

# ONE FIGHT MORE

*by*

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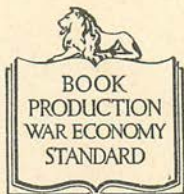
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## FOREWORD

Everyone loved B. H. Streeter, the scholar-statesman, with his great mind and his simple heart ; not least Alan Thornhill, who was so much with him, working and travelling, during his last years. This book is a sketch of those crowded fruitful years before the sudden dramatic home-going.

Thornhill gives us the living heart of the man. He interprets for us the mature thought on world problems which B. H. planned to give in a new book. For B. H. often talked with Thornhill of the book he had in mind and of the philosophy which was to be its core and message. It is a philosophy which can save civilization.

He lived those years in the very spirit of Browning's lines :—

“ The journey is done and the summit attained,  
And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
The best and the last ! ”

B. H. was ever a fighter. He fought for a new world. He saw his goal afar off and his battle brought it nearer. We are left to gain it.

J. P. THORNTON-DUESBERY

MASTER'S LODGE  
ST. PETER'S HALL  
OXFORD

## I

The cold grey waters of the Atlantic rose and fell and rose again. Somewhere they met a cold grey sky. The steamship *Aquitania* patiently pushed her way eastward in the month of April, 1934. At the rail of deck "A" two figures stood alone—a younger man and an older.

The older and taller of the two was wrapped from head to foot in an enormous black overcoat. Between its turned-up collar and the peak of his cap pulled down over his forehead, little could be seen of the wearer's face—little but a thick beard, grey and wavy as if to match the Atlantic itself. Somewhere, in the background, loomed a nose, and somewhere, remoter still, behind burly eyebrows and thick spectacles, a pair of eyes, exceptionally blue and alert. The final noticeable thing about this figure was its feet. To say that they were large is to mislead by understatement. They were telescopic feet. At the place where the normal foot stops they seemed to have decided to start all over again. Encased in shiny, black, crinkly boots, they seemed all of a piece with the long overcoat and thick grey beard. Yet there was an odd, a humorous, almost a twinkling quality about these feet. You smiled with them rather than at them. They had something to do with those unusually blue and alert eyes. Boots and eyes seemed to be enjoying a private joke together.



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Turning to his companion, with an expressive wave of his hand toward the waste of water below, the figure said, "You know this kind of thing creates in me complete disbelief in God and the universe and everything else." Then with an odd little laugh (or was it only a sniff?) he turned and strode away. The other stayed for a moment or two looking out over the sea, and then he too walked, rather uncertainly, below. Back in his cabin he flung himself on his bed and began to think.

So far things were not turning out very well. He had banked a good deal on this voyage. The last day in New York he had paid out his last hundred dollars to transfer his return ticket to England from Tourist to First Class. He had done it suddenly against all his natural habits and instincts. He had done it entirely on account of the tall black figure with the beard and the twinkling eyes.

To the young man, at that time, B. H. Streeter, Doctor of Divinity, Provost of The Queen's College, Oxford, author of "Reality," "The Four Gospels" and a number of other works, was not much more than a name. It is true that they were both teachers in the same university—colleagues if you like—but one was a beginner, a youngster, junior Fellow in one of the smaller colleges, just about to deliver his first course of lectures, whereas the other was perhaps the leading man in his subject in Europe, and one of the few really original and creative thinkers of his day.

The young man, travelling the previous summer on the Continent, had grown used to the slightly disdainful smiles of the learned Professors when he had mentioned the names or the views of most

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British scholars. But when he mentioned Streeter it was different. The learned Professors didn't agree with Streeter, naturally. He was wrong, of course. But he was to be reckoned with. He was a giant in his way. There was no disdainful smile. In a burst of confidence one of them, perhaps the most learned of all, had said that Streeter's book on the four Gospels was the greatest work on the subject produced anywhere since the Great War. And that was something. For the learned Professor had written several books on that subject himself.

The odd thing, the annoying thing, was that this Streeter had probably only lightly skimmed, or perhaps not even read at all, those other books of the learned Professor and his friends. His mind did not work that way. He did not just compile and compare. He worked independently, almost intuitively, a master of detail, yet not bound by detail, with a kind of terrier's nose for a likely trail or a good scent. Reading Streeter was rather like an adventure with Sherlock Holmes. It was strange going for a time, but, as you neared the end, light dawned. You could almost hear beside you that odd little laugh (or was it only a sniff?) and a voice saying, "Quite simple, my dear Watson." There was sometimes the fun, too, of having got a jump or two ahead of the more laborious methods of theological Scotland Yard.

He was never a one-subject man—Philosophy, History, Comparative Religion, Psychology, Ethics, Mysticism—he had written on them all. There was a book on old chained libraries, written for relaxation, which is the last word on its subject—"the only book of mine that'll last," he used to say.

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But much greater than all the books was the man. He was what the world still loves—a genius and a character in one. You loved his books. You loved still more his passion for truth, his rapier mind, his shy but confiding smile, his sidelong glance at you to see if you were shocked or only amused, (“You know,” he would say, “there are things you can get away with, if you have a beard like mine,”) his limericks thrown off *ad lib.* to fit any and every occasion, his mannerisms, his simplicity and humbleness of heart.

But the trouble was that the journey was more than half over. Four precious days had gone by; the winds had blown; the ship had groaned and plunged; seasickness had not encouraged friendliness; and beyond that odd little encounter on deck the young man in his cabin had seen nothing of Streeter. He had had a strong inner compulsion that he must get to know this man; that he had much to get from him and (strange thought this!) something to give as well. Was it just a hunch? Or was it part of a plan, an over-arching plan, God’s plan, a plan with new men and a new world as its goal? That was what the young man wondered as he lay on his back, watching the wardrobe door swing back and forth with the swell. “Perhaps,” he thought, “a hundred dollars might have been better spent after all.”

On the next day the sun came out, and with it the deck chairs and the deck games, the scandals, the romances, the gossip and the photographs.

All day long in the sun the two men sat side by side. Streeter had volunteered to look through the notes of the lectures the young man hoped to



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deliver the following term. All day long they worked. For the young man it was a gruelling experience, as Streeter's critical faculties were sharp and his mind like a razor edge. For the older man it was a pure labour of love, a gracious gesture undertaken at the cost of precious hours of rest between a strenuous lecture tour in America and a heavy summer's work in Oxford. But he did not spare himself, and it was not until evening that the work was done.

Next day was the last at sea. The two men had dined together and talked a good deal. Something of a friendship was springing up between them. Now they were in a corner of the smoking room, and suddenly Streeter began to talk again. But this time it was about himself. He felt, he said, that his main job in the world was now done. He had given his life to try to make the great truths of religion understandable to the thought of to-day. He had written about all he had to write. There were jobs to be done in Oxford, of course; there was plenty to keep him from being bored, and yet, five, ten, even twenty years might seem long and a trifle sad for one who had to go on living and growing old when he felt that his work was done and that he was only marking time.

The young man swallowed hard. This then was the thing that he had been waiting for. This was the clue to that hunch—or that more than hunch—back in New York. This, in some way he could not fully see, was part of a plan, a plan that embraced Streeter and himself and everyone else and the whole world, a plan for which of late he had learned to listen every day.



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He swallowed again, for he was shy.

Then he said, "You know, sir, I believe that, far from being finished, your greatest job in life hasn't yet begun."

"What's that?" Streeter, the critic, the terrier of truth, was fully awake now.

"Well," hesitatingly, "you've given your life to make eternal truths plain to men's minds. Now you will make them effective in their lives."

There was silence.

A few more miles of ocean slipped back into the night. At last Streeter spoke again. "Let's go to my cabin and pray about this matter."

## II

The time had come when he would have to review his whole relationship to the Oxford Group. The incident in the ship's cabin was only one of many that made Streeter realize that. He thought back to the years just after the war, that strange period when Oxford was suddenly swarming with hard-bitten young lieutenants and captains and majors of under twenty-five, veterans of Gallipoli or the Somme, splendid fighters, but restless and ill at ease in their short undergraduate gowns, and more than usually impatient of University discipline. It had needed all one's tact and wisdom to keep Oxford traditions alive, and yet adapt them to that cynical, war-scarred generation. College rules or college property did not always seem very sacred to men who had come through the bloodiest battles in history. Men who had been through hell were not always

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eager for "true religion and sound learning." Streeter had high hopes of the younger generation. But as he had looked around him in post-war Oxford he saw trouble ahead.

