I. That time in Cornwall you and our daughter Jenny strode together over the sands leaving me behind to saunter back to the cottage by myself. And while we were in Sorrento we walked up the steep hills — there was nowhere else to walk but up those steep hills outside the town. True, you had to stop from time to time to catch your breath, but so did I. Even the night before your heart attack you were striding out.

Of course you were tired. I should have noticed it, or rather taken more notice of it. You seldom complained, but during that long burning summer you once told me, "I'm tired: it's not like me." And there was the day you

complained there was a pain in your chest “up to your throat”. And then you brought up wind and the pain went and we thought it was indigestion.

I was tired too, especially so after the Wimbledon championships were over, and Stan and Margie Smith who had been staying with us had gone back to America. We wondered where we should go for a holiday, and then Signe and Arthur Strong rang from Somerset and we knew that was the place, and asked if we could stay with them in their little cottage and they said yes, giving us a great welcome.

It’s an old cottage, three hundred years old, but stoutly built, set on the moor between two opposing ranges of hill, full of history. They had converted the stables into a bedroom with bathroom attached, and there we stayed.

Though you were so tired you would insist on writing to our dear friend Elizabeth who’d been going through such a hard time with her divorce, and then next day you would write to our daughter and son, Jennifer and John.

We walked in the morning and after dinner you strode out with Signe while Arthur and I followed behind. And then in the night the pains came.

The doctor came in the early hours of the morning and pronounced the pain to be a heart attack. You were restless waiting for the ambulance — “I wish they’d hurry,” you said. I tried to calm you by reading the 23rd and 91st psalms and some of our favourite hymns. And then two jolly ambulance men arrived and wrapped you in a blanket and carried you in the chair to the ambulance, and there we were speeding down the roads of Somerset in the fresh early morning. Of course — so like you, my dear — you tried to give your aching heart to the ambulance men, and I had to hush you up and encourage you not to talk and tried to do the talking myself.

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Taunton was not very far from the cottage in Stoke St Gregory where we were staying. How you loved Somerset, and were always talking to me about Minehead where you spent happy holidays with your family. We'd looked forward to such a happy time in Somerset in Arthur and Signe's little cottage. And now we were speeding to the hospital.

I must admit I wasn't worried. I thought your vitality would win through. Looking at snaps of you taken that summer I notice how frail you looked. But I didn't notice it at the time. Everybody one way or another was being affected by the heat, and as we drove to the hospital and I sat waiting in the little room off the passage to the special therapy unit I remembered our many friends over the years who had had heart attacks, and none of them had died — in fact they seemed almost as active and certainly as creative as before. So while I sat in the little room waiting for the diagnosis of your pain I thought ahead to the future confidently. Of course you would have to slow down. You wouldn't be so active as before. But there was much we could do together — we could write the book you had on your mind, *How to be Happy Though Married*. Already you had written snatches of it in your notebook (alas, in your sprawling indecipherable hand!) full of humour and common sense, written out of the considerable experience we had gained in learning to make a marriage of two incompatible people work — at least incompatible is what we could have been called if we had not decided that, incompatible or not, we would by the grace of God make our marriage work.

There were such happy days while you were in the hospital. I only saw you for an hour a day and was so excited when that hour approached. And you were excited too — could scarcely wait for my arrival, finding the long

days boring, you who were always so active if not in body then in mind, every thought spilling out of you like water from an overflowing jug, thoughts of this person or of that, wondering how to help them, caring for their needs.

You shone in that hospital ward, that little square, bright, airy room with five other patients, one a man. Your eyes were so bright and eager as we sat and talked; and as from time to time you shifted your position and I watched your graph registering your heart beat and saw it jump and waver, my own heart turned over and I quickly glanced away.

Then came the great news — you were moving to a public ward. But that was a worrying time. There was a man who'd had a heart attack and kept shouting all the night through, keeping you awake when you should have been quiet and sleeping. And then into the next bed came the beautiful young woman who had tried to take her life. I knew your heart would go out to her and you would want to help, and I admonished you it was not your job, your job was to relax and rest. But the inevitable happened. You were somebody people wanted to talk to and so she poured out her heart to you; her sister came and wept over your bed and so again — though the poor man had been removed — you didn't get the rest you needed.

They said on the Monday you'd be out of the hospital the following Friday, but when on Tuesday Jen and I were leaving for our daily visit (Jen had come down from London the week before) they rang from the hospital to tell us to bring a blanket, you were ready to leave.

How excited you were, the ward staff gathering round you to say goodbye, and in your wheelchair you left like a queen. You were excited as we drove through Taunton and you saw a great beauty in the town. And then we were back at the cottage and we put you to bed.

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We were on the ground floor in the room that had once been a stable. The door opened on to the little garden, and this we left ajar because of the heat. And in the night a strange thing happened. A black cat appeared from somewhere, jumped on your bed and awakened us both with a start. I got up and shoved it out. It was then for the first time that I was afraid. I got back into bed and lay awake listening to your breathing. It could not have been more irregular and I fought a panic in my heart.

I got you your breakfast at 7.30 in the morning and we followed the hospital regime. You dictated a letter to me to our friends at the Moral Re-Armament World Assembly at Caux, and then you got up and with a rug round you sat just outside the door into the garden. I had bought some jig-saw puzzles for you, but you had not the energy to do one.

Back to rest after lunch and then out into the garden again. Then back to bed, where, on the radio, you listened to the story of Madame Curie. Then lights out and we were asleep.

It must have been two o'clock when you awoke and told me you had pain. I was out of bed in a flash to telephone the doctor and he, bless his heart, was round at once and once more summoning the ambulance. This time you did not try to talk. You lay on the ambulance bed wrapped like a mummy in your brown blanket and you only said one thing, "I am at peace." I had taken my night things with me, and when you had once more been taken down the long corridors to the special therapy unit, a night nurse (such a nice one) took me to a little guest bungalow where I could spend the rest of the night. Two thoughtful and caring teenage girls (who were in the hospital to be with their dying father) kindly got me my breakfast and I went back to the hospital. I found you in a room off the

ward, just coming round after the sedative they'd given you. You were very dear and very much at peace and I knew how much I loved you.

Now started the old routine, Jen and I driving in every afternoon (earlier now so you didn't have to wait so long for us to come) and staying with you for an hour or so. Once more (your ward was full of men this time) all seemed to be going well. And one afternoon when Jen and I came to see you you said you were leaving the special therapy unit next day for a public ward, and our hearts again rejoiced. But that evening a night nurse rang and said you seemed to be anxious and it would be good if I could come — she did not tell me you had had heart failure. Once more I packed my night things and Jen sped me to the hospital. I stayed with you till two in the morning and you told me you thought you were going to die. I said that whenever I'd been ill in the last years I thought I was going to die and here I was still. You smiled and closed your eyes and after a while I went quietly from the ward to my bungalow. But I scarcely slept and at 6 am I was back by your bedside again.

You were now growing very weak, but I still remained confident you would recover. I made enquiries about nursing homes and where you could best spend the days of your convalescence.

A male nurse warned me your condition was very grave, and I went to see the doctor who was looking after you. We called him Tickityboo because, before you left hospital the first time, he had said to me, "She'll soon be tickityboo and throwing her shoulders back." Tickityboo reassured me. He said the male nurse was self-important and was nothing but a fellow who went round with a stethoscope and was not a trained doctor.

But it was the male nurse who was right, and deep in my heart I believed it, though I would not admit it. In the

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afternoon of August 20th — it had been over three weeks since you first went into the hospital — Jen and I sat with you. You told us your left leg was swollen, that you had cystitis and that you were unable to take penicillin. Your breathing was quick and very shallow. I didn't speak of death but asked where you would most wish to recuperate. You said you would like to go home.

We were asked to leave the ward because the doctors were doing their rounds. The nurse told us they would take an hour. Jen and I left and went in to Taunton but were back in the ward in fifty minutes. But the doctors had gone.

You were anxious to find out what they had said. The Registrar had left the hospital but I rang him at his home. He said he would see me at ten the following morning. This reassured Jen and me that there was no immediate crisis and we decided to leave you so we wouldn't be late home and could return early the next morning. I kissed you on your forehead and as I left the ward I turned, as I had done every day, and waved good-bye. You waved back, lifting your left hand.

As we left the hospital we saw Tickityboo going into a bungalow with a nurse. We waved to him and he waved back but made no move to speak to us. Again reassured there was no immediate danger, Jen and I drove away.

At nine that night a call came through from the hospital. It was the male nurse. You had had a second heart failure. Again I packed my night clothes and Jen raced me to the hospital. We were met by a doctor who took us into the little room where I had waited when you had first been taken to the special therapy ward. "I am sorry to have to tell you, Mrs Austin may not live through the night."

Perhaps it was no real shock. Perhaps over the last days I'd known you might not live. But I listened unhearing as the doctor took us through your case, showed us the

cardiograms of your heart. Then he left the room and Jen and I sat silently together. The doctor returned and told us you were gone.

It took a little time for the news to register. I told him we had the Christian faith and that you were alive and might be even at that moment standing with us in that little room. The doctor said nothing and left us to ourselves. Then Jen and I broke down and sobbed.

There was a telephone in the room and Jen and I thought of all the people we should inform. First there was John. Things always went deep with him, though he never showed any outward sign of his feelings. All he ever said was, "I never knew anybody like Mum." But there was nobody of our household at home. We rang our neighbours John and Guinevere Tilney, and asked if they could leave a message at our house. Guinevere loved you dearly and broke down and wept. Then we rang a friend and asked him to inform our other many friends in London, and to telex the World Assembly at Caux in Switzerland where so many who knew and loved you were gathered.

A male nurse came in, gave us your belongings carefully listed and asked if we wished to see you. Jenny wanted to but I didn't — I wanted to remember only the living person I had loved so long. But I went with Jenny. You were lying on your back, your eyes closed and your mouth fallen open. "It's just as if Mum were asleep," said Jen. I kissed your still warm forehead for the last time, and with nothing more to be done or said we left the hospital.

We arrived back at the cottage and parked the car. It was a radiant night. I never could remember the stars shining so brilliantly. As I looked up one shooting star fell from the sky.

We went into the cottage where Arthur and Signe

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received us with love and understanding and I went to my room. I decided to pack all your clothes, to have as few reminders of you as possible. And as I did so I talked to you. I've sometimes wondered if you heard, if you were there with me in the room or if you had already ascended to your new home in Paradise. And when at last I climbed into bed I slept soundly.

You had gone away but I had not yet fully realised you would not come back. John joined us from London and the next few days were not unhappy ones. We were in touch with the local vicar about your funeral service and the man responsible for your burial came to see us. Apart from this service he ran the local funfair. He was so precise in his instructions to us he made us laugh. Things, he felt, had to be done exactly right. The way he drilled us amused us and eased our pain.

I wanted the service to be the kind you would most want. I chose the hymn "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken", because that is what you had done: you had taken the Cross of Jesus and lived victoriously in its power. I also chose "He Who Would Valiant Be" because you were such a valiant soul. The vicar agreed to read the first hymn because I knew there would not be many at the service, and there is nothing more gloomy than a hymn badly sung by a few people unable to carry a tune. I also asked if he would use the prayer of Mother Teresa because I knew how much you loved this friend and how much the thought of her had sustained you in the last days of your illness.

Alan and Barbara Thornhill, our beloved *voisins*, so called since we roomed next door to each other at Caux in 1947, came for the funeral — Alan had agreed to make the address. What a friend he was and is! It was August 25th, the day before my seventieth birthday. John, always original and imaginative, had suggested that instead of a

wreath, we had a bowl of flowers as he felt Mum, who loved flowers so much, would want it that way.

Many flowers arrived from friends and many friends came down from London, and your beloved sister Anna and her husband and their son Richard. I suppose there were about forty in all.

I determined not to be sad. The service, the funeral, were necessary I knew. But I knew too you were not in the coffin, only your body which I had dearly loved. But I could not grieve over your body when you yourself whom I loved so much more were not in your body but watching perhaps all that was going on. It was really not a time for sorrow but rejoicing.

Things continued to be made easier by the funeral director, alias the director of the funfair. He marshalled us before the service and made us smile as he marched us into the church at exactly the right moment. Alan gave the address:

“A heart poured out for others. I think that sums up everything that we want to say. More than anyone I know, our dear Phyll has shown what a loving heart means. Love of her husband, love of her son and daughter, love of her household, love of all of us — of a countless host — above all, love of God.

“An African lady, who had only met her once, wept when she heard the news and said, ‘She was my friend.’ Phyll interpreted the word friend to thousands all over the world. Someone said, ‘Whenever things were blackest and I was right at the bottom, she was the one I turned to, and she never failed me.’

“Nothing soft about it. Nor blind — far from it. Just a laying down of life alongside other people, without judgement, with tremendous verve and humour, with infinite hope and care — and dare, because love of that

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kind takes a lot of courage. You risk everything.

“I suppose a heart like that, that gives everything, finally gives out. That’s what happened to Phyll and that is the way she would want it to be.

“It was a terrible shock. We walked about stunned. Next day in church I felt dazed with a heart like stone. And then we sang a hymn that lifted everything. It’s by that wonderful poet-parson, George Herbert:

Wherefore with my utmost art

I will sing thee.

How marvellously she did that — a superb artist — who used her *utmost* art, the highest of standards — on stage and off — in order to praise God.

And the cream of all my heart

I will bring thee.

Phyll brought the cream of all her heart — the richest, the best. So many of us are content with the skim-milk.

Though my sins against me cried,

Thou didst clear me.

It wasn’t an easy life. She was very conscious of her sins. That’s why she was so compassionate with others.

And alone, when they replied,

Thou didst hear me.

Alleluia

Quietly she has slipped off-stage and taken up a new role — on a larger stage — under the same loving Director. Alleluia.

“Let us be quiet together and each of us give thanks for Phyll — her tremendous zest for life, her courage, her humour, her sense of drama, her warrior spirit, above all her love — for people and for God.”

As your body was lowered into the grave the funeral director again was by our side making sure everything was done according to the rules. “Now you must stand here,”

he said, "in a line by the grave." And after the coffin was lowered he gave me two roses to throw into the grave and instructed us to walk alongside the grave to the other side. His continued determination that everything should be done correctly lightened and made easier that difficult moment. But I wouldn't follow his instructions to throw the flowers in the grave. You wouldn't want that, I knew. So I gave one to Margarita, and one to Shirley Wilson who is such a wonderful wife to her husband Frank in his work of drug rehabilitation and who loved you dearly as her best friend.

What a multitude of friends you left behind! How many hundreds warmed to your large and generous heart. The young woman who had tried to take her life and had poured out her troubles to you in the hospital sat sobbing in her car. I went over to comfort her. How long had she known you? Only a few hours. And yet in those few hours, not even hours, only minutes, you had won a friend who was now sobbing at her loss.

The next day was my birthday. What a happy day it was. Alan and Barbara and their beloved Susan, my god-daughter, were with us for tea. You were not there. You were away somewhere. I missed you, of course, but still the aching truth had not come home to me that from this last journey of yours you were not to return.

Jen and John and I stayed on together for some days. We were happy in our love for one another and in our love for you, beloved wife and mother. We went for drives in John's car and for walks in the lovely Somerset countryside. You must have been with us on those walks, for Jenny once said, "Today I felt wrapt in Mum's love." How deeply you gave your love to us and how deeply we loved you in return. That is why there is engraved on the black marble headstone where your body lies buried:

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PHYLLIS KONSTAM AUSTIN

ACTRESS

ADORED WIFE, MOTHER

AND FRIEND

1907 - 1976

SHE LOVED JESUS

AND THE WORLD WAS HER STAGE

Second Letter

IT DOESN'T SEEM so very long ago, though it was July 1929, that a young dark-haired actress was being photographed on Waterloo Station and a young man called John Olliff was telling another young man this exciting piece of news. The young actress was you and the second young man was me.