So he was interested from the start when stories began to reach him of a spiritual ferment spreading among the undergraduates. It was hard at first to get details. It was not apparently a new religious society; that would not mean much in Oxford, where new societies spring up like mushrooms, flourish and die overnight. It was not a new sect or a new cult. It seemed more what in old days might have been called a "School"; a band of men, devoted to their leader, bound together by the closest ties of loyalty and discipline, deliberately training for a common task. It had originated, it was said, in Christ Church of all places, among a fairly tough and, from the religious point of view, unlikely set of men. Their leader was a visitor to Oxford, an American, Frank Buchman. Stories about the new group would go the rounds—stories about the unusual assortment of people seen at the meetings, humorous stories about the surprising things they said and did, scandalous stories third and fourth hand, hinting at dark happenings behind closed doors. They all reached Streeter in time. He did not take them too seriously. He knew his Oxford.

But there were some stories which he could not ignore—stories of change, remarkable, indisputable change in some most unexpected people. From his colleagues, from heads of colleges and college chaplains he heard news of problem characters turned pillars of society, notorious atheists become modern apostles, conventional plodders on fire

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with a new passion. From his friend Professor Grensted and others he heard accounts of remarkable Sunday nights when the Group kept open house, first in a private home, later in an hotel, and a bunch of scholars and religious leaders, athletes and agnostics would drop in and talk. The emphasis was on experience rather than on theory. Anything, it seemed, might happen on those Sunday nights. A bigoted ecclesiastic, or a self-satisfied intellectual, or a gang of drunks might try to capture the meeting. All were free to say their say, but there seemed to be a power there greater than argument.

The story went that one long-haired gentleman, in the most polished style of the Union Debating Society, had discoursed one night on his disgust "at what you Buchmanites have been in the past—a disgust which is only exceeded," he had said, "by my contempt for what you are now." This had raised some laughter and applause from the opposition benches. But when the young man who was leading had simply smiled, and the meeting went on as before, some began to wonder. When the gentleman in question appeared the following Sunday with a haircut, apologized for what he had said, and announced that in the course of the week his life had become new, then wonder turned to intense personal hunger for the power that can set a man free and change the whole furniture of his heart and mind overnight. Evidently it was not the meetings that won the day, but the miracles.

In time Streeter got to know some of these men personally. There was Loudon Hamilton, of Christ Church, first of the pioneers, who had been invited to return to Oxford and provided by an hospitable



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Principal with a bed and three meals a day in order that he might carry on the work of life-changing in the University. Then there was a group of young Americans. One or two of them would attend Streeter's lectures, take an unusual quantity of notes, and then as like as not stay on afterwards to ask a question, or to tell him modestly but convincingly about their convictions and latest news. There was Ken Twitchell, who had entered Balliol as an undergraduate and brought his wife and family over to make their home in Oxford a centre for the Group. There were Ray Purdy and Scoville Wishard at Mansfield. Of Dr. Buchman he heard much but saw little or nothing—evidently a man who believed in keeping himself in the background and training others to do the job.

He was especially interested in John Roots, since he had for many years known John's father, Bishop Roots of China, had entertained him in Oxford and stayed with him in the Bishop's House in Hankow. John had been strongly drawn to Communism in his student days. The influence of the Group had certainly saved for Christianity an unusually gifted and promising young man. Streeter wondered what the Bishop would have to say about it, and was not surprised to hear from John that he was deeply interested.

Another thing that had impressed Streeter about the Group in these early days was the intensity of the opposition that it aroused. He knew from his own experience as well as from history that this was not necessarily a bad sign. He knew that not even churchmen and intellectuals are always eager to break with old moulds and accept change. And

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the Group meant change. From the earliest days the Group had its friends among professors and heads of colleges. But there were the others. Some with direct attack, others secretly under a guise of open-minded neutrality, used all their influence to disparage the work. A man who showed interest in the Group, or who had recently identified himself with it, found himself subject to a series of "casual visits," "unofficial warnings," "friendly hints," complete with the latest titbit of gossip or scandal, from well-wishing members of the opposition.

A regular saga of stories would go the rounds. There was the young man who, under an occult influence, had set out for Spain at an hour's notice and had never been heard of since. As the incident never happened this was not surprising. Another victim had been spirited away to Glasgow by means of "guidance" in the middle of his examinations. This no doubt referred to a man who visited Edinburgh six weeks before his examinations, which he subsequently passed with distinction. All this gave the cautious and the conservative much cause for hesitation. "I'm on the edge of the Group," said an enthusiastic student one day to his college chaplain. "I think that's a good place to stay," was the guarded reply, "on the edge." Indeed, college chaplains and religious leaders played quite a part in this unofficial opposition. History repeats itself. It was not so long since clerical Oxford expelled followers of John Wesley for "divers enthusiasms."

A little mild persecution wouldn't do the cause any harm, thought Streeter, and the cheerful, friendly adherents of the Group seemed well able to take it. But at times opposition went altogether too far.



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Picking up his *Church Times* one day early in 1928, he had read under "Oxford News" the following:

"It would not be unfair to say that the University is overrun at present with what is known as 'Buchmanism.' 'Buchmanism' appears to be some form of American Quakerism," (both words "American" and "Quaker" were clearly regarded by *The Church Times* as derogatory,) "and, like all quietist movements, has its serious dangers, one of which would seem to be in its theory of special providences and guidances—not the best sort of teaching for the young men."

It was *The Church Times* at its most pontifical, and it annoyed Streeter. He had a shrewd idea that a world run largely by people who had *no* belief in providences and guidances, special or otherwise, had its serious dangers for young men also. Besides, he sensed the beginning of trouble. And he was right. The remarks of *The Church Times* were only like the flares dropped by the first attacking planes to point the way for the bombers to follow. A day or two later the *Daily Express* had come out with a disclosure of "Buchmanism." "Members of the new cult," said their special correspondent, "during the meeting hold hands in a large circle and one after another, apparently 'inspired,' make a full confession of their sins." The fact that people sometimes sat around the fire is the nearest approach to the truth in this statement.

But it was the big chance for the opposition. The *Daily Express* correspondent discovered a head of a college ready to enter the fray. "A morbid sensualism," he cried, "masquerading under the guise of religion . . . University authorities should



take every step to stop this outrageous system before it goes too far." Others took up the cry. "Extremely peculiar," said a learned University theologian to the *Daily Express* correspondent, "one might almost say grim." The undergraduate newspaper, *The Isis*, took up the tale, and with horrified indignation over "clandestine meetings" and "hysterical confession" called on the authorities "to remove from Oxford those responsible for a phenomenon which would be faintly comic were it not to produce such extremely unpleasant results."

Finally, a gang of toughs decided to take the matter into their own hands. One Sunday night, merry and full of spirits, profane and out for blood, twenty or more of them rushed into the hotel where the meetings were held. A tame reporter had been invited down from London to witness the fun. But it is not so easy to outwit men guided by God. The Group previously that day had met and guidance had come to call off the usual hotel meeting and attend the University Church that evening where Canon F. R. Barry was to preach. When the gang arrived, they found only a smiling young man, who invited them to go over to the Church and listen to a sermon.

A small handful of courageous men saved Oxford's reputation for sanity and tolerance, and did more than they or anyone realized in the fight for a new world. One was Canon L. W. Grensted, eminent scholar and psychologist. "I know these men," he said. "I know their work. I can speak of its general sanity and effectiveness. It is helping those it touches to be better scholars, better athletes." Dr. Graham Brown, later Bishop in Jerusalem,

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was another ally. A third was B. H. Streeter. "I am convinced," he said to the *Daily Express*, "that the leaders are absolutely sincere. I have never been to any of the meetings, but hope to have the opportunity of doing so before long. . . . I have reason to believe a number of individuals have been greatly helped by their contact with the Group."

A few days later the following letter appeared in *The Times*:

SIR,—

A report has been widely circulated regarding the work of the groups in Oxford associated with the name of the Rev. F. N. D. Buchman, D.D. From what we have observed of the results of this work, it is our belief that this criticism has arisen from misunderstanding and unfounded rumour, and misrepresents the spirit of the work.

Yours faithfully,

- A. D. LINDSAY, Master of Balliol.  
M. E. SADLER, Master of University College.  
W. B. SELBIE, Principal, Mansfield College.  
F. R. BARRY, Vicar of St. Mary's University Church.  
G. F. GRAHAM BROWN, Principal, Wycliffe Hall.  
L. W. GRENSTED, Fellow and Chaplain of University College.  
W. E. S. HOLLAND.  
W. C. COSTIN, Dean of St. John's College.  
J. P. THORNTON-DUESBERY, Vice-Principal, Wycliffe Hall.  
F. H. BRABANT, Chaplain, Wadham College.  
D. C. LUSK, Presbyterian Chaplain to the University.
- Opposition was silenced—for the moment.

## III

From that time onwards Streeter had kept in close touch with the development of the Group. It was a time of rapid expansion. That same year two South African Rhodes Scholars who, like others, had drifted into the Sunday night meetings, had mocked and criticized, stayed and changed, had returned to their home country with a team of six Oxford men. There they had sown the seeds of a national work; there they were first dubbed "The Oxford Group." In 1929 a larger team went to South Africa under Frank Buchman's own leadership. In 1930 another. In 1932, Canada. 1934, Norway.