You had seen my photograph in the *Daily Mirror* during the Wimbledon championships: I had been best man at a wedding. And you had said to yourself, "This is the kind of man I'd like to marry." Little did you think as you made your plans to sail to America to play opposite Laurence Olivier in New York in *Murder on the Second Floor* that you would be meeting this young man on board ship.

What was I thinking when I heard the news that "there's an actress down the platform being photographed"? I said, "That doesn't interest me." But it did. It did very much. I was fascinated by women and in particular by actresses and the whole, to me, magic world that lay behind the stage of a theatre. I loved the theatre. I loved the mystery of it — not least those exciting moments before the curtain went up and the drama unfolded of whatever play it might be. (I hate it today when so often there's no curtain.) I fell in love with the theatre one day at school when a travelling company came and performed John Drinkwater's play *Abraham Lincoln*. It left me spell-

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bound and in a dream. I searched out his other plays in the school library and read them all. With a friend I read the plays of J.M.Barrie. I read and re-read *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

And now, somewhere on the same train with me, was a young woman who was an actress, who lived in that magic world. I wondered if we would meet.

I used to be shy of girls. Dances to me were a nightmare. Why should any girl like me, I used to wonder. I was in my own estimation dull and plain. Yes, I had no opinion of myself. "If you weren't good at games," my mother once said to me, "you would be swept up with the crumbs." I could not have agreed with her more.

But my shyness with girls gradually fell away. I found they actually liked me! Though I never changed my mind about my lack of good looks — my mirror did not lie — I found I was not as dull as I thought: I could in fact be quite amusing. So I had no fears about meeting the actress in the unlikely event of such a meeting coming about.

John and I kept our eyes open for you and the first evening as we were going up the spiral staircase of the ship John suddenly whispered to me "There she is!" And out of the corner of my eye I saw you — black hair curled at the sides, heavily mascaraed eyelashes, vivid painted lips. You passed and were gone.

The next day John and I were playing shuffle board and a blond young man came up to us. He was a great tennis fan, he said, and had seen me play at Wimbledon in the semi-final against Jean Borotra. After chatting for a while he said he had a friend he would like us to meet. We followed him across the deck and who of all the people on the ship should it be but you!

Strange that we should meet so soon and stranger still that you should have taken a liking to me. For that evening

you came up to the table where John and I were dining and said, "Hello". I stood up and asked you for a dance. You wore a peach coloured gown, low cut, a Norman Hartnell creation. I didn't dance very well — neither, if I may say so, did you! But of all unbelievable things you were in my arms and neither to you nor me on that crowded dance floor did dancing seem of much importance.

I don't know how it happened but soon you and your blond young friend were in the cabin John and I shared together. We played gramophone records — not very high brow, the latest popular songs. One was "Mean to Me", a banal song but one we often recalled in the future as it reminded us most vividly of our first meeting in those far off days at the end of the giddy 'twenties.

You had changed into a simple dress and lay on one of the bunks, your grey blue eyes bright between the black mascara of your eyelashes.

A little later we were all in the writing room. You took a cablegram form, wrote on it and handed it to me, "Beware of the woman in 221. Remember mother's warning. A well-wisher." I have the form still.

Later that evening I knocked on the door of cabin 221. You said, "Come in." I went in and you were standing in front of the mirror, your back to me, brushing your hair. I put my arms round you from behind. You turned and we kissed.

Amazing how it happened so quickly — strangers in the morning, lovers at night. I don't mean we went to bed together. Sleeping with girls was against my upbringing — you kept that for the night of your marriage. But long hours of kissing was not against my rules.

After that night we spent all the days together — together with John and your blond, very good looking, almost beautiful friend. But after dinner we would go to

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your cabin and you would change from your evening gown into a simple dress and we would go to the sundeck and sit in the warm Atlantic breezes as the *Berengaria* clove its way through the calm sea and the stars shone in a cloudless sky.

I wonder what we talked about? I don't remember. Perhaps we didn't talk very much. Just sat together. You were in love with me — you had written home and said you had met the man you were going to marry. And I? You were, I am afraid, just another girl friend met on my travels, more exciting, more glamorous than any other, with a special fascination for me because you were an actress, and the world of theatre came for the first time into my life. I'm afraid I was a very shallow young man, loving the life I was leading, loving the worldwide travel, thrilled to see what were, in those days, far away places, many with magic names — Hollywood, 'Frisco, Tahiti, and many more; loving the game I played, ambitious to become the best player in the world.

The voyage ended and we watched the skyline of New York loom out of the morning mists, Staten Island and the Statue of Liberty holding aloft the lamp of freedom, calling to the poor and downtrodden of the world, but forgetting alas the poor blacks who for so long had been held in slavery.

But the rights and wrongs of things, the cruelties and injustices of the world did not concern us at that time. You were absorbed by the bright lights of the West End and Broadway and I by the next tournament, the next championship and, alas, the next girl friend.

We saw each other in New York and went to the theatre together, always with John and your blond friend. As manager of my "team" — it was in fact just John — I was rich. I had a roll of five hundred dollar bills in my

pocket. I could afford to entertain you royally at the expense of the Lawn Tennis Association, though one day I would have to pay the money back.

Then you started rehearsals and I left for tournaments in New England. You wrote to me such dear and loving letters. You sent me telegrams. I have them still. I was reading them the other day and with a stab in my heart I realised how much you were in love with me. Shallow as I was, I had never taken my many flirtations seriously. Each of the girls I met knew — and I knew — that it was unlikely we would meet again. We enjoyed our little flirtations and left each other without regrets, meeting, probably quite soon afterwards, some other person with whom to play the game of love. I never realised you saw in me, only twenty-two years old and looking about seventeen, the man you wanted to marry.

You came to watch me play at the Westchester Country Club and you gave me some advice on my game — you were, at least outwardly, never without confidence!

And now I came back to New York to play in the Nationals at Forest Hills. You invited John and me to the first night of *Murder on the Second Floor* and we sat in the front row of the stalls. Afterwards we went backstage and there you were in your stage make-up. It was then I thought I fell in love with you. I longed to be with you and hated to be away from you. Tennis began to take second place. The previous year, playing at Forest Hills, my teammates and I had stayed in a New York hotel. There was no air conditioning in those days and our rooms were stiflingly hot. We couldn't sleep. So this year it was arranged we should stay at the Forest Hills Inn, near the tennis courts where, though hot enough, it was cooler by far than in the concrete jungle of the city.

But I wanted to see you. So each day after practice and

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each evening after the championships began I took a taxi from Forest Hills into New York and spent the time with you before you went to the theatre. Most nights I went with you and watched from the wings, chatting with you and Larry when you or he were not on stage.

Somewhere along the way in the tournament I played John Doeg, a left-hander with a big serve (yes, even in those days the Americans played the serve and volley game). You came out to watch. I really had no chance. The courts were mostly plantains, the bounce of the ball unpredictable. I did once get to break point on Doeg's service. But his service hit a plantain and didn't rise from the ground. I was beaten easily and I didn't mind. I could spend all the remaining days with you in New York.

I was with you one evening in the sitting room of your hotel apartment. You were wearing a red dress with white polka dots. And you told me a story I didn't quite understand. I gathered that it was some experience you had had with a man and you told me you had hated it. I came to the conclusion that though you were far from being sexually shy with me, were indeed far more free than any other girl I'd met, you were, except for this unhappy incident, no more sexually experienced than I.

It seems a strange thing to write, but though I had not proposed to you I gathered by the end of the evening that somehow or other we were engaged. I had seldom contemplated matrimony, though I must confess that every now and then I had thought that one day I would marry, and I had kept my eyes open for a likely candidate. I am ashamed to say that you, darling, were not at that time in that category, but here I was apparently engaged. And as I went down in the lift I said to myself, "So this is what it feels like." To be honest I felt no different than before.

Soon we had to say good-bye. I was travelling with John to play in the Pacific South West championships at Los Angeles. The year before I had made friends with a famous film star vamp of that time, Jetta Goudal. Now, I thought, it would be different. I was engaged. Hollywood sirens would have no appeal to me.

The train on its five day journey to the West stopped at Albuquerque where I bought a shawl and some turquoise jewellery for you from the Indians. At last we rolled into Los Angeles.

Oh for my resolutions! I heard that the sister of a famous film star was attracted to me and before long I was spending evenings with her at her sister's Hollywood home. And then at a party I met a petite film star and soon I was spending evenings with her at her apartment. I was beaten early in the tournament, but I didn't mind. The petite star in an enormous Cadillac drove me out to bathe at Santa Monica.

The tournament quickly ended and I returned east with the British Wightman Cup team, watching the sun set at the Grand Canyon with my friend Betty Nuttall who, at the age of twelve, when I first met her, was a child wonder, the terror of the adults and the darling of Britain.

At last New York again — and you. All was well until one early morning the telephone rang in my hotel room, and the petite star told me she was coming to New York. I had to tell you. How I must have hurt you! Foolishly I told you you mustn't take me seriously. How that must have hurt you too! Now when I re-read your letters I realise the pain in them, and I have a pain in my own heart. You must forgive me for I was very young, very shallow, very immature and very slow in growing up.

But soon the boot was on the other leg. I sailed from New York on the *Mauretania* and I missed you terribly.

SECOND LETTER

Home again I started work on the Stock Exchange. I arrived at my office in the City on a typical cold misty November day. It was just after the Wall Street crash. There was no work. I copied things I didn't understand into a ledger sitting on a high stool and mourned the lost glamour of all the previous years — Cambridge and world travel and meeting you. I was now the one in love. I wrote you frequently and your replies became more and more distant. Many theatrical opportunities were opening up for you, you wrote. We would, of course, be good friends. You said your play was folding and you would soon be home.

We arranged to meet for tea at the Carlton Hotel and I was full of excitement and high expectation at the thought of meeting the warm, amusing girl I had known in New York. You came into the tea room wrapped in furs. Lot's wife may have been turned into a pillar of salt; you had turned into a pillar of ice. You treated me frigidly and disdainfully. I was getting, as they say, my "come uppence". The chill of you went to my bones.

I thought that was the end. But no: unexpectedly, you invited me to a party at your home and you managed to create the opportunity for me to kiss you. We met fairly often after that for dinner in a small London restaurant. I began to wonder if you were the innocent lily you had made yourself out to be in New York. I thought I would ask and wrote to you. You wrote a furious letter in return. Gentlemen, you stated heatedly, did not raise the kind of queries I had raised in my letter. But condescendingly you allowed, "when you grow a bit steadier you can remain a friend of Phyll."

I believe I went to a theatre with my family that evening, but I was stunned. Again I thought it was the end. But no, again, it proved not to be so. You rang me and said

you had appendicitis and invited me to see you. I went to your house. I also went to the nursing home before your operation and met one of my rivals coming out.

And then I had to go on a tennis trip to Scandinavia, with John once more my travelling companion. I imagined, in spite of my last two visits to you, that our affair was really over. I had a little flirtation with a Swedish girl I had met originally in Paris.

And then some hidden force got into the act. After my trip to Sweden I went to play in tournaments in the South of France, at Beaulieu and Monte Carlo. Your mother planned to take you to Cannes to help you recuperate from your operation. She heard I was going to the South of France and, convinced I was not at all a suitable aspirant for the hand of her daughter, and that Cannes was the place where tennis was played, decided to take you instead to Beaulieu. Two days later I arrived. You met me at the station.

So now everything started up again. Your mother tried to discourage me by telling me you were going to marry your blond friend. Nevertheless, she took us on glorious drives to visit the mountain villages of the Alpes Maritimes. You made me jealous by ogling other players but we were constantly together.

When the tournament at Monte Carlo was over we travelled on the same train to Paris, where I stayed to play in the London versus Paris annual match. You wired me from London, "Please beat Borotra, Bunny." I did — the first victory of an Englishman over a world ranking player for many years.

You were now beginning to act in films, small parts at first which, however, led later to stardom in such films as *The Skin Game* and the very successful *Tilly of Bloomsbury*. I think you must still have been smarting under the hurt of

SECOND LETTER

our last days in New York because to me you were aloof, cold and condescending.

In April I played in the Hard Court Championships at Bournemouth. You were filming on Dartmoor with Gerald du Maurier, in *Escape*. I was almost beaten in the second round by Fred Perry, who had just appeared on the tennis scene: my mind was with you and not on the tennis court. In the third round I got fed up playing a fellow called Eric Peters, a good but not top class slow court player, and was beaten. I was glad. I went back to the hotel and packed my bags, and the next day set off to join you where you were staying at the Two Bridges Hotel on Dartmoor, my foot jammed down on the accelerator, driving like Jehu as fast as my Riley would go. Were you pleased to see me? I don't know. You made it very clear to me that I was a very lucky young man to have you as a friend.

Later, when I was beaten in the Davis Cup match against Germany, I drove out to see you at Elstree where you were filming *Murder* with Alfred Hitchcock. You told me in a very superior way that I "lacked guts and courage".

Then came the Kent championships at Beckenham. You were free from filming and we stayed together at Hayes with friends we had made in the South of France. I had invited you to play with me in the handicap mixed doubles. You stood decorously on the base line, smiling and charming everybody. I had been dropped from the Davis Cup team but beat my two rivals to win the championship.

Our respective families, so different in background and way of life, had one thing in common — both were against our marrying, my father in particular not wanting his son to marry an actress, feeling it could only lead to unhappiness.

TO PHYLL WITH LOVE

In spite of family opposition we continued to meet, and though most meetings ended in a row, on arriving home we would rush to the telephone, ring each other up and put things right. Slowly the invisible tie which seemed, in spite of ourselves and our families, to hold us together, grew stronger. As summer turned to autumn and winter approached, our relationship, in contrast to the weather, grew warmer. And then with November came an invitation to me to go with an International Club team to India. Should I go or should I not?

We talked the matter over and decided a three month separation would be good for us — after such a separation we would know if we really cared for one another or not.

Before I left I went to the local florist in South Norwood and gave an order for them to send to you a dozen red carnations every week.

Third Letter

YOU TOLD ME LATER the red carnations did the trick! Each Friday, as you felt your affections waning, along came the red carnations and you thought, "How very sweet of him to send them to me." And you realised after all how fond of me you were.

When I returned after thirteen weeks away our relationship settled into far calmer waters. We began to talk about marriage and though I never fell on my knees before you and pleaded, "Darling, will you be mine?" we came to what might be called "an understanding".

And once more I was at Bournemouth, playing in the Hard Court Championships and staying as usual at the Burlington Hotel. At 8 o'clock in the morning a message came to my room — I was wanted on the telephone. There was only one telephone in the hotel, in the lobby. I put on my dressing gown and ran down the stairs. I picked up the receiver. It was you. "Darling," you announced, "we're engaged. I read it on the front page of the *Daily Express*."

You rascal! You had leaked the news to a friend who in turn was a friend of the *Daily Express* editor.

This was different from our "engagement" in New York. I loved you. I rejoiced. You said you would be coming down to Bournemouth. You arrived later with your mother.

Dear "Maman", as I was later to call her! She had got

over her prejudice against me, and though she was a very difficult woman and the bane of your family and friends, I came to love her and she to love me. Later we were to have great times together in the South of France when I again played tennis at Beaulieu and Monte Carlo.

She was very sweet to me now. And so were you. We were back to our first relationship, though now I had changed. I had begun to grow up.

You had a boil on your forehead so were not quite your romantic best. But what did a boil matter? I was too excited to worry about boils — or tennis. And when I came up against the Japanese Miki, a great hard court player, against whom one had to exercise great patience to win, I couldn't be bothered and was beaten in straight sets.

But now my heart was at peace. You were now my bride-to-be. We fixed our wedding for November and I began to play tennis well. You were no longer a worry but an inspiration. I played well in the French championships until I put out my sacroiliac joint, and might have won Wimbledon if I had not lost a match point against Shields in the quarter finals.

You were filming at the time, but came to Wimbledon that afternoon before I left the club. My defeat didn't seem to matter much. You were free from filming the next day and we agreed to go out together in the afternoon and read some poetry. Armed with a volume of my favourite poet, Keats, we drove out into the countryside and found a grassy clearing underneath a little tree in a bracken covered heath.

I am afraid poor Keats was forgotten.

We had tea in the garden of a nearby inn. Do you remember the mother and daughter who made us laugh so much? We were never to forget the mother admonishing her child, "Eat it up, dear. We've paid for it." How often

THIRD LETTER

in the future you'd say to me, "Eat it up, dear, we've paid for it."

Soon after Wimbledon there was the inter-zone final of the Davis Cup. You came with the team to Paris but weren't allowed to stay in the same hotel. What a blessing you were to me, amid all the excitement and tension of the two rounds of the Davis Cup played there — the inter-zone final and then the great challenge round itself.

Do you remember the excitement in Paris in those days? The whole nation was agog. With their four great players, the Four Musketeers, Borotra, Brugnon, Cochet and Lacoste, they were the champion nation and had indeed won and held the cup for four years.

The young Perry had come right to the front. We beat the Americans in the inter-zone final and I had to play the deciding match. It was your presence which took my mind off the games. We would go together into the vast Bois de Boulogne and lie on the grass under the trees. And you would make me laugh. You had a wonderful story of a French woman trying to speak English. She would start laboriously and then, bored with trying, her French *élan* would break through and take control and she would rush into a babble of French. It doesn't sound very funny on paper, but in those far off days in the Bois, when Paris was agog with excitement, and the centre court of the Stade Roland-Garros was a cauldron of men and women sweating under the burning sun, cheering their heads off, your funniness made me laugh, and I played and won unaffected by any disastrous nerves.

Do you remember the occasion when I fell on one knee and finding myself facing you in the high stands blew you a kiss? I think a lot of people felt, at least the English people, that it was not quite the right thing to do in a Davis Cup match, though of course the French loved it. And do you

remember how, when I was playing and beating Borotra, you were stung by a bee and went to see the doctor and all he could say was, "Ah, le pauvre Borotra! Le pauvre Borotra!"?

Those were unforgettable days, a highlight up to then of my tennis life. All was magic, not least after we had dined at our lovely hotel, the Crillon, where the team were staying, and in the coolness of the evening after the heat of the day we would stroll round the Place de la Concorde, and watch the multi-coloured setting of the sun behind the Arc de Triomphe, and the twin necklaces of shining lights on either side of the Champs Elysées.

We left Paris in triumph. We had not won the Davis Cup, though it was nineteen years since Great Britain had reached the challenge round.

They were happy days, and happy though quieter days remained as we went for a rest and holiday to your parents' home in Sussex. We walked on the downs and bathed at Angmering-on-Sea. Sometimes you raised doubts about our getting married and though I brushed them aside your doubts persisted right up to our wedding day, at least you later told me so. I had booked rooms for the first three days of our honeymoon at the Dorchester Hotel, and you asked your beloved governess, who had been with you in New York, to come to the hotel the day after our wedding. But by then you knew for sure you loved me and all your doubts fled away.

It is strange that neither of us could remember anything about our actual wedding and the reception afterwards. One would imagine that every detail would have stood out in our memories. But no, the whole event was a blurr. I thought perhaps my memory was a blurr because although I didn't realise it till three days later I had the 'flu! But this doesn't explain why your memory

THIRD LETTER

was a blurr as well!

The 'flu upset our honeymoon plan. You wanted to go abroad and I had arranged for us to join a small team going to Scandinavia. While my temperature soared you sat at the end of my bed crying and making a fuss because our tennis trip had to be cancelled. When I recovered we went instead to your parents' home in Sussex.

They were happy, peaceful days there, with long walks over the downs, as I grew stronger. How beautiful they were, the valleys often filled with pools of mist, the ground white with rime. In those far off days of our youth heat or cold didn't seem to matter very much, one took them in one's stride. But it was not always cold. There is a snapshot of us standing coatless and hatless on the downs, you leaning against me, your arm through mine. I call the snapshot "The Good Companions", though your wind-blown hair, not in its normal careful trim, rather spoils the photograph!

But you still hankered after a trip abroad and I accepted an invitation to go to Barcelona and play against the champion of Spain, Booby Maier. It was December, and as it was cold in Barcelona it was suggested to us we should go to the lovely island of Majorca and revel in its sunshine. What an experience that was! We booked into a little hotel by a beach where we imagined we would spend idle hours bathing and lying in the sun. But it didn't turn out as we dreamed. We almost didn't get to Majorca at all. The ship we sailed on nearly capsized in a terrible storm in the Golfe du Lion. But we did arrive and went in a horse-drawn cart to the simple wooden building which was our hotel.

The sky was blue, but soon great clouds climbed over the horizon and as in the days of Noah the rains came. It rained and rained and rained. We were assured that the

rains never lasted for more than three days but the fourth day came and the fifth and the sixth and still it rained. I got a sore throat on Christmas Day and that amusing couple we met asked you if I had been drinking the water. You said yes. "Oh dear," they replied, "it's typhoid." You saw, with your dramatic imagination, another *Daily Express* headline, "Phyllis Konstam Widowed After Only a Month."

But it was not typhoid and after the sixth day of rain you said, "We're going home." We left in the rain in a howling gale and your hat box with its twenty-two trousseau hats was blown into the sea. On the ship back to the mainland we had a fight. You said you thought my father was common. This deeply hurt because I loved my Dad and he happened to come from a family which was not without its aristocratic background. So I sat on you!

We had a terrible channel crossing on our way from Calais to Dover and were glad to be home. We decided if we could survive our honeymoon we could survive anything. We did. But it was not without a titanic struggle.

Fourth Letter

WE WERE NOW ENSCONCED in our lovely little flat in Hampstead by the Whitestone Pond. We were the highest people in London. Over to our right we could look down on the far off dome of St Paul's Cathedral and straight ahead we looked over the wooded heath of Hampstead to Highgate on its opposite hill.

Your parents had furnished it for us. How generous your father was and how you adored him! It was not surprising. Born of a poor Jewish school teacher, he had come with his brother to London at the age of seventeen, inherited a small leather business from an uncle and built it up into a huge success. He was humble, kindly, full of compassion for those less fortunate in life. He loved and had a great knowledge of painting and supported the Polish artist Wolmark all Wolmark's life. He loved music and in the golden music room of your Hampstead home gave many musical soirées. In fact your home was a Mecca for artists of all kinds. The Hungarian sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska came and doodled on the blotting pad in your study. How you wished you had kept those doodles!

As a young businessman he had discovered Augustus John, Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska and Wolmark before they were known. He bought their work for a few pounds. Wolmark he considered the finest artist of them all, but he was such a cantankerous man and so biting rude to critics

and all who tried to make him famous that he remained unknown all his life. He gave us a painting as a wedding present. It hung in our living room.

Over the mantelpiece was what we called "The Sausages" — a reproduction of a painting by Marc of red deer. Our furnishings were modern with a mirrored lampstand and a screen dividing our living room from our dining room with its green painted, glass-topped Grecian style table. A large mirror hung on the wall over the sideboard giving space to the room.

Here we entertained. You had a genius for friendship and I often marvelled at your boldness at making friends with people of whom I often stood in awe. Gerald du Maurier became one of our best friends and through him of course his daughters, Angela, Daphne and Jeanne, especially Daph. And when Daphne married Tommy Browning we saw a lot of one another, and called ourselves the A's and the B's.

Then there was Chris Hassall the poet and through him we met Eddie Marsh of the high squeaky voice, Churchill's Private Secretary. Through Gerald we met Gladys Cooper, who later was to marry Philip Merivale, and both of them, and Gladys' children John and Joan Buckmaster and her daughter Sally Pearson and all five Merivale children became great friends. We spent holidays with them at Frinton.

Then there was Herbert Marshall and his wife Edna Best who gained such a triumph in *The Constant Nymph*. At their house we met the comedian Bobby Howes — his daughter Sally Anne then was only three years old — and also Leslie and Glad Henson.

Our friendships with Gerald and Gladys led us into many another friendship, with J.B. Priestley, whose wife Jane was the sister of one of my great school friends

FOURTH LETTER

Geoffrey Holland; John Drinkwater, whose play *Abraham Lincoln* had first given me my love of the theatre, and his wife Tanya Moiseiwitsch; Ursula Jeans and Roger Livesey and of course Larry and his first wife Jill. We shared a cottage with Larry when he was playing in *Hamlet* in its full length — nine hours acting on matinee days. But he would come out to the cottage at night still full of vitality and wanting to play games.

In our orbit too were many of the woman writers, particularly G.B.Stern, the author of *The Matriarch* in which you played with Mrs Patrick Campbell. G.B.Stern used to ask us to literary luncheons. They terrified me — I was not an intellectual (neither were you, darling, but you beautifully acted the part!). At one such luncheon I sat next to Rebecca West, I think it was. I told her I'd like to live in a remote cottage but have my name in the newspapers every day. She laughed. "That's terribly good," she said, "I must tell it to Willy Maugham." I thought that was a great triumph!

Through Larry we knew his entourage of those days, among them Roger Furse, his set designer, and Herbert Menges, his musical director. I had my portrait painted by Anna Zinkeisen, who later became a fashionable artist. These and many more were your friends. You had subtly got rid of mine and involved me completely in your own world. Not that I objected. After feeling all at sea at theatrical parties I caught on to the idiom of the theatre and found it fascinating. Wasn't this the world of which I had dreamed? Familiarity did not, at any rate at first, breed contempt.

Of course we also had our friends in the tennis world and among the film stars of Hollywood — the great names of the 'thirties — many of whom may only be remembered today by the true fans of the theatre, film and tennis.

You enjoyed our fame and our famous friends. And though I often felt inferior, it was fun for me when you were acting to have the freedom of your theatre, backstage and frontstage and be able to slip into a box and watch without charge, or slip over to Covent Garden, pay one shilling and sixpence and watch from the gods the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo which I loved.

You revelled in our life together and were happy. It was all you wanted. You enjoyed the publicity and both of us achieved enough of it to bore the public to death.

You took a long time making up your face. I reckoned if we were married for fifty years I would have spent two years waiting for this necessary preparation for you to look your best! You were oblivious of time and always late — except for the theatre. You thought nothing of keeping a friend waiting an hour for you at a luncheon engagement. You were always forgiven.

Fifth Letter

IT MAY NOT BE APPARENT from what I've written that any fundamental change had taken place in my shallow life, but for some reason Jesus Christ had begun to creep into it. I had not been to church since my schooldays when I had been confirmed and chapel was an everyday event. Though it was compulsory in those days at Cambridge, I rebelled against it because it bored me: I could find other and more exciting ways of entertaining myself on a Sunday morning, probably in the company of my three girl friends from Newnham College whom for two years I always took out together, Alice, Katya and Cecily. But at some time, soon after our marriage, I had read a small book about Jesus called *The Man Nobody Knows*. In America in 1932, where I again played tennis and you had come with me, I found myself talking about Jesus to people, among others to my hostess at Newport, Rhode Island. And that year I contributed an article to a series written in the *Daily Express* called "My Faith Is This". It was not at all a bad article!

My new-found interest in Jesus did not at all affect my character or way of life, but when I read news of the doings of the Oxford Group I became interested, and when asked if I would like to meet them I said I would. So one day you and I went along together to meet some of them at tea at Brown's Hotel. They presented to me a revolutionary view

of Christ, not a Christ of a stained glass window, but a Christ out in the market places of the world, dealing with the manifold problems that beset mankind, challenging men to live by His four absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.

I was fascinated. For a year I had been concerned with the state of the world and especially the threat of a second world war and began to see in Christ an answer to the various problems that beset mankind. You, darling, had given me a book *The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature* to "improve my literary style", as I was beginning to write. And as I read I said to myself, "Why don't people live as Christ taught?" And a question had quietly popped into my mind: "Why don't you?" Now in the Oxford Group I had met people who were "living as Christ taught". Their way of life was infectious. They were fun and they meant business. Theirs was not a life of church on Sunday and do what you like for the rest of the week. They were dedicated. Christianity to them meant obedience to Him every hour of every day, a total surrender and commitment. And their vision was world-wide, their aim to make God regnant in the life of every nation.

It appealed to me as a great adventure. I had no sense of personal need. I was riding high, at the top of my tennis career, ranked number two in the world in 1931, Wimbledon finalist in 1932 and Davis Cup winner in 1933, and although our marriage wasn't perfect, I was happy. But to play a part in actually seeking to build a new world had an enormous appeal to me.

You, my darling, reacted differently. The challenge of those four absolute standards got under your skin and brought your conscience alive. When we got into bed that night you blurted out to me many things about yourself you had kept concealed before.

FIFTH LETTER

It was something of a shock to me but not a surprise — a shock because you had deceived me, denying what I had suggested to be the truth. In fact I was no different from you, though in spite of my manifold girl friends I had never actually been to bed with any of them.

That night left a seed of bitterness in my heart which I was not to realise for many years. Forgive me, darling, for my self-righteousness.

Life however went on much as before. We went together to an Oxford Group meeting in a house in Knightsbridge and then in January the following year, 1934, I went once more to play tennis in the South of France. And here I met Frank Buchman, the initiator of the Oxford Group, and four of his friends.

You meanwhile had been rehearsing the part of Rose in Louis Golding's dramatisation of his best selling novel *Magnolia Street*. I arrived back just in time for the first night.

Before I left for the Stock Exchange next morning I knelt by your bed and when you opened a sleepy eye, knowing your nerves had been bad for a long while, I said to you, "Darling, I've found exactly what you need."

"What's that?" you asked.

"The Oxford Group."

You made no further reply and I went off to the City.

Each evening now, after the Stock Exchange closed, I walked across London to Brown's Hotel to meet with one of my friends of the Oxford Group. I had learned that when man listens in silence God speaks, and I had started having quiet times in the morning before leaving for the City, and in the evening with John Roots I had further times of listening. For a time all was well. You drove down to Brown's Hotel to pick me up and we drove back to Hampstead together happily enough. But one day in my

time of listening I faced the fact that I had a resentment against another tennis player and had guidance to write and apologize to him. You were furious.

Why exactly this intention of mine should have made you so angry I didn't at the time understand. But in retrospect I do understand. You suddenly realised my seriousness, that my touch with the Oxford Group was no passing phase. You realised that a new factor had come into our lives which threatened to disrupt it, a factor with which you wanted to have nothing to do.

And so you began to fight it. You told me I would write that letter over your dead body and as I refused to budge from the new way of life I was adopting you brought every gun to bear on me.

I should have been far more understanding. In my times of morning listening God warned me it would be difficult for you. I was no saint, had shown no inclination up till that time, at least outwardly, to become a Christian. But I had had a background of religion. Scripture at school, preparation for confirmation, the study of the four gospels in order to gain a credit in divinity and so be able to pass into Cambridge, though making no impact at the time, must have sowed some seed in my life. You had no religious background as your parents were not practising Jews. You had had some sense of God as a child, otherwise you would not have been scared when you had learned that God backwards spelled dog. But now this God of whom you were afraid was walking into your home. You were determined He would have no entrance there. You had the life you wanted; the husband you wanted; the success in the theatre you loved; fame which you enjoyed and enough money to enable you to live in comfort and without worry. You were understandably afraid of this God turning your husband into a different kind of man

FIFTH LETTER

from the one you had married.