Meanwhile in England the work was spreading rapidly. Bishops, statesmen, business men, Labour leaders were following where University students had led the way. By the end of 1933, the Group had received the attentions of the leader writer in *The Times*, was the subject of the best seller of the year, had been officially received by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth, and commissioned for work in London by the Bishop of London in St. Paul's Cathedral. Its message had been heard by a large meeting of M.P.s in the Houses of Parliament, and had even been the subject of a cartoon in *Punch*. England in her own characteristic way was slowly, often reluctantly, taking the Group to her heart.

In Oxford the battle went on. Gradually, leadership was trained to carry on and develop the work. Julian Thornton-Duesbery, Chaplain of Corpus, the Chaplains of Lincoln and Hertford,



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and Miss Christine Morrison, tutor in English, joined Professor Grensted in taking an active part in the Group's work. The undergraduates were a varied and colourful crowd, destined in time to make their mark as spiritual leaders in many lands—the irrepressible Goulding brothers, Frank Bygott, oarsman and poet, Kit Prescott, husky young son of a famous football family, Harry Addison, frail-bodied, tough-spirited little intellectual from a worker's home in the North-East, Roland Wilson, quiet, scholarly statesman and leader of men—these and others began to take their place at the heart of a growing spiritual revolution.

And Streeter, in the background, had watched and evaluated it all. The public meetings he seldom attended, but he would occasionally drop in at lunch time at the Old Library of the University Church of St. Mary's. Here, close to the spot where the Reformation martyrs spent their last night on earth, where Wesley and his Holy Club met to pray, where Newman thundered from the pulpit, the Oxford Group had found a home and a daily meeting place. First in handfuls, then in larger numbers, they came day after day, some still in academic gowns from a lecture, some in rowing or football clothes, some running (it meant quick work over lunch getting to that meeting at one-thirty), some on bicycles, some shy and hesitant, some with a tremendous abandon and the glint of battle in their eye.

It meant something to come to those "one-thirties," as they were called. They were not the usual discussion circles that Oxford loves. The aim of the Group was not discussion. It was nothing

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else than to build a new world. It stood, Frank Buchman would repeat, "for a quality of life resulting in personal, social, racial, national and super-national change." These meetings were an intense spiritual training. There was complete informality and you could say what you liked, but the spiritual temperature was such that the dilettante or the arm-chair theorist soon found the pace too hot for him. Men were blunt about themselves and each other. Absolute standards of honesty and unselfishness meant *absolute*. They were applied, not to some pleasant pipe-dream of the sweet by-and-by, but to the details of the nasty now-and-now. "What time do you get up these days? How about your morning quiet times? Are you winning your friends to this way of life? What about the Dons? Which comes first—God or the family? How about the future? Are you ready to go anywhere, be anything, sacrifice everything for God's plan and a new world?" These were the kind of questions flung out and fought out in these daily meetings. With them went the simple practical training that every Christian university ought to give as a matter of course—the moral basis of Christianity, the steps involved in finding a personal experience in your own life, the relating of that experience to social and national and world problems, the art of passing on the experience to another man ("life-changing" Buchman called it), the art of listening to God, the building of an unbreakable fellowship.

But, of late, Streeter had most of all liked to be present at an inner council of war where a smaller group of leaders met together on Monday nights. There, in an atmosphere of outspoken honesty,



among friends who trusted and understood each other perfectly, he would watch the lines of a spiritual strategy being laid down, not only for the University but for the whole country, or listen to the latest report from South Africa or Switzerland or Canada, or meet visitors passing through from Scotland or the industrial North or the East End of London. He could see the emergence of a philosophy—not in academic debate or discussion, but in relation to a hundred and one practical problems of life.

He was a good listener—instantly and obviously bored at the slightest trace of unreality or cleverness for cleverness' sake, but alert for every grain of truth or genuine experience, no matter who gave it or however crudely it was expressed. In fact, he was beginning to see that the direct, colloquial language of the Group was one of its many merits. After all, the language of the New Testament was not, judged by classical standards, good Greek. It was mostly the popular idiom of the day. "Hence," wrote Streeter at a later date, "if ever at an Oxford Group meeting the language used by a speaker falls below the highest level of literary taste, I console myself with the reflection—if colloquial Greek was good enough for the Apostles, colloquial English should be good enough for me."

He seldom spoke himself. But near the end of a meeting he might casually throw in a remark to clarify a point or sum up a discussion. These remarks had a habit of sticking. One night a young man, who was for the moment taking himself too seriously, announced the discovery that he must be ready even to make a fool of himself for the sake of the cause. "*Make* a fool," said Streeter with a



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chuckle and that mysterious little sniff. Everyone laughed, including the young man himself—and Streeter, who when he laughed would throw back his head, his beard pointing skyward like a spreading plant and his mouth open wide in proportion to the size of the joke.

He loved the sense of a family, perhaps because he had not had much family life himself. He liked the sense of battle. He had always been a fighter in his own way. He understood the mixture of daring faith and shrewd commonsense that he found on those Monday nights. Gradually he began to dream, to hope, to believe that here might be an answer for the world.

## IV

For Streeter saw clearly where the world was heading. He did not need Abyssinia or Austria or Spain to show him that we were rounding the last bends and that the crash of civilization was not far away. Versailles, Locarno, disarmament conferences, economic conferences, the League itself—he knew that they had failed. And he knew why—just that men were still selfish, still greedy, still proud and fearful under the veneer.

In the first years after the war he had believed in progress—slow perhaps, with set-backs here and there, but none the less progress towards an age when scientific developments together with universal

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education would bring the good life within reach of everyone. He had drawn strength and invigoration from his close touch with youth in the Student Christian Movement and elsewhere. He had had high hopes of the outspoken honesty and fundamental soundness of the younger generation. But as the years went by he had felt his resistance to pessimism steadily weakening. It might be that we were a little better than our fathers. But we had need to be a great deal better if we were to be trusted with the infinitely greater power for good or evil that science was putting into our hands. Children can afford to quarrel over their toys, but not when the toys happen to include a case of razors and a tin of dynamite.

Increasingly Oxford depressed him. The religious societies on the whole seemed either narrow and sectarian or else anæmic and dull. The Union Debating Society was at a low ebb. It was too often dominated by a bunch in pink ties and dirty old grey trousers, who were soon to tell the world that they refused to fight for their King and country.

The Communist philosophy with its subtle appeal to frustrated idealism seemed to be leading scores by the nose. There were too many imitators about, too many "Yes-men," and not enough of the vigorous independent thinking, the genuine culture that characterized the true Oxford.

And then his thoughts would turn again to that quiet back room on Monday nights. There he saw developing a world philosophy to answer the -isms. There was a fighting faith with a call to sacrifice everything. There was Christ, the constructive Revolutionary, of Whom he had written, but Who

seemed to have been lost in a welter of -ologies. There was where he, Streeter, belonged.

A sharp note of warning sounded in his mind. He was no longer the young rebel against orthodoxy who had shocked authority by his radical opinions, who had flung down the gauntlet and dared the Bishops to deprive him of his Orders, who had seen the devout of Hereford hurry from the cathedral in protest as soon as he mounted the pulpit. Times had changed. His so-called radicalism had become orthodoxy. His once "extreme" opinions were widely quoted in defence of the faith. The Church of England had quietly adjusted itself to his views and christened him respectable. He had fought his battles for truth. Now let younger men fight theirs. "It's one thing," he said to himself, "to pat the animal and call it a noble creature. It's quite a different thing to get astride yourself."

Yet his love of truth would not let him rest. If here was a great experiment which, from however humble beginnings it had sprung, might yet grow to save the world, and if he were equipped to help in that experiment, then sympathy or patronage or safe advice were not enough; it meant standing in the front line of attack and sharing the kicks as well as the praise.

But there was the College to think of. It was an ancient and honoured institution. He had only recently been appointed its head. He stood in a long line of Provosts. Each night as he presided at dinner in the ornate classical Hall, the portraits of his predecessors looked searchingly down from their heavy gilt frames. "We were discreet and careful men," they seemed to say. "We



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avoided scandal; above all, we avoided extremes. That is how we built up the College. It is for that that you sit here to-day." His colleagues at table, tutors and professors, mostly younger men, were reserved and respectful. But he knew what some of them thought of the Group. Was it fair to them? Was it fair to the College to arouse criticism or spread misgiving?