God, as I have written, explained this to me in my morning quiet times and if I had been more understanding I might have helped you more. As it was we got into a furious battle. We argued, we fought. You wouldn't let the matter drop. Even after you had left the house for the theatre you would ring me up and give me hell over the telephone. You brought your friends in to argue me out of my budding faith.

In the end you won. You insisted I was making you unhappy and this was very selfish. When, one day, you said that my sickly sweet voice drove you mad and you wished I would "shake you or something", I shook you. You looked at me aghast. "You shook me!" you exclaimed indignantly. I felt a heel and let the whole matter of the Oxford Group drop.

Another seed of bitterness was now sown in my heart. I saw you standing between me and the thing I most wanted to do. That might have made all the difference. I might have stuck to my guns and though, as later happened, we would have lived through difficult days, perhaps difficult years, all the heartbreak that followed my apostasy might have been avoided.

For a while our lives took up again the outwardly undisturbed tenor of their ways. *Magnolia Street* a C.B. Cochran production, had fine settings and the acting could not have been better and you got wonderful notices. But there were too many characters in the play, and consequently too complicated a plot, and its unravelling was too difficult to follow. As your father said, "It's a play you have to see for the second time first." *Magnolia Street* unfortunately failed.

You were for a time out of work. Spring came and with it the tennis season, the hard court championships at

Bournemouth; Wimbledon; Britain's second defence of the Davis Cup. But all was not well on our hilltop home. There was an undercurrent of unease. The conflict over the Oxford Group was just below the surface and every now and then appeared above it.

"I'll not stop you if you want to join the Oxford Group," you would say, and I would reply curtly and truthfully at that time, "I don't want to."

Then one day the subject came boiling to the surface, and in a heated moment you exploded, "I don't want to be married to a bloody saint."

When I married you, darling, I wanted to be faithful to you, and for all my weaknesses and in spite of the many temptations of your actress friends, I had succeeded in being so. Now, alas, my good intentions went out of the window. I'm not going to go into all the details: you know them only too well, and for what happened next I can never be sorry enough. A dark shadow came between us, a shadow for which I did not repent for a long time and one for which, for those same years, you did not forgive me.

But there was one thing in our favour — both of us had decided that come what may we would stay together. And perhaps at this point I may be a little moralistic. The reason so many marriages break up today is simply through lack of this determination. At the first difficulties, married couples say, "It doesn't work", and go their separate ways.

I cannot be grateful enough for such Christian instruction as I had received at school — though it seemed to have made so little impression on me. I learnt enough to know that although an apple stolen from a neighbour's garden may be delightful to the taste, nevertheless it remains a stolen apple. And thank God that though the

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apple which the serpent had handed me was sweet I nevertheless knew it was stolen, and was therefore wrong, but it was hard to get the taste out of my mouth.

The months that followed were unhappy ones. A holiday in the Trossachs did not help. The very beauty of the scenery seemed only to highlight our misery. But out of evil one good thing emerged: we decided to have a baby.

Your "woman's intuition" had pronounced it would be a boy, and we went through every boy's name known, and could agree on none. And then of course the baby turned out to be a girl and we both immediately agreed to call her Jennifer.

And what a blessed gift she was and how happy we were while Jennifer was on the way. We were in the South of France during your pregnancy, staying at that cheap but delightful hotel on the edge of the harbour of St Jean Cap Ferrat. The little town with its multi-coloured houses and shops faced us in a semi circle round the harbour, and the harbour itself was bright with fishing boats painted all colours of the rainbow.

We met the delightful Mrs Stanley Williams and her daughter who owned a car identical with our own. We became great friends, and when I was not writing the novel I had begun, we explored the countryside, driving once more to those fascinating Saracen villages, perched high on the mountain tops.

I can still see you now, in your pale maternity gown coming back along the path which led from Beaulieu, your arms swinging. You hadn't wanted a baby but now you were carrying one you were happy, contented and at peace. And my own heart warmed towards the mother of my child, as yet unborn.

They were days of blue unclouded Mediterranean skies, bright days outwardly, and inwardly too, after the

TO PHYLL WITH LOVE

dark storm-tossed years that had gone before. There was however one cloud on the horizon — Hitler had marched into Austria. Events were in motion that were to change our lives.

Sixth Letter

1938 SAW A GREAT CRISIS in the world and another great crisis in our lives. But these did not come until September. Before that our daughter had been born.

It was during the championships at Wimbledon, and you displayed great courage and selflessness. Your labour started on the first Wednesday of Wimbledon and you went into the nursing home in the evening. I moved from our bedroom and made up a bed on the divan in my study, so I could be near a telephone. No news of the baby's arrival came through that night.

I rang the nursing home in the morning — still no news. I had to go off to Wimbledon to play my match and when I returned that evening a call came through from a nurse to say the baby had not arrived but all was well.

I learned afterwards that all had not been well. It was a breech birth. Your labour was intermittent and at that time they feared for your life. But you would not have me worried and you insisted I be told that all was well. Whatever failings you may have possessed they did not include lack of courage. Your spirit was valiant and this was to be more and more revealed in the years ahead.

Friday came and at last at nine o'clock at night the word came through that the baby had come, and in spite of your "woman's intuition" it was a girl. I sped down to the hospital. In your room there was a strong smell of ether.

Then Jennifer was brought in, a tiny babe with large and bright blue eyes. You were exhausted after your long travail but you managed to murmur, "Isn't she pretty?" Bless you, darling, for such a wonderful gift, one we were to learn to appreciate more and more as the years rolled by.

I was quite scared as I drove this precious bundle from the nursing home to our flat. We installed Jenny in my study under the care of a nurse who had come to be with us.

Thanks to you I eventually reached the final at Wimbledon. Almost immediately afterwards you and I and baby Jenny went for a holiday at your parents' home in Sussex.

And then in September the Munich crisis hit the world. The war I had anticipated in 1932 threatened to engulf us. To say I was shaken is an understatement. I was shaken to the roots. All my childhood memories of the first world war came flooding back, memories of the millions who had died, memories of the legless, the armless, the deaf and the blind, and the mutilated bodies I had seen at the Star and Garter Home, the terrible aftermath of war, the almost forgotten men who had paid so high a price.

It was this we had now to face again and we knew, this time, that it would not be "over by Christmas". I saw the long years of war stretching ahead of me and I knew we would all need an added strength if we were to endure them.

Word came through that Air Raid Wardens would be needed and we went together to the Hampstead Town Hall to enrol.

Many men may have foreseen the war. Some had called for re-armament. But one man above all others had seen the necessity for more than material re-armament. If the democracies were to survive there needed to come a re-armament of their spirits. That man was Frank Buchman.

SIXTH LETTER

One day as I was driving up Fitzjohn's Avenue in Hampstead to our flat, the weight of threatened war heavy upon me, the words "Oxford Group" were written as if in neon lights in my brain. There was no mistaking this call from God. I didn't consult with you. I had turned away from the Oxford Group. God was now summoning me to return. Without hesitation I obeyed.

Darling, you'd always said if I wanted to "join" the Oxford Group, you would not stop me again. I am sure you were sincere in what you said, but when you heard what I had done, that I had been to Brown's Hotel and there, with an old friend John Roots whom I had met in the South of France, I'd given my life to Christ, your old fears, your old antagonism, your old fury returned.

What days of battle we now had! But this time I knew there was no turning back. God had called me. It was not so much what I wanted — though it was what God wanted. This I hadn't realised before. And with this realisation came a promise, that if I now stuck to my guns, if I stood firm, I would not only have a new life for myself, but you darling would find a new life too and our marriage would be remade.

I cannot be grateful enough for the faith God gave me at that time. You showed no signs of budging. You fought against my new-found decision with all the fury of your passionate nature. Eyes blazing you cried angrily, "I want to get it into your thick head I will never have anything to do with the Oxford Group." And I heard you and watched you and deep in my heart I knew, though I did not know how and when, that what you said, though you believed it utterly, would not be true and some day we would be united together.

But that day was a long way off.

There was a conference for Moral Re-Armament, as the Oxford Group had now become known, at Eastbourne, and as I went to it and returned from it, my goings and comings were met with equal fury. I could have done so much better, darling. But I was inexperienced in my new-found life. I argued furiously with you, though most of our arguments had nothing to do with the real point. As you would say years later, "I fought against MRA not because I thought it was wrong but because I knew it was right." You told me you felt the people in MRA were the most selfish you'd met, but when Daphne Browning rang to say I'd invited her to Eastbourne, though you had no intention of going yourself, you encouraged her to go, saying that people in MRA were the most selfless you knew! And so the battle raged. In March 1939 I went to America to help launch Moral Re-Armament there. We had had happier days before I went, but when I cabled to say my return was delayed so that I could have an interview with President Roosevelt your fury returned. When at last I sailed and you met me at Southampton you gave me hell every moment of our train journey up to London.

By this time we had moved from our flat to our lovely little house in Hampstead, No 7 Downshire Hill. You took me out into the garden and showed me all the flowers you had grown. You always loved flowers and had the greenest of green thumbs and you had worked many wonders.

I didn't tell you at first that I had promised to return to America in a month's time, and when you found out you were furious again. But God had a trump card up his sleeve of a most unexpected kind. I turned your fury by inviting you to come with me, and for two weeks until the day before my departure you didn't say yes and you didn't say no, wanting to go to America, especially Hollywood where a meeting was to be held to launch MRA on the west coast,

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but not wanting to please anyone in MRA. At last you said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll call up my psychiatrist and if he says go, I'll go, and if he says don't go, I won't." I wonder what was in your mind? The psychiatrist up till now had been no help. I rather imagine you expected him to say no. When you put down the receiver your face was a study. "Well, what did he say?" I asked.

"He said," you replied numbly, "he said that if you were going to America of course I should go with you."

You came! The journey on the ship going over was, to say the least of it, surprising. When my MRA friends had called at our house, even if you invited them in, you usually ended by throwing them out. You could not very well ask my friends on the ship to throw themselves overboard, and curiously enough you didn't seem to want to. In fact you got along famously with them, not least surprisingly with the clergyman, and I still smile when I remember his saying to you ardently, "When I know a man is marked for Christ's Kingdom I pursue him relentlessly." "Good Lord," you remarked, "you can't talk like that to me!"

You took a liking to this ardent clergyman — perhaps his spirit matched your own. And you liked too the Labour MP. Anyway, it was a happy journey. Something in your heart was melting. You also enjoyed the four-day journey across America on a special train. But this was more hazardous. Among the large group travelling to Hollywood for the meeting was a very unwise fringe member of MRA — there are always a few around — who got hold of you and started talking a whole lot of nonsense. It might have finished you for good. But you were surprisingly tolerant.

Frank Buchman was wonderful to you during the days before the meeting. You took a lot of his time and he gave it to you generously, patiently dealing with your endless questions and equally endless arguments.

Then came the day of the great meeting, thirty thousand packed into the Hollywood Bowl, ten thousand of them having to stand. Another fifteen thousand, police reported, had to be turned away. It was an occasion to appeal to your dramatic sense: the floodlit arena, the clear star-studded Hollywood sky, the four searchlights, representing the four standards, stabbing through the night air. And as individual after individual climbed the rostrum to speak, people of many nations in their varied coloured costumes, people of many races and every type of background, here was an unfolding drama to appeal to your love of the colourful and dramatic. And here too, as Frank called it, was "the preview of a new world". Suddenly your horizon was widened. The Oxford Group was not just a handful of people with a crazy idea. It was a marching world force, demonstrating in miniature what it aimed to do on a global stage, build a new world society under God.

After the meeting was over you talked to Jimmy Newton, an able young business executive and friend of the great American triumvirate of that period, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone and Thomas Edison. You talked about the guidance of God. You told Jimmy you thought it was dangerous. He asked what you were guided by, and when you told him it was often fear, queried whether it was not more dangerous to be guided by fear than by God? He talked to you about electric light, and how Edison experimented and how as a consequence electric light now lit the world. "Why don't you make an experiment?" asked Jim, and then with a smile he added, "If it doesn't work you can always stay in the mess you're in!"

You had to admit we were in a mess and what harm could an experiment do? You took a notebook and pencil and, as Jim had advised, wrote down the thought that

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came into your mind. It was, "Be honest with your mother: you have always been a liar."

If I had been God I'd have taken a different tack. But God knew what He was doing. He knew the metal He was dealing with, and when we got back to England at the end of July you went to see your mother. You found her in her sitting room, bolt upright as always in an armchair, her auburn hair flaming on her head. Your heart quailed but you went through with what you had to do. "Mother," you said, fearing the heavens might fall, "I've always been a liar and I want to say I'm sorry." The heavens did not fall. Rather they shone a radiance on that meeting. You told your mother all about yourself. She asked, "Why haven't you told me all this before?" And you replied, "I have always been afraid."

It was the first real talk you had ever had with your mother and for the first time you lost your fear of her.

You had made an experiment. You had bravely carried it through and it had worked.

Seventh Letter

“GOD,” you used to say, “gives me the willies,” and in spite of the successful carrying out of your first and most difficult piece of guidance you were still not convinced of His existence.

Then one day you were talking and arguing and said it wasn't God who had our destiny in His hands, but our glands. And this, you said, worried you because if your glands were wrong you'd end up like your mother. This you said was a real fear.

I suggested we pray about it, and to my surprise you happily got down on your knees. When you got up you went to the bathroom. To reach it you had to go through my study. On the wall by the door into the bathroom from my study was a floor to ceiling bookcase. As you went through you put up a hand and pulled out a book. You opened it and the chapter before your eyes was headed “Glands”. And glands, you read, did not affect our character: it was our character which affected our glands.

It was almost as if God Himself had appeared before you. The extraordinary fact that out of the several score books that were in my bookshelf you should have taken that particular book, and the extraordinary fact that the chapter on which you opened the book was headed “Glands”, made it almost impossible for you not to believe that someone or something had your interest at heart,

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whether or not you chose to call it God.

July became August, and once more we went for a holiday at your parents' home in Sussex. On September 3rd the long tensions of the past months and years broke at last. War was declared.

It meant yet again an upheaval in our lives. But an upheaval of a different kind. Gone now were your antagonisms. We had sailed into calmer waters. We left your parents' home to stay with friends near Newbury. Our nanny, who'd been away on holiday, wrote to say she was not returning — her fiancé was in the Merchant Navy and her duty was to be with him while he was still on shore leave. As a consequence you were left with the entire care of Jenny. In lifting her one day you had a miscarriage.

The danger of puerperal fever followed and you were rushed to a nursing home. Here you had a shaking experience. A girl was in a room near yours. She came from what is known as "a good family" but had got herself into trouble with drugs. She poured out to you a terrible and distressing story which affected you deeply. You realised for the first time the tragic penalty that the wrong kind of living exacted of a human life. Your own tragedy in losing our second child, the danger to you of a severe illness, coupled with the disturbing story of this beautiful young girl, left you in a more sober and serious mood.

It was now my duty to return to London while you were evacuated with Jenny to stay with friends in Much Hadham.

It was a lovely house and you were with good friends. You were with Jenny whom you had grown to love so dearly, and you had our dog whom we called Georgy-Poo: Georgy after the King and Poo because that was the remark people made — at least you said they made — when they stooped to pat him!

Our loved housekeeper Mary Martin was also with you at Much Hadham and for the first time there came into our lives a woman who was to play so great a part with us in later years. She was a trained children's nanny. Her name was Elizabeth Rhodes. She, like the rest of the household, was in MRA, and she gave her services to us freely.

I was staying with several friends in a house in Hampstead, but was working in the heart of London at the MRA headquarters at 4 Hays Mews, close to Berkeley Square. At Hampstead we prepared for the bombs that might at any time fall and had made a dug-out. In London we were trained on the course of action to take should there be a daylight raid.