"But the Prophet Jeremiah has remarked, and I have observed the same myself," Streeter would say, "that the heart of man is deceitful above all things." "Is it really for the College that you are concerned," whispered Truth, "or is it for yourself? Aren't you just scared of what people will say about you?" For Streeter was a sensitive man. He knew that if he took this step his friends would be as polite as they had always been—to his face. He knew, too, the raised eyebrows, the delicate sarcasm, the clever innuendoes, the pained surprise that would grace a dozen College dinner tables behind his back. "Pity he's losing his grip . . . thought he had more sense of humour . . . most unfortunate for the College . . . must be hard up for a new book." Little things—foolish words. Yet how many prophets and pioneers have such words frozen to death? How many heroes of the sports field or the battle front have they turned into cowards or deserters?

He meditated much at this time on the Crucifixion of Christ. Among all the other things that the Cross had meant, it had meant publicity, scandal, making oneself a public spectacle. Perhaps, for those who were willing to take up their cross and follow Christ, that was still the hardest part to bear.

## V

And then Irene, his wife, returned to him.

Their life of late had been lived mostly apart. It had worked out better like that. He with his bachelor ways in his book-lined study littered with papers; she, the Puritan, the independent, disapproving of his books, disapproving of his habits, living mostly abroad and going her own gait. He seemed too clever, too original for her; she too practical, too rigid for him. So he took refuge in his books and hobbies and research; she in her strict principles, her good causes and her points of view.

But lately there had been a remarkable change. Irene had returned to Oxford and taken up her residence with him in the Provost's home at Queen's. It was there he needed her most as hostess and companion. No one had been more surprised than he at the job she was making of it. He marvelled at the graciousness of her hospitality, the care in her housekeeping, the new understanding of him, the sense of a home such as they had never experienced before. She didn't lecture him any more, or disapprove, or set herself on a pedestal. Instead of that she was alongside him, willing to help and understand, saying less and laughing more, eager that they pioneer and build something new together.

He found himself continually watching her as though fascinated. She was rather a forbidding figure, with her straight black hair and her heavy masculine features. Everything about her was large and stern and strong. But there were times when her

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whole face would light up with a smile as if the sun had broken through dark clouds. And every now and then there was the gleam of battle in her eye.

And then one day she had talked to him from her heart. Fearing another lecture, he had tried, as he often did, to parry her with a sly joke or a piece of sarcasm. But she was not to be parried, and this was no lecture.

Rather she told him of her own failure, begging his forgiveness for the way she had deprived him of warmth and affection and had laid down the law. The shyness and reserve and disappointment of years began to melt as he listened. Eagerly he asked her questions. She told him how she was learning to listen. She who had preached and prayed and organized good works, and had given God His orders along with everyone else, had been finding that God had things to say to her. In the Oxford Group she was learning to start at the bottom again as an ordinary sinner like the rest, to learn how to be humble and flexible and take her orders from God.

Now he was deeply moved. Here was this spirit which he believed might change the world coming into his own home. He had written a book called "Reality." Was this reality for him? There was another book, "Adventure." Was this adventure beckoning at his own door?

He talked with many friends. He asked innumerable questions. Like the scholar he was, he tested the evidence at every point. Bishop Roots was once more staying with him in Oxford. Often they talked and prayed together late into the night. At



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last he made his decision.

"Would you be good enough, my dear," he said one day to Irene, "to tell your friends in the Group that I would like to say a few words, if I may, at one of their public meetings?"

His tone was deliberately matter-of-fact, almost casual.

Her reply equally so.

But on her knees she thanked God for His miracle-working power and prayed for strength for them both to carry through to the end.

## VI

It was July 11th, 1934, three months after the encounter on the Atlantic voyage. The Town Hall at Oxford was crowded to the doors. Forty-five countries were represented there. Turbans and tartans, open-neck shirts and stiff white shirts, tall intellectual foreheads, rough work-hardened hands, children, parents and grandparents, leaders of today, leaders of tomorrow. The common aim "a new world civilization."

The Oxford Group summer house party was in full swing. The subject that night was education, and the speaker, for the moment, a London telegraph boy of sixteen. In his audience there were wise and learned from five continents—statesmen, scholars, editors, church dignitaries, heads of colleges, captains of industry. But the speaker had something to say to the wise and learned about education—the kind of education you need at sixteen years old in a two-room slum with half a dozen brothers and sisters, or

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in a city office working along with a gang of young rough-necks like yourself. As a speaker, he was cheeky and alive and full of fight. He spoke with authority because he spoke from a simple experience of God's power.

He sat down the minute he had nothing further to say. How many educators know how to do that?

The next speaker rose and came to the rostrum. The young man of the Atlantic voyage leaned forward intently. There was the tall black figure and the twinkling eyes. There were those monumental boots, the quiet, half-diffident voice.

"My attitude towards this movement," it was saying, "has been what diplomats call (sniff!) a benevolent neutrality."

A peculiar mannerism, that sniff. You couldn't tell whether he had a cold or was making a joke at his own expense.

"In speaking to some of my friends I have compared this attitude to that taken up towards the early church by Gamaliel, that most amiable of the Pharisees."

The crowd laughed, though they did not all understand what he meant. 'Suits us in Oxford, all right,' thought the young man to himself. 'Hullo, what's this?'

" . . . . say publicly," went on the voice, with almost the dry monotone of the lecture, "that I ought now to cease from an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards what I have come to believe is the most important religious movement of the day."

Silence. The audience was held, gripped by a sense of something happening, important beyond their understanding. In the front row, listening in-

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tently through a large ear-trumpet, sat Irene. With straight back, head erect, grave motionless features, she looked like a guardsman at his post.

"The world situation" . . . . the young man had missed the last bit. 'Hope somebody's taking this down,' he thought . . . . "more and more full of depression, full of despair." The voice was stronger now, with more ring in it. "There is a great deal of goodwill; but there is not enough of it to solve our tremendous problems—war, class war, economic breakdown. And the men of goodwill are losing heart. They are carrying on, but with lessening hope. And, speaking broadly, the churches have been losing heart."

A Bishop stirred in his chair. He had heard that before. Probably said it himself last Sunday. Why had he seldom felt the truth of it so keenly?

"This movement," the voice went on, "seems to be able not merely to change bad people into good, but also to give new heart and a new courage and a new sense of direction to those who are already men of goodwill. That is why I have come to the conclusion that in an age of growing world despair it is my duty to associate myself with it."

Some of the older men looked puzzled and uncomfortable. They were friends and colleagues who had come that night, partly out of courtesy, partly out of curiosity, knowing that Streeter was to speak. They felt perhaps as he did. But should they be doing as he was doing? There was much to weigh carefully in the privacy of their rooms.

"May I add," came the voice, again more diffident, "that I come to the Group, not as a person with perhaps some little reputation in his



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own sphere of study, or as the head of an Oxford College. I come as one who has already learned something from the Group, and hopes to learn more, and who hopes that by so doing he may be of a little more use than might otherwise have been the case."

He sat down. There was silence. The young man's mind was far back in a ship's cabin. He seemed to smell the air from the engine room and hear the creak of a thousand beams as they took the strain of the Atlantic. So this was it.

"By 1934 I had seen enough of the Group to realize that it was making bad men good and good men better faster than any other movement; and I decided that it was my clear duty to step into the boat and handle an oar, instead of continuing to shout from the tow-path a judicious mixture of criticism and encouragement."

So wrote Streeter three years later, just before he died.

From shore to boat is a little step.

But it may be a step to another world.

The Town Hall speech at Oxford was Streeter's step into the boat. What a voyage it brought! And what a journey's end!

## VII

Outwardly life went on much as before. Another University year began. Streeter lectured as usual. The pick of Oxford's advanced scholars came to his special class on the Gospels. Every word of every verse was analysed; every point thrashed out. One day they reached the last word of the last

verse. It had taken them 14 years' work since the beginning. Some had been present throughout. Streeter looked up over his spectacles and with the barest smile said dryly, "I imagine we may as well start at the beginning again." Without another word the pages were turned back and the work went on.

In The Queen's College there was great activity; old buildings renovated, new buildings acquired, the library reorganized, scholarships awarded, new lecturers appointed. The age-old picturesque ceremonies observed in the College every Christmas Day were broadcast this year, and half the nation heard Streeter's careful monotone, with sniff complete. On New Year's Day, in accordance with ancient tradition, his colleagues met with him in the Hall to be handed a needle with thread of scarlet silk, with the bidding "Take this and be thrifty."

The usual college boat-races came round and Streeter, as he had done for 20 years, stood at the starting point and during the last seconds before the gun recited a limerick to encourage his college crew. He did things in his own way. You expected it of him. Besides, anything was a help that took your mind away during those last ticklish seconds. One year, when Queen's rowed behind Corpus, he contented himself with announcing "Habeas Corpus." And they did.

Outwardly things were much the same. But there were changes too. Most of all in the home. It was a large austere building where you instinctively lowered your voice and put on your best behaviour.