It was in these early days of war that I was to have an experience that was destined to affect deeply the future course of our lives. One day quite unsuspecting there came into my mind the picture of a group of actors and actresses on their knees, and with it came the realisation that God wanted me to help create a new type of theatre wherein the actors and actresses, the playwright and the director would have dedicated their lives to God. It was in short to be a Christ-centred theatre dedicated to the advancement of His will in the world.

I write of this theatre now because before long you were to be deeply involved in it and, though you and I were unaware of it, the day was not far off when events began to take an unexpected turn. In December of 1939 I was invited by Frank Buchman to return for the third time to America.

I regarded the cablegram which brought the invitation with astonishment. Frank was not only the wisest, the most God-centred man, but also extremely practical and I was bewildered to think he should have asked an impossibility, that is to say for me, thirty-three years old, a man of

military age, to leave my country while it was at war. Naturally there existed fool-proof restrictions to make such a thing impossible.

First, I consulted my friends and with them I had a time of quiet to try to seek the mind of God. To my surprise the thought came clearly that it was right for me to go.

This thought cut against my will for a number of reasons. In the first place I did not want to leave Britain now that war had broken out. I had feared its coming but now it had come it brought with it a certain excitement and exhilaration. Secondly, I was getting a response from influential theatrical personalities to my conception of a God-centred theatre, though I must admit that at first they thought me a little mad. Thirdly, I was supplying to our great friend Daphne du Maurier the material for a morale-building book which later was published under the title *Come Wind, Come Weather*. And fourthly, a very strong reason, I did not want to leave you behind in Britain.

When the thought came that it was right for me to go I telephoned you at Much Hadham. For a time the old you returned and the telephone line crackled with your fury. I told you I would come to see you. Up till then we had had happy times together each Sunday when I had gone out to Much Hadham to spend the day with you. Now I feared that once again I would run into your bitter antagonism.

But it was not so. As I stepped out of the train on to the pitch black station at Much Hadham, I felt someone approach. I felt two arms embrace me, a kiss on my cheek and a quiet voice saying, "Darling, I believe it is absolutely right for you to go." You told me how your change of mind had come about.

First you had paced your room, your heart boiling with anger, anger that I should leave you again, anger that I should go against all tradition and leave my country while

it was at war. And then you had calmed down and done something you were gradually making a habit of doing and that was to listen to God. And to your astonishment, much as it had been to mine, you had known it was right for me to go.

Of course I still had to get government permission, but God opened the way. I had forgotten the great spiritual truth that with God, not merely some things, but all things are possible. And to my surprise this seeming impossibility did indeed come about. Permission came from three separate government departments, the Foreign Office and the Ministries of Labour and Information. The only proviso was that I should sign a paper promising to return to the country whenever I was needed, which I gladly did.

My sailing date was fixed for December 19th on the Dutch ship *Volendam*. In the meanwhile you joined me on a speaking tour of the country and, miracle of miracles, spoke by my side. When December 19th arrived, my sailing date, you came with me to see me off on the boat train at Waterloo Station, where just over ten years before I had first heard my friend John Olliff exclaim, "There's an actress down the platform being photographed," and I had lied in my teeth and said, "That doesn't interest me." Now we had all the pain of saying goodbye as our ways parted and we separated into an unknown future.

For a while the "phoney war" persisted, and then the full fury of Hitler's madness struck Britain and she was drenched with bombs. The Hitlerian hoards reached the channel ports and France was largely overcome.

You were safe enough at Much Hadham, but guidance came that along with so many small children that were being evacuated across the Atlantic you too should leave Britain and sail for Canada.

It was a hard decision. Ships with evacuated mothers

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and children were being torpedoed. One before yours was sunk, one after yours was sunk; but you and Jenny arrived safely at the port of New York.

I was at the time at our training camp at Tahoe in California, where under Buchman's leadership some forty-two of us were hammered into a united, dedicated, spiritual force, united in spite of the manifold differences of nationality, religion and background. I could not leave the camp to meet you and you were angry I wasn't there at the dock. But later, leaving Jenny in the care of friends in New York, you joined me for a short while at Tahoe.

You were full of the great speeches of Churchill and of the heroic resistance of the now "historic" few. You weren't prepared to be impressed by what was happening at Tahoe and were not at all happy when you, glamorous star of stage and screen, were asked to take your turn at the domestic work, including cleaning out the lavatories. But my vision of a new God-centred theatre was being realised. A patriotic musical revue was in course of preparation, and you gave of your wide theatrical experience to help in its production.

While we were there we moved out of Tahoe to take our revue to the American nation. The time had come for you to return East and to Jenny. We spent our last hours together in Reno, the divorce centre of America, calling itself "the biggest little city in the world." How strange that you and I should have found in this little city not the end of our married life but the beginning of a new one. As the fluorescent advertising signs of Reno flashed their lights into our bedroom, we talked together through the night. A new understanding had come between us and the first seeds of a new and deeper-planted love. The next morning you entrained for New York.

Time and distance now divided us. But didn't we feel

closer to each other three thousand miles apart than we had done sitting together in the past years, when we had felt three thousand miles apart in spirit?

We wrote regularly. And then the day came when I arrived in New York and we met for one all too brief day, and I saw Jenny again for the first time for a year and a half. The baby of a year and three months I had left in Britain now was a little girl. She laughed when I balanced a balloon on my nose. "Look Mummy," she cried, "Daddy's got a balloon up his nose."

Alas, the day after I saw you was the day when your American visa expired and you left for a home in Canada. Those early Canadian days were tough for you. No longer the excitement of theatrical life and the glamour of famous friends, but ordinary simple Canadian folk of pioneering stock living in Ottawa. You had never done any house work in your life. Now you had to wash and clean and learn to cook. On the first day in your new surroundings you broke a dish and put the washing machine out of order. It was not a good beginning or one to endear you to your hostess!

But you had Jenny and she was your comfort and your joy. You brought her up in the ways God was teaching you. For it was His wisdom you turned to and in His wisdom He taught you child care. You held up to Jenny the four absolute moral standards of Jesus Christ, absolute honesty, absolute purity, unselfishness and love. You made each of her four fingers one of those standards, calling them little men, and her thumb you called Mr Obedience. Each night you would ask Jenny if her four little men were standing up or if she had anything "tucked under her heart". And so from the earliest age Jenny was taught the love and ways of God, and learnt to listen for His voice in her heart and to obey the simple thoughts she received. And you too began

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to love all people, not just the glamorous few but the ordinary men and women who make up this teeming world. At first you felt that the people you found yourself amongst were a queer lot. But God said to you one morning, "They may seem queer to you but they are dear to me." And slowly bit by bit they became very dear to you too.

One day one of your maids who had served in your house at Hampstead came to see you. She had married and emigrated to Canada. She saw you working at the stove and her astonishment knew no bounds. "Phyllis Konstam," she exclaimed, "What on earth has happened to you?" You had a long talk with Dorothy. She told you how the way you had lived had made her bitter and in consequence she had become a Communist. You told her how sorry you were and how you were finding a new way of life. And then Dorothy confessed her own trouble: her son was fed up and was leaving home that night. Your own openness, your honesty about your own faults and mistakes and the new love you had found for all people opened Dorothy's own heart. She told you she had become a dictator. You had apologised to her, she said, she was going home to apologise to her son. She did so and the next morning telephoned you in joy — her son had decided not to leave.

Dorothy became the first of a long line of people stretching over the future years who lived to be grateful for the warmth and openness of your heart.

Soon not only your heart but your theatrical talents were to find a new and creative expression. The success of the musical revue which had been launched in the United States inspired the creation of a similar revue in Canada and you helped to write it. You were now staying with Howard and Norah Reynolds, and it was with Howard that you wrote a captivating song called "We're All The

Same Underneath". The revue, entitled *Pull Together, Canada*, was rehearsed and launched. You, of course, not only had a hand in its writing but also in producing it and above all in playing in it. You created a Cockney character called "Lil Wiggins", after Netty Wiggins, the Cockney nanny of your childhood whom you loved so dearly.

In due course *Pull Together, Canada* was invited by both labour and management of the Dominion Coal and Steel Company to tour the coalfields of Nova Scotia. Here industrial disputes were holding up the production of coal so vital to the war effort. It was the conviction of the company that the spirit of *Pull Together, Canada* could and would do much to bring a new spirit to the miners and to their management.

It did. Coal and steel production shot up over five per cent, equivalent nationally to adding fifty thousand men to the war effort. And you, my darling, had a big part in bringing this about. One miner announced after asking at the Box Office what the play was all about, "I'm coming back and I'm coming critical." And critical he was, and critical too were his fellow miners. They would sit in stony silence as the show began. And then you would come on as the Cockney Lil Wiggins and like another Gracie Fields (though without her voice!) would sing, "We're All The Same Underneath." And just as Gracie's great heart won the hearts of the millions of the working people of Britain so your warm heart won the heart of the miners. And from that moment on they were with you. They sat back and relaxed and laughed and cheered and wept for the remainder of the show.

It was not an easy time for you in that far eastern province of Canada. It was winter, wet and bitterly cold. And you stayed in miners' homes. But just as much as those simple, rugged, honest mining folk, mostly of Scottish

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origin and nearly all called MacDonald, responded to you, so you responded to them. They were mining for coal. God was mining for gold, the gold that lay not very far below the surface of your heart and theirs.

Eighth Letter

ONE OF THE THINGS of which you had been most afraid if God entered our lives was that you would have to give up the theatre. Now your life was to become more enmeshed in the theatre than you ever dreamed and you were to play a part in it beyond anything you could have imagined.

In 1940 Alan Thornhill, whom at that time you knew only slightly, had written an industrial play which he called *The Forgotten Factor*. For two years the play had lain in a drawer — or rather the bottom of his suitcase as Alan travelled widely across America. The play was inspired, but it could not be immediately produced as we had no trained actors and actresses at that time.

But in 1942 Frank Buchman initiated the first conference for Moral Re-Armament held on the North American continent; it was on Mackinac Island situated in the narrow straits which join Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. To this conference you and the cast of *Pull Together, Canada* came from your work in Nova Scotia, and I came with the cast of the revue *You Can Defend America*, which had been making a great impact on many of the key industrial cities of the United States. And now for the first time we had a chance to work together.

In a barn behind the old frame hotel, "Island House", where the conference was held, a stage had been built

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where the two revues, the Canadian and American, could be performed. And here, we saw, was our opportunity to produce *The Forgotten Factor*.

Your host in Canada, Howard Reynolds, had produced and directed *Pull Together, Canada* and had revealed real acting and directorial gifts. We wondered if he could produce *The Forgotten Factor*. We gave him the script to read. He was enthusiastic. And one morning we went off with him to the "Theatre" in the barn where we discussed its production and, of prime importance, how it could be cast.

In the course of the morning several who had gained acting experience in the two revues came into the barn, and all were corralled and tried out for parts in the play. You were quick to detect those who displayed real acting ability and at length the casting was complete. You became the labour leader's wife, a part you were to play superbly for seventeen years in countries too numerous to mention. You not only played magnificently in *The Forgotten Factor* and in the many other plays which were later to be written; but you also played an important role in training actors and actresses who were to develop a high professional polish. Richard Aldrich, the famous Broadway producer, said to me when he saw *The Forgotten Factor* in New York, "Your actors are of a high professional standard but in your theatre you achieve what the professional theatre never achieves: the play is more important than the players. No one is trying to be the star."

Little did you think when you gave up your chance of advancement in the professional theatre and went to Canada with Jenny that you were to play so great a part in the creation of the theatre according to God's design.

Perhaps at first you didn't realise this. Your heart was

not yet wholly given to God, your will not entirely in His hands. You were still in the nature of a fellow-traveller.

But you had travelled far. You had faced your past and had found freedom and forgiveness. And you were finding a faith. When you were ill at Mackinac — you were very ill, your temperature rising to 104 degrees — you never missed your morning time of meditation. God said to you, you told me, “You may be ill but you are not too ill to listen to Me.”

And you did wonders with Jenny in giving her a great love of Jesus. When you were recovering from your illness Jenny was allowed to play with you. But Jenny developed a cold and the doctors told me I must explain to her that she should not play with her mother until her cold was better. I was wondering how best to put it to her. She loved you dearly and she didn't know me very well: I'd only seen her for one day in three years until we had now met again at Mackinac. But as I was putting Jenny to bed and wondering what I should say to her she looked up at me with her large blue eyes, “Daddy,” she said, “God say I mustn't play with Mummy till my cold is better.”

Jenny was a child and her simple faith was childlike. Jesus said, “Unless we become as little children we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Jenny has never lost or swerved from that childlike faith and it was you, my darling, who enabled her to find it.

When Mackinac was over we went our separate ways, you back to Canada and I to the west coast of America. Soon I was in the United States Army Air Forces, and except for my short furloughs we were parted again for another two and a half years. When I came out of the army you were carrying our second child.

I could not at first come to see you as I was travelling with *The Forgotten Factor* in which Marion Clayton, a

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young Hollywood actress, was now playing your part. But I reached Ottawa just before the baby was born.

It was an important hour in our lives. In spite of the closeness we had found together during these past years, there was still the shadow of "the other girl" in the back of our minds, legacy of those difficult years before the war. It was a subject we could not talk about because, understandably, it raised a fit of jealousy in your heart. I don't know how the subject came up that night before John was born. It had been on your mind and God had said to you, "Either you love Bunny more than your pride or you love your pride more than you love Bunny." So that night after we had gone to bed you raised the subject and we talked it through.

At length we put out our lights and settled down to sleep. But I didn't sleep. A thought came into my mind, "You were callous and cruel." I turned over in bed. The thought came again and I said to myself, "If that is God speaking He's on the wrong line." Callous and cruel! It was not my idea of myself at all. Was I not a gentle — rather too gentle — and sensitive Englishman? I turned over again. And the thought came, "Callous and cruel." There was no doubt now that it was God speaking and there could be no doubt He was speaking to me. I turned on my light, reached for my guidance book and wrote down the thoughts that came. That night I got a new picture of myself, not a nice polite Englishman but one who could be — and had been — callous and cruel. And I was given fresh insight into human nature. I realised I was no different, neither better nor worse than anybody else. In short I had a human being's nature, capable of rising to great heights or sinking to great depths, all depending on the influences that were brought to bear and the decisions that were made. I realised how desperately I needed God

to make me different and how deeply I needed to ask your forgiveness.

The next day our son John was born — and so was a new relationship between us. A shadow was lifted from our lives.

By now it was Spring, 1946, and the war at last ended. Many of those we had worked with, including the cast of *The Forgotten Factor*, had left for Britain. We stayed on in America and went with our funny little golden-haired baby boy, just five months old, on a holiday to a friend's farm in the country at a place called North Hatley, and it was there we experienced a miracle of healing.

One day John, after yelling for his food, suddenly collapsed. Fortunately we had a trained nurse with us and she manipulated him to keep the breath of life in his body. Twice he collapsed and twice he just survived. We saw a paediatrician and then we rushed him to hospital in Montreal. I stayed on at the farm with Jenny, knowing John was safe with you and not wanting to interrupt my time together with Jenny after so many and such long separations.

One night you rang from the hospital to say John had had another collapse. Dismayed, I sat in an armchair and took out my guidance book. I seemed to be surrounded by light and a thought came into my mind which I wrote down, "At that hour the child was healed." I looked at my watch and wrote down the time, nine o'clock.

The next morning I drove up to see you in the hospital. You looked up at me brightly. "He's well," you said, "he suddenly got better last night."

"At what time?" I asked.

You made a calculation from the times at which he had been fed. At last you said, "It must have been nine o'clock."

EIGHTH LETTER

We left North Hatley for the first post-war conference for Moral Re-Armament on Mackinac Island. And we hadn't been there long when God told us to write a revue. It was one thing for God to tell us: it was another thing for us to do it. The whole of our now highly trained theatre company, except for you, had left for Europe (where *The Forgotten Factor* was to have such a historic effect on coal production in Britain). What were we to do?