But now Irene's hand was at work, letting light and air and colour into every nook and cranny. There was a constant stream of visitors. The usual



B. H. Streeter and a young friend.



Increasingly  
he loved  
his times  
with  
Frank Buchman.



student tea-parties, instead of being a typical Sunday afternoon bore, became fascinating occasions where everyone was included and you instinctively gave of your best.

But it was some of the private visits that counted the most. Men had always gone to Streeter for advice. The new thing was that he was giving more than advice. Cautiously, to begin with, he was practising the art of life-changing. One morning the phone rang in the room of the friend of the Atlantic voyage. Streeter's voice was at the other end. "I think you had better come over," it said with more than the usual number of sniffs. "There's a young man come in to talk and I rather think I've got him at least half changed." His friend declined to go over, but urged him to finish the good work himself. Next day a new recruit was to be seen at the 1.30 meeting. The change had taken place.

Sometimes, late at night, a shaft of light would pierce a private back door out of Queen's, and a hurrying figure slip out into the darkness. For Oxford had, here and there among its great ones, a Nicodemus who came face to face with reality secretly by night.

But other things that happened in the Streeter home everyone was getting to know. There was the story, for instance, of Irene and the servants. There were three servants, and they were ruled over by Mrs. Pegler, a large and formidable cook. Administration was on the Victorian plan. Cook took her orders from the mistress, and then dispensed to the others their duties with a heavy hand. Nowhere in the Empire was there a caste system more rigid.

Imagine then the rumour going around Oxford,

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that Irene and the Provost, cook and the three maids had been seated round the kitchen table having a quiet time. A photograph had actually been seen in which Mrs. Pegler, magnificent in white apron and starched cap, was apparently leading the meeting. She was evidently driving home her point with a large wooden rolling pin, while the Provost and Irene and the three maids sat smilingly at her feet. The rumour was that cook was helping Streeter with his lectures these days, and getting in return a few professorial hints on how to season the beef-stew.

At any rate, it was true that Irene's guidance one morning was "No more orders." Cook had agreed. Everything from then on was settled round the table in these daily councils of war to find out God's plan for the day and organize the household accordingly. Cook and maids were changed and all worked together to make the home in every detail a pattern for a new world. It was an experiment in God-guided democracy and one close to Irene's heart. When Frank Buchman celebrated his 59th birthday in Oxford, the big moment of the evening arrived when the lights were put out and there was borne in a colossal cake with burning candles. Mrs. Pegler and Irene had baked the cake, and they carried it in, attended by a retinue of three maids. "You know," said Streeter one day, in an outburst of candour, "strange though it may appear, there are times when my wife shows unmistakable signs of genius."

For Streeter it was all part of a new and fascinating family life. He was no longer Professor Streeter, the patron, the spectator, the distinguished visitor. He was B.H., the loved and lovable father of a big family—the whole Group in Oxford. He



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came more to the meetings now and usually sat in the front row next to Irene with her big ear-trumpet. He was giving leadership and direction to the whole work, and yet he was also its newest and rawest recruit. No one paid him undue deference. No one put him on a pedestal. No one took him for granted. And that was what he liked.

Occasionally he made time to visit other cities and talk about the Group. He would take a few younger men with him in the car and they would speak together as a team. B.H. was adept at answering questions, and he was never happier than when there was opposition in the meeting. "I rather think the Lord has delivered him into our hands," he would whisper to a companion, while an opponent was delivering a virulent attack. When his turn came he would deal with the point with a minimum of words and a maximum of effect. At a large meeting of clergy someone delivered a tirade about some alleged act of foolishness on the part of one of the Group. B.H. was asked to reply. "After all," he said slowly, gazing round the hall, "you know you've each of you got six mad females in your congregation." Discussion moved on to the next point.

But at times the fire would burn in him and he would give his audience all he had. To one speaker who had acknowledged that in the Group the Spirit was at work, but who had urged that we must guide the Spirit into safe, familiar channels, he spoke with burning passion. "Who are you to guide the Spirit of God? When are you going to let the Spirit of God guide you?"

Yet he had things to learn, too, from his younger team-mates—how to talk simply from experience, for

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instance. Attempting on one occasion to explain the fact of God's guidance, he had described it as "A supra-rational contact with the great Over-Soul." People let him know what they thought of that after the meeting. He learned how to illustrate his points with stories of lives and situations actually changed, how you can sometimes win an argument and lose your man. Above all he learned how to get in among the crowd after the speeches were over and press home the challenge in personal talks. Then there was the drive back through quiet, green countryside, and a chance to relax, to fight the battles of the day over again, to check up on mistakes, to say what was most on your heart in the frank but costly give and take that builds an unbreakable fellowship.

## VIII

Spring came late in 1935. Mussolini, Laval and Macdonald were getting together at Stresa. They were going to do something at last, it was said, about this fellow Hitler. That April Anthony Eden had been on a grand tour to visit Hitler and Stalin. Stalin had asked him if he thought the prospect of war within a year was greater or less than it had been in April 1914. Eden thought it was less. Stalin said he thought the opposite.

All asked questions, few had an answer. One or two were shaking their heads over a place called Abyssinia, which, somebody said, was a member of the League of Nations.

On April 1st, that same spring, B.H. and Irene

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took the "Lapland," newest air-liner on the London-Copenhagen route, to join the Oxford Group in Scandinavia. It was their first flight—the first of many. The tall bearded intellectual alighting from his plane and hurrying within an hour to address the crowds—crowds which were flocking day after day to the Odd-Fellow Palais—caught the imagination of the Press. Next day the newspapers dubbed him in a headline "The Flying Professor," and the name stuck. "I want," he said, "to join the Group once more in its daily work." And the work was stirring indeed. For it was a spiritual advance in whole nations—small nations, true, but nations which might one day play a vital part in the remaking of Europe.

B.H. and Irene, part of a team of more than 300, moved rapidly each day through a series of meetings, parties, receptions, Press interviews, private conferences. It was exacting work. Everything had to be done through interpreters. The spiritual hunger was extreme. The clamour was always for more speeches, more interviews. B.H. would leave a solemn conclave of Lutheran ministers still arguing over a point of theology, and rush in a fast car to talk at a late cocktail party for the smart set. Early next morning he would be off with Frank Buchman to meet a statesman or industrialist in another city.

He loved increasingly his times with Frank Buchman. No two men could have been more different. Temperamentally, in background and in outlook, they were poles apart. Yet they enjoyed a rare friendship together, and in the depths of their being they were one—simple, human, warm-



hearted children of God, burning with an answer for mankind. It was church unity in action. Together they journeyed, calling on Bishops and other dignitaries. B.H., as usual, was wearing a grey felt hat, faded, crumpled, with the marks of a dozen winters upon it. A few yards from each official residence which they were to visit, the car would be stopped while B.H. with solemn deliberation produced from a box a silk hat which, by its remarkable shape and moss-grown antiquity, made the grey felt seem almost new. The silk hat was ceremoniously carried into each home and reverently placed in the hall while B.H. expounded to their host the meaning of the "Oxford" philosophy.

Oxford — Oxford — you heard it everywhere those days. The smiling conductor who helped you on to the street car told you proudly he was "Oxford — just three days." A little boy gave his father twopence for his tram-fare and told him to "go to a meeting and find out about Oxford." He had heard Dr. Buchman say over the wireless that it meant no more scolding at home. "Anti-Oxford Meeting a Colossal Fiasco" ran a headline in *Dagens Nyheder*. You heard it at Labour meetings, over the lunch counter, in church, in Parliament. "Are you, are you not Oxford?" That was the question of the hour.

And B.H. was "Oxford." Not only as one of the University's most brilliant leaders, but also as a simple member of a team of ordinary folk who were bringing an answer to men and nations. He was deeply stirred. The hunger for this thing was greater than he had ever dreamed. The response was tremendous. If the spirit could spread so quickly, might not whole nations be affected? If but

one nation could give a lead, what of Europe, what of the world?

From the pulpit of the little English church in Copenhagen, before a congregation including the American and British diplomatic Ministers, B.H. gave voice to his conviction. It was Palm Sunday and he read from the Bible the story of Christ weeping over the city of Jerusalem. Then he turned to the fate of modern cities.

“There was some limit to the ‘devastated areas’ in the last war; in the next war London, Paris, Berlin and hundreds of other great cities will be ‘devastated areas.’ Revolution after revolution has resulted from the last war; it is perfectly obvious that the next one, whoever wins, will be followed by revolutions on a far larger scale. In some countries Communism may get to the top; in others some kind of military dictatorship. But whichever prevails will do so after a civil conflict of a kind which will leave behind it many times as great a legacy of bitterness and hatred.