It is apparent that when God wants a thing done He has a way of bringing it about. We founded a new company — of writers who had never written before; songwriters who had never before written a song, and a backstage crew who had never before worked backstage. But our first scene needed a highly skilled director. God sent us one of Broadway's best, Nellie Von Volkenberg. The first scene also needed a special musical effect. God sent us one of Hollywood's top composers, Paul Dunlap. The first scene needed scrim. None of the stores of the big towns within three hundred miles of Mackinac had stocked it since the war. Our stage manageress went down to the local shop to buy black sateen. The shopkeeper said he was sorry: all he seemed to have was yards and yards of black mosquito netting. She wondered how she could make it into scrim. On the way from the shop she met a sail maker. She told him her problem. He said he could do the job for her.

And so our first scene was staged. But what of the remainder? Our writers who had never written before, you among them, our songwriters who had never written songs before, and our backstage crew all performed miracles. Before long a revue was born. Nellie Von Volkenberg returned to Broadway. You took charge. The revue was played with success throughout Michigan, the opening performance filling a vast auditorium seating five thousand

and holding them spellbound.

Then you and I and Jen and John sailed for Switzerland and the Moral Re-Armament Assembly at Caux. We adapted the revue for Europe, calling it *The Good Road*.

Now came a great challenge to your spirit. Konrad Adenauer, shortly to be Chancellor, had been with his family and staff to Caux. Deeply impressed by what he saw and heard, he asked for *The Forgotten Factor* to be translated into German and to be played in the Ruhr where, at that time, the Works Councils were seventy-two per cent Communist. The play was translated into German and you were asked to direct it.

Your spirit quailed and you cried in your heart, "Not me! Not me!" Your German Jewish relatives had largely escaped the Nazi pogroms thanks to the foresight and generosity of your father. But some of them, and all your relatives in France, suffered in the concentration camps or died in the gas chambers. The very sight of a German turned your stomach. "No, not this!" you cried. "No, God, not this!"

But you knew bitterness was wrong. It was tearing Europe apart. Short of an answer to bitterness what hope was there for the future of Europe? You went up to your room and prayed. On your knees you asked God to take the bitterness out of your heart.

You went downstairs and met with the German cast. One of them had a gash on his face. He seemed the very epitome of the Germany you had once loved but had come to hate. You swallowed hard. You told the cast about your bitterness, and how sorry you were for it. You told them the story of the sufferings of your relatives. Many of the Germans wept. Some told you they had never been Nazis nor in sympathy with the regime, but they were guilty

men. They had not had the courage to stand out against it.

So a German cast was trained and soon travelled to the German Ruhr. Here *The Forgotten Factor* was performed night after night to houses crowded with the workers, many of them Communists. The spirit of the Ruhr was transformed. Communist representation on the Works Councils fell in four years from seventy-two per cent to eight per cent. Some of the Communists, finding a faith, travelled with us in the days ahead.

Years later a friend, who had then been a member of the Party but defected from it at the time of the quelling of the Hungarian uprising, gave it as his considered opinion that not only did the action of *The Forgotten Factor* in the Ruhr save West Germany from Communism, but it saved all of Western Europe. True or not, the fact remains that that act of surrender of your bitterness, your willingness to obey God against the pull of all your feelings, had a real effect on the history of Europe.

The changes God had worked in your heart were remarkable. Your fear of God, the fact that even to think of Him "gave you the willies", was now far in the past. And with your new-found love of God had come a new-found love of people. Outside your work in the theatre — and you were now playing supremely well a part of high comedy in Alan Thornhill's new play *Annie The Valiant* — people were your preoccupation. We had many wonderful talks together with married couples who had come to Caux to find an answer to their problems. There was the Norwegian admiral and his wife. During a meal with them the wife suddenly broke down and wept and out poured all her woes. There was the Danish businessman and his wife and the railway worker and his wife. God graciously used us, sometimes over several days, to help married couples find

in their lives the new relationship we were finding in our own.

We did much speaking together at conferences at Caux and elsewhere. You were fast growing in your spiritual life. You had a quality which must have greatly pleased our Lord. It was humility. You never pretended to be better than you were. You had a winning honesty about yourself and your motives. God once said to me, "It is not sin which shuts a door in Christ's face but a cold proud heart." Your heart was neither cold nor proud and so it was open for Christ to enter in. But you hadn't yet fully given your will to Him, greatly as He was using you at this time, and sometimes you reverted to type.

In 1949 I arrived at Caux before you. You followed later on your birthday, April 14th. As a present for you I had bought a dressing table set of gentian china. On each piece I had written a little poem wishing you a happy birthday and expressing my love for you. Unfortunately at the last minute I was unable to meet you at the station. This so annoyed you that when you came into the room where the china and the verses were set out you were so angry you didn't even notice them.

Later we left Caux for Breganzona, a small town near the Lake of Lugano. I had the temerity to tell you on the train that you were just like your mother. To be like her was your greatest fear and you were furious. We travelled through the most beautiful scenery of Switzerland and you saw none of it. You told me afterwards that if you had had a knife you'd have stuck it into me.

But, as always, you were ready to face the truth. And you began to see the demand in your life. In fact you wrote down everything you demanded, and the last thing you wrote down was your desire to be loved, and that this demand often blinded you to the love that was yours.

EIGHTH LETTER

Your work in the theatre was teaching you much. You adored your two children and of course they adored you. But your part in the plays as we began to travel widely meant that you had often to be away from them. Your departures were a traumatic experience with many tears on your part as you said good-bye.

One day we were in California, installed with friends in Pasadena, to follow up work in Hollywood where the film community had responded so warmly and whole-heartedly to *The Good Road*. We were looking forward to a happy time together with the children. Then a cable came saying you were needed in Caux. John was only four and Jenny twelve. But you went.

Your acceptance of the Cross meant much to Jenny. You had to stay away longer than you had expected. And you wrote a wonderful letter giving the reason why. You wrote that there was great need in Europe and you yourself were wanted to help answer the still existing problems of hurt and hate which were the legacy of the war. Jenny was delighted with your letter and her eyes shone. "Isn't it a wonderful letter," she commented to me, "none of that actress sentimentality!"

Soon you were to learn another lesson in further humility. *The Good Road* had given place to a new musical called *Jotham Valley*. In this play you had a very small part as Mrs Hubbard, one of a gossipy group of ladies. After playing in Hollywood the show moved to Broadway. Here you were once again in America's theatrical capital, playing where you had first played at the leading lady of Laurence Olivier. The lead in *Jotham Valley* was a young woman with a beautiful voice who had never appeared in a play before. She was the one to get the applause, while your smaller part went unrecognised. You were tossed by many an emotion. What would your theatre friends in

New York think when they came to see you in such a small insignificant role? You were honest about all you felt, and God said to you, "You must learn to serve in the sphere where once you shone most brightly." It was another important step in your spiritual growth.

In 1952 we were at Mackinac. A conference held at the Grand Hotel was over, and training sessions were being held in the tiny church originally built on the island by Jesuit missionaries.

During one of the sessions, I realised that the man taking it had some deep need in his life, and I felt I ought to talk to him about it when the session was over. However, I considered him much more spiritually experienced than I was, and quailed at the thought of attempting to correct him. I held back from doing so.

Frank Buchman had not been at this session but the Holy Spirit had spoken to him about me. He sent for me. "Bunny," he said, "you're holding back." And then he added something that astonished me, "It's Phyll's fault."

This last remark was, as you know, against everything that Frank taught us: that a man or a woman is responsible for his own sins and can never overcome them so long as he places the blame for them on anybody else. And here was Frank himself saying that my sin was your fault!

To me it was patently obvious that it had nothing to do with you and I told Frank so. But he held firm to his point. There was nothing else for me to do but to find you and tell you what Frank had said.

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." And Frank's statement that it was your fault, unreasonable though it seemed, was to work a wonder in your life.

First you wandered about the island disconsolately.

Finally you found your way to the back of one of the meetings. In front was Ellie Newton, the wife of Jimmy Newton who had done so much to help you after the Hollywood Bowl meeting. The Holy Spirit said to Ellie, "Go to the back of the meeting," and although not knowing the reason why, she obeyed. She happened to sit down next to you. You turned to her. "Ellie," you said, "I need your help."

You left the meeting together and talked. In the course of your conversation you asked Ellie, "Why do I feel that Bunny is more committed to this work than I am?"

"Perhaps he is?" queried Ellie simply.

You were quiet for a moment and in that moment you realised that you had never fully committed your life to Christ. You were identified with Moral Re-Armament more for the love of me than you were for the love of Jesus.

You told this to Ellie and decided this was the commitment you wanted to make. You sought out Frank and told him what had happened and what you wished to do.

"This is very important," said Frank. "Come to see me at 3.30."

Frank lived on the island in a small frame cottage surrounded by a verandah. On that verandah we met with Frank, and you knelt down and gave your life unconditionally to Christ.

The transformation was immediate. In a flash you grew to a new stature. From being a fellow-traveller — though a fellow-traveller wonderfully used — you now became responsible not only for the work and the spiritual life of the people in it but for the whole world. All your latent abilities began to flourish. Your acting had already reached a new dimension of sincerity and integrity uncluttered by ambition or artificiality. But now your

TO PHYLL WITH LOVE

heart grew even larger and warmer, your mind ever more active in care and thought for others. In the words of a song written by Peter Howard, in those moments of your surrender on your knees on the verandah of that little cottage on Mackinac Island, "The world walked into your heart."

Ninth Letter

AS THE WORLD walked into your heart so the world opened up before you. Up till now our travels had been entirely between the North American continent and Europe. Now before you there opened up Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Burma, and you took all these countries to your heart.

You especially loved India. At first you were appalled by its poverty and though, having been to India before, I had warned you about it, you were not prepared for the poverty you saw — the tens of thousands sleeping homeless on the streets and many thousands more cooped up in squalid wattle huts, open to the monsoons and little protected from the sun.

But though you took India to your heart your first experience was not a happy one. We were staying in Bombay in the flat of one of the founders of the Praja Socialist Party, his wife, their daughter and an uncle. And we had not been staying there long when you contracted a high temperature, the thermometer registering 104.

One afternoon, feeling sorry for you and that you might be homesick, our host suggested we should take tea into your room. In they came, the father, the mother, their daughter, and also the uncle puffing a large cigar. The dog came too, jumped on to your bed and licked your face. You

made an heroic effort to be sociable but it was too much for you. You went deathly pale and closed your eyes. I hurriedly suggested that perhaps it would be wise to leave you by yourself.

It was a worrying time. The Indian doctor, after taking your temperature, looked at his thermometer. "Very high," he said, "very high. Not till Friday will we know if it is typhoid."

Fortunately travelling with us was an experienced Canadian doctor who had lived many years in India and had been in charge of a hospital.

Very tactfully, taking care to give no impression to our host and hostess that they had failed in any way in their hospitality — which indeed they had not — she suggested you be removed to the Taj Mahal Hotel, where you convalesced and rapidly regained your strength.

There was at this time a great conflict in you, concerning your relationship with your mother. In every letter she attacked you. And after reading her letters you invariably wept. This was a little surprising as you knew what her accusations would be — that the people of MRA were selfish, only interested in getting people's money and living at ease and in luxury. One of these letters accusing you of this arrived when we were with the Tricomdases and your temperature was 104.

I asked you one day why, when you knew every letter from your mother would be an attack, you allowed every letter to reduce you to tears. You pondered this for some time. And then you saw the reason: you longed for her approval. You surrendered this and from that time onwards your only concern, as you put it, was to get your mother into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The task you undertook was not an easy one. Your mother continued to attack you. But I'll say this for you,

NINTH LETTER

darling, that you never faltered in your love for your mother over the nine years which remained of her life.

After you recovered from your illness you took India in your stride, the heat, the dirt, the long and dusty train journeys. Acting in the plays, your heavy Western stage costumes were soaked with sweat. Sometimes they stuck to you and swift costume changes were difficult. But you loved India. You said it must be your Eastern blood! And when years later we were in England on a glorious English spring day, the sun shining, the hedges and trees in their fresh spring green, the birds singing, I asked you where you felt most at home and you answered, "Madras".

You loved the Indian audiences. You said they were the most intelligent before whom you had played, understanding every nuance of the dialogue. And what crowds you played to! No wonder you remembered Madras, where thousands came to the outdoor theatre and even climbed trees to catch a glimpse of the stage.

And do you remember the Christmas in New Delhi? What a magic atmosphere Frank could create, at least what a magic atmosphere the Holy Spirit created through him. Do you remember the Christmas tree, the chorus standing on either side, the candle flames flickering and the chorus singing carols and the distinguished audience of cabinet members and high Delhi dignitaries drinking it all in? And *The Cowboy Christmas* at the theatre, crowds streaming on to the stage at the end of the performance, standing wide-eyed and in wonder before the tableau of Mary and the Christ child, the Hindu audience learning for the first time what Christmas was all about.

Those days for me, too, darling, held a magic and how happy we were at Jaipur House in Delhi! We may have dreamed of living in marble halls and here we were in them, the palace of the Maharajah of Jaipur lent to us by

the Indian government. The only catch was that the marble halls were all we had, nothing else but two camp beds, because Jaipur House was being turned into a picture gallery. Yes, nothing else but two camp beds and the bats which flew round the rooms.

Then there was our visit to Srinagar. You came in a convoy from Calcutta over the terrifying Banihal Pass. You were supposed to arrive on your birthday. I had gone ahead and I waited for you until three in the morning, welcoming all the other two hundred who were travelling with you. But you didn't arrive until the next day, and though you were tired when you arrived you were quickly refreshed and glorified in the beauties of Kashmir, the lake, the snow-capped mountains surrounding it and the Moghul Gardens, recalling the famous song, "Pale Hands I Loved Beside The Shalimar." Yes, we actually walked hand in hand beside the Shalimar!

Soon we were back in England, then off to America again, then back the next summer at Caux. At some time during these days Frank held a conference in Florence, and we were introduced to and became great friends with Frank's own great friend, Helen, the Queen Mother of Roumania whom Frank had known since she was eight and had helped through so many trials. That summer she brought her daughter-in-law, Queen Anne, to Caux. Queen Anne later brought her husband King Michael and they paid many visits. And then we went with Frank to Montecatini Terme in Italy, and the Royal Family came out twice a week and we drove in with Frank to visit them in Florence. During these days they learned to love you, and King Michael saw in you someone to whom he could pour out his own heart, all the traumatic experiences of his childhood and later his three years of reign under the

Communists. What a man he is, a king in stature as well as in name, coming through hardships which must have broken many a weaker character.

And their children loved you too, all the five girls. You became a second mother to them when they went to school in England and when Margarita and Helen came to live here. You understood their difficulties, the loss of their kingdom, princesses only in name and having to make their own way in life as ordinary citizens, enjoying no privileges or prerogatives but training for, seeking and finding jobs.

Yes, darling, your heart grew warmer and wider as more and more people entered in. We travelled with Frank to Australia and New Zealand and through the Far East and back to Australia again. From Australia we were invited to the Philippines and here we experienced one of the most memorable moments of our lives, the conference at the summer capital of Baguio.

The Japanese, whom you had done so much to help, came to apologize for the terror they had created through the war, and the Holy Spirit blew round the conference like a mighty wind, and hurts and hatreds melted away. New relationships were born between those far away lands, between the Philippines and Japan, between Japan and Korea, and later between Japan and Australia through Prime Minister Kishi, who caught the spirit of our work and apologized to the Australians, in pursuit of what he called "the diplomacy of the humble heart". How we could use such diplomacy today!

You were in the forefront of these events. You had grown to be a spiritual stateswoman and Frank relied on you greatly.