“But suppose, as personally I hope may be the case, that the statesmen and diplomatists enable Europe to weather the present crisis; who believes that there will not be another crisis to weather, say, two years from now, and perhaps another five years hence, and yet another in ten years’ time? You have seen a juggler throwing and catching balls—keeping half a dozen in the air at once. A clever juggler will keep them up without dropping any for five minutes—perhaps for ten or more; but he cannot go on doing this for ever. The statesmen and diplomatists of Europe are like jugglers who must never drop a ball. But when to drop a ball means to drop

a civilization, who will have the nerve to stand a long succession of such crises? If Christ rode today into London, Paris, Moscow, or Berlin, might He not again weep over cities which knew not the time of their visitation?"

Here in the quiet cultured accents of an Oxford Professor was the voice of a modern Amos. And his message was the same, "Repent. Change."

"Respite is no cure," he said, "it, when the thing comes, it will be worse than if it had not been postponed. But there is one chance. Can we somehow or other make use of such respite—and it may be quite a short one—to do something which is going to bring about in Europe a fundamental moral change?"

Then he went on to analyse the reasons for the Crucifixion of Christ. It had been called the greatest crime in history and no doubt it was. But the people who were the actual agents in the greatest crime in history were not members of the criminal classes. They were zealous churchmen, businessmen with vested interests, a politician with an eye on public opinion, ordinary men, some of them even good men, but just not good enough to rise to the occasion at a time of crisis. So in the modern situation, few really wanted another war or a class war. "The only thing is that the prejudices of one set of people, the financial interests of another, too great deference by national leaders to public opinion in one way or another, and similar influences, have brought about a situation in which the conflict of race and class, prejudices and interests has become so acute that the slightest error in the juggling of the diplomatic balls may precipitate a world war."



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So change must take place not only in half a dozen great leaders, but also in the rank and file of the men and women whose minor selfishnesses, prejudices, stupidities, false notions of honour and the like pile up the forces which create the present world situation.

Then, still quietly, but with burning conviction, Streeter spoke of his faith. A new spirit was abroad in the world, as in the days of the early Franciscans or the Wesleys. Here was the possibility of saving civilization. The heart of this new spirit was change, the change that God works in a man when he is honest and admits his faults and puts himself at the disposal of God completely.

Finally, he turned to his congregation, and spoke of the special responsibility in this matter lying upon the British Empire, the Scandinavian countries and the United States. They had fewer and lesser injuries to one another to forgive than had some other nations.

“During the war everyone was anxious to do his bit. Today to do your bit for the salvation of civilization means to begin with the reform of yourself.”

It was hard. It was humiliating. “So was the Cross of Christ. To pocket your pride and ‘give yourself away’ may be the cross which you personally ought to face this week. For you, facing that cross may be the necessary path to a spiritual resurrection.”

That was seven years ago. Suffering and loss are burning the truth of those words into our very soul. Could we but have heeded them then! The British Empire, the Scandinavian countries, the United

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States—could they and their leaders have acted more quickly, more decisively in accepting change, the tragedy of war might have been averted, or, in the event of its coming, the Democratic nations might have been united and ready to meet its shock. Many did accept the message. But not enough. Life in Copenhagen, as in London or New York, was still too comfortable, too soft, too individualistic for the urgency of the times. Yet in those countries now the spirit that Streeter spoke of still works and spreads. In it still, as in 1935, lies the only hope.

A few days later the Streeters left again for Oxford. They were given a royal send-off by their Danish and other friends. There were songs and poems and speeches and a guard of honour from the hotel to the car. In a few short weeks "The Flying Professor" had become a nationally-known figure.

His words of farewell were in the form of a limerick.

"I'm not very sure that I'm changed,  
But my inside's a bit re-arranged.  
So no longer I'll trifle,  
But shoulder my rifle,  
On a world front the battle is ranged."

Like all his limericks, it was composed in a few seconds. But it was a confession of faith, and he held it to the end.

## IX

"The conviction that we have reached a day of decision," said B.H. that summer, "came upon me with increasing force during the time I spent

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last vacation with the Oxford Group. It was not merely that a number of men manifestly entered into a new life. More significant was the vision which caught the imagination of progressively larger and larger numbers—the vision of their country as one that might have a call from God to play some part specially its own in His plan for the deliverance of mankind. The aim of the Oxford Group is so to deliberate, to pray and to act that each of us may come to realize what is the call of God for us individually and for our own country—whatever that country may be.”

Life-changing must lead on to nation-changing if the world is to be remade.

This conviction was strengthened in B.H. that year, when, following another flying visit to Scandinavia, he joined Frank Buchman and a large international team in Geneva. It was September. The flags of the nations fluttered over the various hotels along the lake-front. Official cars pushed their way through crowded streets. Diplomats hurried from the Assembly to the Five-Powers Committee. People craned their necks to get a glimpse of Anthony Eden, the League's best-looking, best-dressed representative. Cafés were crowded night and day with delegates, pressmen and visitors.

In the Assembly, Sir Samuel Hoare in cultured, studied tones upheld the sanctity of the League. Sly, sleepy-eyed Pierre Laval, in broad Southern French, casually followed suit. In the front row the Abyssinians, white-robed, mysterious, watched and waited. The restless Italians shifted in their seats, ready to walk out in a body should an Abyssinian speak or be recognized. The lesser speakers had



their say. The interpreters, alert, efficient, reproduced every word. No one took any notice. The hall buzzed with talk, delegates walked to and fro chatting, joking, planning. Pressmen hurried to their telephones. Earnest students in the galleries recorded their impressions. A host of secretaries, experts, officials thronged the lobbies.

The Genevese, cultured and close, went their own way. They had seen it all before. They knew where it would end. High above the town were rising the majestic new buildings of the League. Italian engineers were supervising the work. In another year or two they would be completed—"in time to turn them into a war hospital," whispered the tight-lipped Genevese. Meanwhile, talk, talk. It never for an instant stopped. Shrewd, intellectual Edouard Benes, that year's League President, entertained the delegates at the usual evening reception. Some of Czecho-Slovakia's finest musicians played in honour of the guests. But no one listened. There was too much noise. Talk, talk. It almost seemed to go up in a sultry mist and hang heavy over the town. Once in a while an evening breeze would blow away the heat and Mont Blanc would appear, towering over all, as though to say, "Look up to the hills. This is all not so important after all."

Streeter found it all unreal, oppressive. Speaking of another world centre of idealism and intrigue—Jerusalem—he had once said, "I don't think my faith's robust enough to go there," and then added with a wink, "It was hopeless in the time of Christ and it has degenerated ever since." He was tempted to wonder whether his faith was robust enough to stand Geneva either. At any rate he saw it clearly

—a noble monument to human wisdom, a wisdom that had failed. And he knew why. It had not come to grips with the root of the problem—human greed and selfishness. “A race that has grown up intellectually,” he said, “must grow up morally or perish.” And not all the machinery of the Covenant or solemn deliberations of the Assembly could alter that fact by one iota.

One of the team that visited Geneva found himself seated at dinner one night next to a diplomat who was engaged in arbitrating a trade dispute between two nations. They got talking. In the course of the evening the diplomat let drop the fact that he had just been divorced. A little later he happened to mention his brother who was also in Geneva. “But we never speak,” he added. “We had a lawsuit some time ago and it was a pretty unpleasant business.” Later still, he mentioned another relative with whom he had quarrelled. His companion could stand it no longer. “And you’re the fellow,” he remarked, “who is trying to show two nations how to get along together.” B.H. recalled an old and favourite saying of Frank Buchman, “How can you save a world that’s selfish as hell when you’re selfish as hell yourself? ”

He was unusually silent during those days in Geneva. The turmoil around him threw him more and more back on the simplicity of his own experience of God. He had fought for this experience, for he had never found faith easy. He had seldom known the warmth and glow of a clearly felt Presence. His recent decisions had been more cold decisions of the will than any Damascus Road revelation. Yet those decisions had been honoured. He had a



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genuine, a growing experience of God. "For one who has had this experience," he wrote, "there is no longer any question of believing or not believing. It is the clearest reality, as exact as any scientific idiom."

How to create this experience and relate it to the hard bitter realities of the modern world—that was the problem of the Oxford Group in Geneva. "We are here," said Theo Spoerri, tall, genial Professor of Literature at Zurich University, "not in order to bring new ideas and new programmes to a town which certainly has not lacked them, but to show in concrete facts the possibility of curing the disorder and misery of the world by the uniting of ideals and reality in human lives." Ideals and reality have seldom been good bed-fellows. Who will unite them in human lives before the next experiments in an international order come to be made?

Did the Oxford Group accomplish anything in Geneva? There is no doubt what the newspapers thought at the time. "The Oxford Group travels like a flame," wrote *La Suisse*. "In the city of disillusioned idealists," said the *Gazette de Lausanne*, "the message of the Oxford Group rings like a challenge."