We travelled from the Philippines to Japan. Moscow had invited a hundred leaders of the four and a quarter

million youth federation of young farm and factory workers, the Seinendan, to an international youth conference. Frank Buchman had countered this by inviting one hundred to our conference on Mackinac Island. He relied on us to implement this invitation. You quickly won the heart of the founder and president of the Seinendan, Ninomiya. Kinu Wakamiya, a Vice-President, became your devoted friend.

Typical of you, you insisted Ninomiya bring his wife to meet us. She came, a tiny, mousey little woman. During luncheon she broke down and wept. We asked her why, and she told us it was the first time she had been out of her house for eight years.

As a result of our visit, a hundred young farmers and factory workers came to Mackinac. Most of the young farmers had only two assets, a donkey and a wife, and they treated them much the same. It was such problems as these we had to deal with at Mackinac, and you were among those who fought magnificently that these problems should be resolved.

But dealing with such human problems was not our only difficulty. There was the ideological problem — the existence of a Communist cell among the hundred young Japanese. Perhaps we were slow in spotting them.

Most dangerous of all was that charming character Inouye. He was round and chubby and in all the entertainments the Japanese gave for the rest of the conference, he was M.C., playing his flute and apparently heart and soul in the mood and spirit of all that was going on. And then one day that lazy fellow called Yamamoto wrote a play. Up till then he had lain on his bed enjoying the meals and not bothering to attend the conference sessions. But he did attend one. At it he heard there was a God who could, if you were quiet, put thoughts into your

mind. "Nonsense," said Yamamoto to himself. However, greatly unbelieving, he decided to make an experiment. To his amazement the thought came that he should write a play. "Nonsense," said Yamamoto to himself again. He had never written a play in his life nor thought of doing so. But he made another experiment of listening and again, to his amazement, there came into his mind not only an idea for a play but the whole outline. He decided he would write it out.

The play was inspired. Some of the hundred Japanese had left but some remained, and these gathered together to hear the play and later cast it. It was now that the innocent and apparently foolish Inouye, affectionately known as "The Potato", became highly vocal. He suggested it would be wise for all the remaining Japanese to return to Japan and rehearse in the atmosphere of their own country. It was an argument that was plausible enough. But here your powers of discernment came into operation. You had the clear thought, "He is a Communist. Invite him to lunch and tell him he is more involved in Communism than he has let us know."

We invited him to lunch and his first comment was to me and was scarcely one to start the meal on a rollicking note! I had been the one to cut across his suggestion that they should all return to Japan and rehearse the play there. Through an interpreter he said to me, "When I am crossed, as you crossed me today, I get my revenge in blood even if it takes me ten years."

Then you launched your torpedo. He turned to you and said, "Madam, you have X-ray eyes. I am a very cunning fellow."

He was unmasked and he knew it, and he told us his whole story. He had been in the Japanese Navy. During the war his ship had been torpedoed, and while he was in

the water he had been strafed by American planes and badly wounded. When the war ended he ran into Communism. He heard they were out to destroy America. Full of bitterness, this was what he most wanted to do. He enlisted in the Party. Your care for him, and especially the care of a young American who, however rude Inouye might be, always brought him an early morning cup of coffee, showed him something which he knew Communism lacked, an answer to the needs of the human soul. Inouye changed, and en route home to Japan, at a gathering in the Chamber of the City Council of Los Angeles, made one of the finest speeches on Moral Re-Armament ever heard.

You were having an immense influence on many such people, darling, and success is a heady wine. God was using you. The Japanese loved and admired you, and called you "Mother". But you were becoming a little arrogant. I was with you at all the meals we had with the young Japanese but you almost completely ignored me. Whereas before we had worked as a team, you now did all the talking and I might as well not have been there.

I spoke to one or two friends about it, and they suggested I was jealous. There may have been an element of jealousy in it, but it was more of hurt. If I had thought less of what you were doing to me, if I could have stood aside free of personal reaction, I might have been able to help you. I did not. You had ceased to see yourself as a difficult person, moment by moment in need of God's grace. You were becoming, little by little, spiritually proud. And pride comes before a fall. Candid friends at last raised the matter with you frontally and told you you could not go on as you were, and needed to find a humbler and more Christ-like spirit.

Some months later you went back to England to look after your mother, leaving me in America. You were still

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nursing grievances against those who had felt you needed to be different and needed to face your spiritual ambition and your pride, and so you began to drift away somewhat from the God you had come to love and began to yield to the lure of your old way of life. And the devil being the rascal he is, you began to be critical of many people whom in recent years you had come to love and whom you regarded as your dearest friends. You wrote to me suggesting I, too, return to England and that we buy a house and settle down.

I need not dwell on this unhappy interlude, for interlude was all it proved to be. After six months you rejoined me in America. You hadn't been back long when you became seriously ill. You had pneumonia and pleurisy. At the height of your illness you wondered, if you were to die, where would you go?

You were in the infirmary on Mackinac Island and your room looked out on to the great lakes. At one end of an island opposite, known as Round Island, there was a lighthouse. By a strange chance the light from this lighthouse shining on the wire mosquito frame of your window formed a Cross. It was as if Jesus Himself was speaking to you. Suddenly you realised all the blame in your heart. You sent for a secretary and wrote eleven letters of apology to those against whom you nurtured bitterness. You regained your spiritual health and with it your physical health too.

Tenth Letter

IN 1961 you once more returned to England to be with your mother who was dying. Through all the years since you had lost your demand for her affection your care for her had been unstinting. Now it reached its climax.

I rejoined you after short visits to Brazil and Caux. You and your sister Anna had found your mother a nursing home where they were prepared to take patients with terminal illness. There you went to see her every day, gave comfort to her and prayed with her. At last she went into a deep sleep. Her breathing was quick and shallow. And then a moment came when she breathed no more. It had been a grey day, but at that moment the sun broke through the clouds and shone into her room, and your heart rejoiced because you felt God had received her into His Kingdom.

After her body was laid out I went into her room to see her. Then I called you in and again you rejoiced; there was a look of triumph on her face.

How faithful you had been with her! How patient and full of grace! Though her vicious attacks had often hurt you, you turned the other cheek, got on your knees and prayed for the grace to continue to care for her. I remember on one occasion when we were staying with her in the country her attacks were continuous. One day you lost your temper. You left the room and prayed for forgiveness and then went back to her to apologize. "Yes,"

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your mother returned, "you've always had a temper — you take after your grandfather." Once more you were back on your knees praying for grace. And then the day came when you went into her room and found her reading. "This book is very interesting," she said. "It's all about the kind of work you are doing." And from that day on there came a closer understanding from her which continued until the day of her death.

With your mother's going began the last great chapter of your life. For five years you had ceased to have any close connection with the theatre. Now a new connection began in earnest. The decision was made that the Westminster Theatre, which had been bought in 1946 as a memorial to the men and women of Moral Re-Armament who had given their lives in the war, should be used for the production of plays to further the ideals for which they had fought and died.

I remember your first acting at the Westminster Theatre as long ago as 1939, in a triple bill in which you played a lead in J.M.Barrie's *The Will*. Now you were in a double bill in which you played leading roles in both productions, *The Hurricane* and *The Ladder*. *The Ladder* was a short masterpiece by Peter Howard, dramatising the conflict between a man climbing the ladder of success and his call to follow the way of the Cross. *The Hurricane* dealt forthrightly with the issues of race in Africa.

Through The Garden Wall, again by Peter Howard, followed the double bill. And now, night after night, your dressing room was filled with people who came to talk with you and find an answer to the problems of their lives. How well you played the role of a dominating wife and mother. Your apology to your husband and son in the final scene was unforgettable and moved people to their depths.

There was a woman from Birmingham. She had come

unwillingly to the theatre on a chartered bus. In your dressing room after the play she told you her story. She was on the point of divorce, blaming her husband for all her troubles. She was worried about her son who had constant headaches and was bottom of his class at school. The play had shown her, she told you, that she was the problem in the home; she was going back to apologize to her husband and put things right. A few weeks later she came back a changed woman. She had apologized and the atmosphere of her home was completely changed. She was not only a better wife but was doing more constructive work as a union leader, and her son, free from headaches, was beginning to do better at school.

There was a couple from the "rag trade". The wife said to you, "On the stage you said to your husband all the things I had wanted to say to mine for years and haven't had the courage. The play has given me the courage." In gratitude for their new married life they gave you a dress.

Darling, I don't want to recount here all the miracles that happened in people's lives through the plays at the Westminster Theatre in which you performed so key a role. Not only were individual lives changed but through their change industries were affected and even countries. All types of men and women came to the theatre and many found their way to your dressing room: union leaders and ordinary working men, dockers, factory workers, black power leaders, businessmen, diplomats and many from behind the Iron Curtain.

You yourself, a professional actress, were now performing with others in the profession, and you were as busy with the members of the cast as you were with the members of the audience. There was that fine actor who played opposite you in one of Peter Howard's plays. He was at first cynical about MRA. He boasted to you one day

that he was continually unfaithful to his wife. "What do you think of that?" he asked mockingly. Your answer shook him, "I think you are very immature and very selfish." He came to you for many talks after that. He learnt to love you and to love the Westminster Theatre.

Alas, after the end of the run of *The Diplomats*, he contracted a rare fever. Slowly he began to weaken though he never lost hope of recovery. His wife rang you up one day. "The one thing he wants to do," she told you, "is to get well and get back to the Westminster Theatre." Two days later he died.

You had made a great contribution during the days when you had an actual part in the plays, but you played a part of equal importance during their production. You sat in on auditions with our director, Henry Cass, who was such a great gift to us. He understood so well the purpose of the theatre and ranked it alongside the theatre of Shaw, Ibsen, Chekhov and Galsworthy, "all men of ideas who kept the theatre at its best, kept it alive, creating great excitement."

We always hoped to choose actors and actresses who would be in sympathy with our theatre's aims. For this purpose one had to be a judge of character. Here your powers of discernment were of such great value. It was not easy to judge character during the few minutes in which an actor or actress was auditioning, especially as during that period they were, naturally, in behaviour at least, at their best. And so, once in a while, difficult fish did sometimes wriggle through the net of our discernment and, challenged by the play in which they were acting, caused a bit of trouble backstage. It didn't happen often, and here again your gift of dealing with a difficult person came into play.

You also fought valiantly during rehearsals that the moral standards of a play should be maintained. This was

not an easy task. We were swimming against the tide. During the 'sixties the theatre was fast being degraded. Standards everywhere were being lowered. It was the era of "the kitchen sink", of *Look Back in Anger*, of the theatre of the absurd. Henry Cass was loyal to what we were trying to do, and had a genius for conveying it on stage. "What are you trying to say in this play?" he often asked. We would tell him. "Well, you're not saying it!" he would return bluntly, and the author would go to work rewriting the offending scenes.

Not everyone was immediately aware of deviations from the moral purity at which we aimed. And purity in the 'sixties was not a popular commodity. It was considered old-fashioned, out of date, laughable, even dangerous. But you wouldn't yield. And more than most others connected with the theatre you had the moral guts to fight for what you knew to be right. You would sail into action like Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar, fearless of the shot and shell that came your way. You, who at times had fought so passionately against God and His standards, fought now with equal passion for all those things you had earlier fought against. You had now caught the vision of what a Christ-centred theatre could do for our country and the world.

According to a well known journalist, the Royal Court, a small theatre seating only four hundred people, had altered the moral values of Britain and even affected those of Europe and America. What could not another small theatre, the Westminster, do to turn the tide and swing the country — and the world — away from the decadent and destructive values of materialism to the life-giving nation-saving values of Jesus Christ?

Your activities, of course, went far beyond the bounds of

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the Westminster Theatre. You, who had been lazy-minded, began to give deep thought to the theatre's historical role. You read widely. You learned that the Greek theatre had been used as a catharsis, a moral cleansing force in the life of the city states of Greece. Citizens did not have to pay to attend but were fined if they did not. You studied the decline of the theatre in ancient Rome until it became so debased that human lives were actually slaughtered on stage for the titillation of the audiences. You learned how the Church had clamped down on the theatre of Rome and how centuries later it had been reborn through the Church in the inspired mystery and morality plays, until the theatre reached its majestic stature in the plays of Shakespeare.

You became in great demand as a speaker and you spoke brilliantly, with intelligence, humour, wisdom and depth. All your gifts and faculties were now in God's hands. "Let us have a theatre which does face facts, but which can also cure, enrich and ennoble man. Let us bring about a true renaissance, a rebirth which can create a new type of society." This was your theme.

And outside the theatre you continued unremittingly in your care for people. Often on walks together, in St James's Park or in the country if we were on holiday, I would "lose you". We would be chatting and I would ask a question. There would be silence. Your mind would be elsewhere, wrestling to find an answer to a problem besetting a friend.

There was the beautiful woman, a former stage actress who years before had, through you, given her life to Christ. Suddenly her husband, who was not a Christian, became infatuated with his secretary. The affair was no secret, and day after day the wife came to you for your wisdom and advice. You counselled patience and helped her to find the

courage and compassion she needed. Thanks to the rock-like quality of your caring she managed to suffer her pain valiantly and though she underwent so much humiliation, she continued to give love to her husband and allowed no seed of bitterness to take root in her heart. She won through. Her husband's infatuation ended. They were reunited. And in later years to his wife's great joy they became united not only in their marriage but in their common commitment to Christ.

There was the Welshwoman at a conference at Caux who had never met you before, didn't even know who you were, but when she saw you said to herself, "That's the woman I want to talk to." And when at last she met you she unburdened her heart to you and found a new life for herself and a new relationship with her husband, to whom she had been so often unfaithful.

For the first three years after our return to England we stayed with friends in a house in Charles Street, near the MRA offices in Hays Mews. We were a varied group but with a common commitment and purpose, with standards to live and work by, and, using the home to entertain widely, the household lived in harmony. Jenny was away in Germany but John was with us, finishing his education at an English school but maintaining an American accent, "because," he said, "it made him different."

Then in 1964 a pre-vision which you had had long months before, that one day we would have a home in Westminster, came true and we found a house close to the Westminster Theatre in Victoria Square.

How happy you were to have a house of your own after twenty-four years of travel, after twenty-four years of living in other people's homes, in hotels, or in one of the rooms of our centres either at Mackinac Island or at Caux.

We were assured by a friend that whenever we found

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the right house our furniture would fit in perfectly. The previous owners had left behind their carpets, curtains and most of their fittings, generously leaving us, too, their stove, refrigerator, washing machine and Hoover.

We found our dining room table and sideboard, painted in green, perfectly matched the curtains of that room. The desk, which had been your desk both in our flat and in our house at Hampstead, perfectly fitted into the alcove in the room we called the study. The furniture, too, which we inherited from your mother also fitted in perfectly as if made for the house.

How joyous you were to move into your own house on the day which happened to be your birthday, April 14th, 1964. It was as if the house was God's gift to you for good and faithful service over the years. But you knew it was not your house. It was His house, loaned to us to be used in His service. What happy and creative days we enjoyed in Victoria Square! They were the consummation of all the years that had gone before, all the pain and all the sorrows, all the laughter and all the tears. Now all was plain sailing. No more rows. We had sailed into a harbour of peace where our lives could be placed absolutely at the service of others.

We seldom left our home except every summer to go to the World Assembly at Caux. But in 1966 you fell ill and as it was February I was told by the doctors to take you away to the sun. By chance some friends from Jamaica were in London and they invited us to stay with them in their house in Montego Bay. He was the "Custos" of his district, and they made us guests at Doctors Cave, where there exists, I am sure, the finest bathing beach in the world.

Here (John was with us) we revelled in the sun and in the sea, often armed with snorkling equipment to lie on the

buoyant surface of the water and watch the multi-coloured fish swimming in and out among the rocks below.

For a while we stayed with our host's son in another house, situated at the top of a long drive which cut through the sugar cane fields and snaked its way up to the house, secluded on its hill. And it was here disaster struck us.