Perhaps the most experienced observer of them all, Sisley Huddleston, who attended every European conference since 1918 as representative of the world's leading newspapers, records his impression in his book, "In My Time." "I made the acquaintance at Geneva of Dr. Frank Buchman, Canon Streeter and many others of the Oxford Group, who seemed to me to have precisely the right idea about peace and to be doing infinitely more for it than the Foreign Secretaries and the League ladies and gentlemen . . . . .



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Changed newspapers, changed politicians, changed people. Foreign affairs must be lifted out of the hands of the incompetent and the obstinate and the revengeful; and this can only be done if there is a nation-wide, a world-wide renaissance."

Four hundred guests, including Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors and delegates to the League, sat down to luncheon at the Hotel des Bergues at the invitation of the President of the Assembly to hear that message. "All of us here today," said a senior statesman, "will have experienced the feeling that the Oxford Group is binding together in the same wonderful fellowship men and women of conflicting races, countries and churches."

That afternoon important committees were delayed, conferences were missed, appointments cancelled, as the guests at this luncheon sat on until 3.30 eagerly listening to the one note of confident hope to be heard at Geneva.

Today people may be tempted to say that all was in vain. Delegates from Abyssinia and Italy were both present at that lunch. A month later their countries were at war. Where today are smiling Edouard Benes, its host, and thick-set Carl Hambro, its chief speaker? Where are those delegates from France and from Hungary, from Turkey and Iraq, from Greece and from China, and the others who sat at that meeting?

The voice heard in Geneva that day may seem to have been drowned in the roar of planes and guns. Yet after the bloodshed is over and the last bombs have done their work, humanity may recall that day and turn again to that same voice, for it

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was the still small voice that speaks in every man, telling him how to begin all over again, the voice of the Spirit of the Living God.

And the men and women in every land who, through crises and collapse, through destruction and disaster, have gone on listening to that voice, obeying its dictates, and fighting to make it heard everywhere—they and they alone will be the leaders fit to succeed where Geneva failed.

“No improvement in mere machinery,” said Streeter in one of his few speeches during this visit, “can make harmony out of ambitions, resentments and dread which intellect alone cannot control. World problems—social, political and economic—are the accumulated results of these passions in the individual. They are soluble only if bad men can be made good, and good men better on a grand scale.”

And so back to England, and another year of hard work and hard struggle in Oxford.

## X

A year earlier Streeter had said that he did not think he would write any more books. From the time when as an undergraduate he woke one day to find that he had lost his boyhood faith, his life had been a constant battle for truth. “I can never believe a thing,” he once said to a friend, “merely because I want to believe it, however much I may want to.” He was not content to put “religion” in one compartment and science or psychology in another. At all times he had been ready to risk the faith he had rather than deny the greater faith that

Irene Streeter  
and  
Mrs. Pegler.





B. H. and  
Irene say  
farewell  
to Oxford



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Truth was indivisible, and that God was either the Lord of all Truth or else no God at all.

It was this element of risk, of battle, that gave his writing a special appeal to youth. You did not feel he was putting something over on you. He was not one of those writers who indulgently fling you a rope and offer to pull you up over crevasses of doubt and error to the mountain tops of certainty where they have long been at home. Rather was he like an Alpine guide equipped with rope and axe, offering you all his strength and knowledge, as you fought your way up together. As one undergraduate who had read "Reality" remarked, "It has made me feel that harder thinking is done by those who do believe in God than by those who don't." And of one of his own books Streeter wrote, "I only know I have enjoyed the writing of it — the hue-and-cry after new discoveries, the following up of hitherto unnoticed clues . . . ." But by the time this story begins his mind had to a great extent found rest and satisfaction. In books like "Reality," "The Four Gospels" and "The Buddha and the Christ," he had summed up the conclusions of his quest. Along the lines of relating religion to the new knowledge which was coming to mankind through science he felt that he had said his say.

But now this restless, pioneering spirit of his was on the move again. What he had written so far needed to be written. He was not ashamed of his books. He believed his conclusions were valid. He believed they were important. But they were not enough. "I have come to realize in the last few years that this work of relating religion to the new knowledge, important as it is, is not the thing that

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the world most needs." (*The Spectator*, Sept. 6th, 1935.) Men need enlightenment and understanding. But still more they need direction. And that direction must come from something more than human intellect, however penetrating. It must come from a superior wisdom. Doubtless there is such a wisdom. But is it at the disposal of the ordinary man in his perilous journey through life? Doubtless there is a God. But is He a God Who speaks?

This is the question that Streeter set himself to answer in the winter of 1935 as he once more embarked on a new book. He had much of the material for such a study in a course of lectures which he had been giving over the past two years to the learned lawyers of Lincoln's Inn. But now he felt that the lectures, like the lecturer, needed, if not to be "changed," at any rate to be "a bit re-arranged," in the light of new facts. God's guidance was becoming to him a daily experience. It was beginning to embrace the smallest details as well as the greatest issues of life.

He was learning by hard experience the practical tests of guidance, the blocks to guidance, the relentlessness of guidance, above all, its miraculous results. All these must come out in the new book. It must not only tell about a God Who speaks; it must teach people to hear what He has to say. It must challenge the reader to listen for himself, and to obey to the limit the Truth so far as he grasps it. Above all the book must be related on every page to the desperate needs of a dying civilization.

"Our world," he wrote in his prologue,\* "is like an Atlantic liner deprived of rudder, compass,

\* "The God Who Speaks," (Macmillan, 1936).



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sextant, charts, and wireless tackle, yet compelled to go full steam ahead. There is magnificence, comfort, pulsating power; but whither are we going? Does that depend solely on the accident of circumstances and the ever-changing balance of conflicting interests and ambitions? Or is there available for man, if he so will, guidance on his dark and dangerous course from some Wisdom higher than his own?"

Then with typical Streeter understatement he added, "A study which may point the way to an answer to that question is one of more than academic interest."

Apart from the new book, the winter proved busier than ever for B.H. and Irene. The College, lecturing, preaching, travel taxed him to the utmost. More and more the Provost's house at Queen's was becoming a centre for the Group, where at all hours of day or night friends would be welcome, plans discussed and far-reaching decisions made. Irene loved it all. With her home she blossomed, and like her home, her heart seemed to grow larger the bigger the family that found a place within it.

The following spring B.H. visited Scandinavia for the third time. The thing that struck him most was that the spiritual leadership of the work there had passed to the people themselves. Within a year the Oxford Group in Denmark had become a national force under Danish leadership. Over the Easter week-end he was present at a great gathering held at the famous Physical Culture Centre at Ollerup. Although Ollerup is on an island far from all the larger centres of population, something like fifteen thousand people were present out of a popula-

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tion of only three and a half million. A party of four hundred youths bicycled from Copenhagen, over a hundred miles away, through a snowstorm.

But more than numbers was the impact on national life. "We heard," said Streeter, "of a rise in the standard of commercial honesty in certain circles in the capital, of a readiness in leading politicians to approach the discussion of burning economic problems in a spirit of friendly and constructive conference rather than one of party bitterness and intrigue. Customs officers reported an unfamiliar influx of conscience money, and there has been a marked diminution in the statistics of divorce. A march on the royal palace of thirty-five thousand men, organized by the farmers' Union, and widely believed to have started with revolutionary intent, was turned into a peaceful demonstration through the influence of leaders who had come into contact with the Oxford Group. Thus, in the space of one year, there has been born a new spirit in facing the conflicts which threaten the collapse of civilization.

"History shows that in the case of wars, revolutions, strikes and other major conflicts, a relatively small weight of public opinion on the one side or the other, or the presence or absence of moral insight and courage in a few individuals in positions of influence, has often turned the balance. Modern civilization can only be saved by moral revival; but for this it would suffice if every tenth or every hundredth was changed. For each such person raises the level of those whom he touches in the home, in business and in public affairs.

"This *will* happen, if those who lead Britain learn to find in God their inspiration and direction.



And Britain, thus led, would save the world. But the opportunity must be seized during the period of uneasy respite from major calamity which at the moment appears to lie ahead."

For B.H. himself there was no respite. That summer he became desperately ill. Those large feet of his in reality were no joke. Ever since he was a young man they had been a source of weakness. More than once they had very literally let him down. This time an infection in his feet spread rapidly through his whole body. Within a few days he was suffering from acute blood poisoning and lay at death's door. Irene hurried to Hereford where he had been fulfilling his usual term as Canon in Residence when he was taken ill. Friends in Oxford and all over the world waited in anxiety as the reports grew worse. For a week or more it was touch and go. But at last the poison was fought back, and B.H. was saved, though almost too weak to speak or move, or to consider work for many months ahead.

It was a long winter that he spent at various south coast resorts, away from Oxford and his friends and from the active life for which he longed. Meanwhile that uneasy respite which he foresaw for Britain grew more and more uneasy. Spain succeeded Abyssinia as the scene for war, and the shadows grew closer, as the nations stumbled forward into the night.