Returning in the Volkswagen which our host had lent us, I was driving heedlessly up the road to the house, taking little care as I knew we were the only ones to have a car. But that day the cook's brother had come to visit him, and as we went round the hairpin bend he came whistling down on his motorbike in the other direction. I swerved to avoid him. We ran onto a grass verge. I swung the car around and almost instantly collided with a tree. We had stopped on the edge of a canyon. Another inch to our left and we would have fallen twenty feet. The Jamaican maid came out and seeing the derelict car standing on the edge of the precipice, smashed beyond repair, cried out, "Glory to God, the heavens opened and saved you."

You were safe but badly bruised. My head had hit the windscreen and knocked it out. My left leg had broken the gear lever. John in the back of the car was unharmed. We telephoned the doctor. He was at lunch. When we at last got through and told him what had happened he made no comment.

Both of us were shocked but I could get no rest. The cook's brother was round at all hours demanding payment to be made for the damage done to his bike. I told him nothing could be done until the insurance company had been contacted. The next day, in another borrowed car, we drove down to the insurance office.

A week later I contracted bronchitis.

It was a difficult time for you, my darling. For days I couldn't stop coughing, and even when my temperature

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went down my cough continued. I had only to lay my head on the pillow at night for it to begin at once. I tried sleeping sitting up but to no avail. The weather grew unbearably hot and, back now at the home of our original host, there was no air conditioning. The dust from the cornfields where the cane was being cut only aggravated my condition.

As our son said to you, "Marriage is for better or worse, Mum. And this is worse." The strain of continual coughing and lack of sleep affected my nerves and I know what a trial it was for you, and I'll ever be grateful for your love and patience through those difficult days.

At last we were able to escape from the dust and the endless Jamaican wind to the haven of a country house in America. But I didn't get well as we fondly hoped. My nerves were taut and strained and the local doctor, diagnosing a depression, gave me pills which only tautened my nerves further. I know how distressed you were. But you never let me know how worried you were. With me you were always buoyant and optimistic, till at last I was well enough to leave America and fly home. But from that year my health was never to be quite the same again and you, my darling, were to spend much time caring for me, looking after me, supplying the things I needed to boost my strength.

I could no longer take such an active part at the assemblies at Caux, but you would bring my meals to our room and we could still be used together in the lives of many people.

In Britain we had happy holidays together, especially at West Runton, a little village between Cromer and Sheringham. Years ago as a child I used to go there with my family and always remembered it with affection. When I first suggested we go there together, you said, "No, no,

you'll only be disappointed. It won't be the least like you remember it. It will have been totally spoilt." But in the end I persuaded you and we went. And joyous days we spent there!

It was not in the least bit spoilt. The funny old hotel was still there, unpretentious, comfortable and mercifully cheap, with excellent cooking. The cottage and houses where I had stayed as a child were still exactly as I remembered them. The spring where we drew our water was still there, though the pump was rusty. The pond was still there where my sisters and I had sailed our boats in the mornings before breakfast. The common was unspoilt and so was the beach a mile away.

The only change was the golf course, once a delightful sporting "links". Part now was a housing estate but nine holes remained. While I played you would accompany me. I can see you now, one club in hand, searching in the rough or under the long grass below the hedges and discovering ball after ball. You kept me well supplied! Perhaps it was your Jewish blood that made ball hunting such fun for you — you were getting something for nothing and thoroughly enjoying the getting!

I can see you now on the croquet lawn, holding the mallet all wrong, your face eager and determined. You were a fierce competitor but though I always gave you a few hoops' advantage I mostly won. But what triumph lit your face when you were the victor! We both had a competitive spirit and that is why we could never play Scrabble. We would start the best of friends, oozing a sporting spirit. And then you or I would score a triple with some obscure word we had gouged from the dictionary and the sparks would begin to fly. The only danger to our marriage in its latter years came through the game of Scrabble! We decided not to play it and did jig-saw puzzles.

Eleventh Letter

SO THE LAST YEARS of our marriage passed, I never very well, you radiating vitality and energy. Perhaps unknown to me you were burning yourself out. Perhaps your endless care for countless people and for me placed a greater strain on your heart than either of us realised. It was such a big heart, wide enough, as I have written, to take in the whole world, for though we no longer travelled abroad except to Switzerland, the world beat a path to our door.

Few came without finding the answer they sought. You not only had the gift of discernment but the genius to open up the most tightly closed heart. It was a combination of many things, your warmth, your caring, but perhaps above all your willingness to pay the price, to share the things in your life of which you were most ashamed. These were the open sesames to the hearts of others. And always you prayed for guidance. "Lord," you would ask, "what is it that will enable my friend to talk?" And the Lord would answer you, sometimes surprisingly. "Tell her," He said one day, "how difficult you find it to get up in the morning." This acted like magic. Your friend's face, tight-lipped up to that point, suddenly brightened. "That's exactly my problem," she exclaimed, and began to pour out her heart.

You had many funny ways which endeared you to Jen

and John as well as to me. You were, as one friend remarked, "larger than life". Everything was in superlatives. If I asked you how much someone had enjoyed one of our plays the answer was always the same, "Oh, they absolutely adored it!"

I tried to gain from you some gradations of enjoyment but this you could never understand. Either someone didn't like a play or they absolutely adored it. No gradations for you!

You were never, darling, fully domesticated! You were never the little woman sitting by the fireside darning your husband's socks. We once had a row about this in Japan — you had not sewn name tapes on my socks. Your answer was you were far too busy. And then one day we went to see a Japanese film. The hero was a member of the Kabuki Theatre whose traditions have remained unchanged for five hundred years. He fell in love with one of the maids in the house. It was against tradition to marry outside the theatre group and so the two of them eloped. Otoku was the name of the maid. Because he could find no work the two of them endured great hardship. Through it all Otoku was sacrificial in her caring. She went without food that her beloved might eat. She dried his clothes against her breasts. There was no hardship she would not undergo on his behalf. At last they realised that it was hopeless and that it was his duty to return to his family and fulfil his destined role in the Kabuki Theatre. By the time they returned she was dying. The last scene showed the hero in a river pageant acknowledging the plaudits of the crowd. Otoku's room overlooked the river. She tottered from her bed to the window to see her beloved pass. Then she died. By this time everyone in the cinema was sobbing and as we went outside I turned to you. "Now, darling," I asked, "what about my name tapes?"

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You sewed them on!

I often called you Otoku in the future years when I thought you were not quite fulfilling your wifely or domestic duties. But I cannot say it had much effect! Domesticity was not a part of your upbringing and, in spite of your training in Canada during the war and at our various assemblies, domestic duties had no strong appeal to your artistic nature, though, forced to it, you were an excellent cook. You meant well. Often I would hear you say to Jenny as she went downstairs to the kitchen to prepare a meal, "I'll be down to help you in just a minute." But the minute would lengthen and by the time you arrived in the kitchen the meal was already prepared.

Your great contribution to the household was your flowers. You loved them and arranged them beautifully. But you never bought them. Your conviction was that if God meant you to have flowers He would send them to you. He always did. Our home was always bright with flowers and they were always gifts — some of them even from myself!

I loved to give you flowers. They meant so much to you. But for some reason it was flowers in the house you loved. When I pointed out the beauty of the flowers for example in St James's Park they had less appeal, and you would often pass them by unseeing.

Your most lovable characteristic was perhaps your enthusiasm. It bubbled out of you and knew no bounds. Often when you returned from an outing you would be telling of your adventures almost before you were through the front door. You were eager to tell everything that passed through your mind. Often you would interrupt my letter writing two or three times to say something to me, even though you were highly displeased if I in turn interrupted yours! At night when I was in bed reading you

would pop in and out of the bathroom for one reason or another chatting away and interrupting my reading. And I would look up from my book and say, "Yes" or "No" as the occasion required, yet loving your talk as your active brain flitted from this to that, never idly but always to some point, about the theatre, or some person's problem, or about our son and daughter.

They were your frequent concern — Jenny because she was not married and in the last years of your life you knew she was in love; and John very often because of his hair! This was the only point on which I ever knew you to lack understanding of the young generation who are so like ourselves. John wore his hair the same length as every other man of his age. But nevertheless you longed for him to have it cut, and almost daily I had to restrain you from making some comment on it. One day you did. "Now Mum," John rejoined, "was Hitler a better man because his hair was short?" It was a difficult question for you to counter!

How you loved your son and daughter! Night after night you poured out your heart to God on their behalf, and how happy you must have been in your heavenly abode when at last Jenny married the man she loved — and such an exceptional man too — and John found the work exactly suited to his talents and temperament.

We went often to Westminster Cathedral to pray and more often than not it was for John and Jen. But there were always others to pray for too and in the last months of your life you must have been very close to heaven. The night before the final of Wimbledon in 1975 you went to the Cathedral to pray for our friend Arthur Ashe, and when you returned you told me you had experienced the shining of a brilliant light.

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Our last holiday abroad together was at the end of March 1976, when we went to Sorrento. It was a "package holiday" and we went with our beloved *voisins*, Alan and Barbara Thornhill. How lucky we were! In all that spring we enjoyed the only two fine weeks they had in southern Italy. Alan had chosen at random a hotel from a travel brochure. He couldn't have chosen better. The hotel was as clean as a new pin. We had delightful bedrooms overlooking the garden of the hotel. Each morning we could sun ourselves on the patio, then later walk into the town to buy our lunch, which we ate in the secluded part of the hotel grounds overlooking the Bay of Naples. In the distance across the bay was Naples itself and shrouded in mists the volcano Vesuvius, unrepentant of its destruction of Pompeii.

Most evenings you and I would take a walk, out of the town and up the hills, the paths lined by orange and lemon groves.

One evening we met members of a family who owned one of these groves — an aunt we discovered and four nephews. You knew very little Italian but soon the family had warmed to you and in a few minutes it seemed we were old friends. The aunt spoke to one of her nephews and in a flash he was up a tree, picking the best fruit which we carried triumphantly back to our hotel, which a waiter made into a delicious lemonade.

Then there was that marvellous drive on a blue cloudless day over the Sorrento mountains, past the little town of Positano nestling in its quiet bay, through Amalfi and up to Ravello, the castle there and the garden where Wagner had written the second act of *Parsifal*.

Finally we went with our tour party to Capri. We were a little disappointed with the island about which we had all read and heard so much. But before we left we broke away

from the main party and took a taxi to the villa of Gracie Fields. I had met her in the days before the war and she had been interested in our work. We hadn't let her know we were coming, but by chance there was a gardener emptying some rubbish outside the villa walls. We spoke to him and he seemed to understand and told us to follow. We did so until we came to the gates of the villa itself. Here he rang a bell which brought out a questioning Gracie to see who we were. We introduced ourselves and she invited us in.

How quickly she responded to you, darling, and so did her husband Boris to whom you gave special care. We had coffee with them and they showed us around the villa and when we left we were firm friends. When we later wrote and sent her our book *A Mixed Double*, she wrote back that if only she were younger she would want to work with us. What a great soul she is!

You hadn't been well when you went away but you seemed physically in good shape when you came back and the spring was now with us, the trees showing their first leaf and the daffodils at their best in St James's Park. So the spring continued, cold as it always seems to be these days, until the hottest summer in recent memory was suddenly upon us.

I had no idea how soon you were to go, but looking back on those days I realise you were ready, even though you hated to leave us. God had perfected His instrument. Your humility, your courage had won through to a marvellous grace. How often I heard Frank Buchman say to friends of his, "You must meet Phyllis Austin, she has the Holy Spirit." Yes, my darling, you had the Holy Spirit. You found as the years went by a marvellous purity and it shone like a light in your face.

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Yes, in my eyes you grew more beautiful every year. It was the beauty of holiness. You were not perfect. What human being ever has been? Only one and He was God Incarnate. Yes, you had your faults, but Alan Thornhill was accurate when he summed up your life in his address at your memorial service in Bishop Goodwin-Hudson's beautiful new church near Portman Square:

"Today is All Saints' Day. The Church, having set apart different days all through the year for the various saints who get, as it were, top billing in God's Company, has this special day for all the rest, all the bit-players, the extras, the heavenly chorus line, the understudies, and all the back stage crew, for in God's production all who play their part with their whole hearts are stars, stars in His Crown.

"It's a good day on which to give thanks to Phyll. The thought of being a saint in any conventional sense would have provoked in her laughter and a few tart comments. But in the true definition, I think that Phyll belongs, at least, we can say, in the Company of Saints. I was looking at a fascinating book, the *Penguin Dictionary of Saints*. The introduction to this book has some wise words. 'A saint is not faultless,' it says. 'He does not always think and behave well and wisely. One who has occasion to oppose him is not always wrong or foolish. He or she is a saint because his personal daily life was lived not merely well, but at an heroic level of Christian faithfulness and integrity. The key word that distinguishes the saint is "heroism". The saint is the man or woman who gives himself, herself, to God heroically.'

"This is the word I would stress in thinking of Phyll. Heroically means something more than just bravely. It implies life lived 'all-out', on a big stage, dedicated to a great, heroic theme. The true saint is larger than life. He is

certainly larger than death. Phyll, as we have known her in these last thirty years and more, lived that way, on that scale. With it all there was her marvellous humour, her immense care and compassion for people, her implacable hatred of sin and unbelievable love of sinners. Any memorial to Phyll must focus on that giving heart. It was the key to her life. A heart outpoured in love for her husband, her family, her friends, her enemies, and above all for God.”

Alan then quoted extracts from some of the five hundred or more letters Jen and John and I had received. A fellow-worker in the theatre wrote: “Often when I was desperate for someone to talk to she listened and understood. She didn’t preach. She wasn’t soft or hard. She had that gift for feeling what you were feeling. She led you back to God gently and firmly with many a laugh. It was often laugh till you cry and cry till you laugh.”

In Hollywood, the wife of a composer said, “She had a broad shoulder and big ears.” The wife of one of the professional tennis players wrote: “I admired Phyll more than any woman I’ve met. She always urged me to think big, and though sometimes I feel I’m just not strong enough, I realise that with God’s help I will not disappoint her.”

A teenager wrote: “Aunt Phyll and you helped me to find faith and love, helped me to dare to give everything to this great thing of letting God guide my life. You have shown me what FUN it is to live according to God’s Will, and how much it is worth it.” One husband wrote: “Once in a while someone really grabs you, challenging you to think and care, to question your whole life-style and *raison d’etre*. That’s what she did for Tessa and me.” An older friend said: All the gracious things she did seemed to spring spontaneously from her passionate passion for souls.”

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Then Alan continued: "A memorial to Phyll must focus too on her special vision for and commitment to the theatre, especially the Westminster Theatre, in which she poured out her resources, her time and her talent, a theatre of hope for the world with the challenge of Christian values. Could we pledge ourselves to carry on that work? Could we not together help shift the cultural forces of the West Godward? Could we not put our heads together with others who share her vision and devise some memorial to her in this field? Could we not create a theatre that in standards on and off stage, in integrity and in vision, might be, as it was originally in this country, God's handmaid to bring His Truth to men?"

Alan ended by quoting some words from a wonderful letter written to me by Mother Teresa, "Phyll's going home to Jesus must not be a sorrow for you. She is much closer to you than she ever was, for in Jesus she can be right in your heart. In all her letters to me she spoke of you with great love. You must be missing her, but this is the joy you must hold on to, that you have separated for a greater love, by the One who made you and her."

Darling, I am grateful for Mother Teresa's words. I have often felt you very close, especially during the September just after you passed away. It often seemed that Mother Teresa was right: I could hear your voice in my heart, hear you tell me I was the one you had loved, and that your love for me had been your ladder to heaven. And as you loved me, darling, so I have loved you, and today I remain as always,

Your own,
Bun.