It was not easy those days to lie helpless, too weak to write or even to talk for more than a few minutes. Irene visited him frequently and brought him news of his friends in Oxford. Now he was more than ever grateful for her robust, practical faith;



her brusque dismissal of doubt or fear; her quick disposal of difficulties about which he tended to worry. "All these people need is to be thoroughly and soundly changed," she would say. It was to her he turned when things went black. Besides he recognized more and more her warm, dauntless warrior spirit. It was Irene who led him along the slow, difficult road to convalescence. She stood at his side to encourage and protect him when in the spring of 1937 he at last returned to Queen's, where, lying on a couch and looking like a gaunt grey effigy in stone, he slowly began to pick up a few of the threads of College business.

By the summer he at last began to feel he was coming to life. He managed to make his usual appearance at the start of the College Bumping Races and composed his usual last-minute limerick.

But as the term ended, the doctors ordered a further long period of rest in Switzerland. The usual summer house party was beginning in Oxford. Frank Buchman and a group of old friends had just arrived from America. B.H. paid them one or two visits at Lady Margaret Hall. The last and best picture of him that exists was taken outside that College, as, with Irene beside him, with twinkling beard and battered old hat complete, he waved his friends good-bye.

## XI

The little train chugged slowly up the rack-railway from Montreux towards the town of Glion perched high on the rocks above. Suddenly the blue

lake and the mountains opposite swung into view. A sturdy peasant drew in his breath sharply and shouted at the top of his voice, "Vive la nature!" The young man at his side said nothing for he was English, and this was an enthusiasm which he might feel, but could never allow himself to express. A few minutes later the young man, whose name was Harry Addison, was greeted on the platform by B.H. and his niece. For this was the place they had chosen to begin the holiday in Switzerland. Harry was their first guest, and most of what follows comes from his account.

"Here," Streeter would say, "is the typical Continental breakfast—'One bun which looks like a bun, and another which looks like a horseshoe.'" It was nine a.m. and he had appeared at the table promptly. For though he was supposed to be resting, and was still far from well, he would never submit to the indignity of breakfast in bed. Then he would embark on his chief relaxation—talking.

"He talked brilliantly and accurately," says Harry, "about an infinite variety of subjects; and he never seemed to tire. After I had been with him a week I wrote down from memory a list of the subjects we discussed — or rather about which he discoursed while his companions listened, fascinated by the life and colour he brought to every topic however unpromising it might sound. Here is the list—Mendel's law of inherited characteristics, the difference between British and European scholarship, the migrations which brought about the fall of the Roman Empire, contemporary Chinese politics (he was an authority on the Far East, in which he had travelled extensively), and German history—this last in the



form of two after-breakfast lectures, the first taking us to the Reformation, the second down to the present day.

“ But he was as good a listener as he was a talker. He had that rare quality of evoking from his companions more than they thought they had in them, and giving them the exhilaration of feeling at the top of their form.”

Later B.H. would be seen in the hotel lobby surrounded by maps and time-tables. He was still too weak to go far himself, but he took a special delight in helping to plan expeditions for his friends. He would work out with immense ingenuity how the greatest number of places could be visited most easily at the least expense. He loved the unconscious humour of the guide books. “If the Synoptic Problem had not claimed me first (double sniff!) I might have set up as a rival of Mr. Thomas Cook himself.” And then, as he pored once more over the guide book, he added with a chuckle, “Don’t forget to visit the bear pit at Berne. According to this it is ‘filled with well-kept representatives of Bruin.’ ”

As the background to everything were the times of listening to God when plans and all the details of daily life were considered and decided. And this kind of guidance, rather than that of Thomas Cook, must account for the fact that after a few weeks in Glion, B.H. and his friends were led to the tiny village of Lauenen, almost unknown to the guide books. Here, at the head of a valley, four thousand feet above the sea, with the magnificent mass of the Wildhorn towering over them, they found at the height of the summer season surroundings of perfect peace and unbroken solitude.



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By this time the Oxford houseparty was over and Irene came out to join them in Switzerland. She brought with her a friend in the Group, Marjorie Carpenter, formerly Dean of Women at MacMaster University, Canada; two others, Christine Morrison, a tutor in English from Oxford, and Bob Lowry, a young Canadian student from the prairies, completed the party.

None of those who shared that holiday at Lauenen will ever forget it. As always in such a fellowship of honest, costly sharing and waiting on God, answers were found to personal problems, recent or long-standing, as well as insight into the needs of others.

Through all there was a gay, colourful pattern of expeditions and talk and argument and laughter; of mornings spent walking in the high pastures; of afternoons sometimes too stormy for expeditions, when the whole party would gather on the wooden balcony facing the Wildhorn, and read poetry or try to write it, while the thunder crackled among the mountains; of evenings when Madame, the ever-friendly proprietress, would bring in a neighbour or two and try to teach her guests how to yodel; of meal-times when everyone gathered with appetite whetted, not only for the good Swiss fare—mysterious soup with dumplings swimming in it, tasty stews, never-failing salads in wooden bowls, delectable coffee and cakes—but for the conversation which outdid the feast.

It was the family life for which B.H. had always longed. His care and thoughtfulness for each one knew no bounds. As he grew stronger he would stroll up the valley with each one of his guests in turn, focusing all his wit and his wisdom to suit that in-

dividual's special interests or needs. A conversation with B.H. usually left you with one pungent comment or pointed remark that summed the matter up. It might be a piece of profound wisdom or a little scrap of elementary common sense, but it stuck in your mind and was hard to forget. On one such walk he was passing on to Christine Morrison all that his experience had taught him of how to lecture. On her remarking that she needn't fear overwork as she was strong as an ox, he said with a twinkle, "Ah, but you mustn't make the ox an ass."

At the same time he was constantly thinking about a new book in which he might give to the world his maturest convictions. He often talked about it. One morning he fastened on a sentence from a book review which said, "The only lesson of history seems to be that men never learn the lessons of history."

"I want to show," he said, "that there is one lesson of history which men may yet learn, the lesson of God-control." But that meant that the great Democracies must get back to the real source of their greatness. The struggles for freedom in Britain and America had been struggles for the freedom of the individual, not to do as he liked, but to do what he felt God wanted him to do. Streeter contrasted the materialistic conception of freedom which had spread in Europe since the French Revolution. How to present the fact of God's guidance as a practical, working alternative to chaos for individuals and nations? That was the supreme question of the hour.

As summer drew on he began to talk of his plans for Oxford. All his love of adventure was knit up with his vision for the youth of his country, and



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especially of Oxford. He had a sense of pride in his College and in the fact that its men were going out and taking up leadership of world significance. He had a great longing that new leadership, and spiritual leadership, should be given to the world through the men of Oxford. Yet none knew better than he did that the going would be hard. Oxford was his "Jerusalem," where he would meet opposition and persecution. His was not the courage of a man who did not care. He knew what fear was, but he knew how to overcome it.

So the last day dawned; it was crisper, sunnier, more beautiful than any that had gone before. After breakfast they packed up lunch in rucksacks and walked to the Lauensee, its waters a deep blue under a clear sky. They ate lunch by the lake and walked back in the late afternoon. At one point they stopped and sat down together on a bench facing the Wildhorn where a waterfall poured down its precipitous cliffs. All at once B.H. began to pray, thanking God for the beautiful weather and the joys of the holiday which was just coming to an end. It was the longest walk which he had undertaken since his illness. Striding along side by side with Irene, he finished strongly, flourishing the shooting-stick which he always carried. As they neared the Hotel he turned proudly and declared, "Well, I think I may officially describe myself as cured." That evening he prayed a prayer which had something prophetic in it, thanking God for the interesting life He had given him, the people he had met, the places he had visited, the work which he had been able to do. Next day they would take the train to Berne, and then home to England by plane.



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The old Swiss railway porter stared in amazement. The party were unmistakably British—two young men in sports coats and worn grey flannel trousers, the elderly bearded man who was surely a professor, and his more than English-looking wife. Yes, they were British. Yet they were singing! And with great gusto! Could they be an elderly bridal pair setting out for their honeymoon? Something in their eyes, something in the look they gave each other suggested that it must be so. If he could have understood the words of their Canadian cowboy's song, he would have wondered all the more:

*“ So me and my wise old horsey,  
We're taking new trails today,  
For a brand new country, you'll be proud to be  
in it,  
And He shall have dominion from sea to sea in it.  
We're listening to God, every morning to God,  
And we'll soon remake the world that way.”*

The train roared out of the mountain tunnel and came to a standstill. The elderly pair got in. The two young men struck up another song as they waved good-bye. The travellers were joining in too. A bridal pair all right! The old porter smiled as he thought how love still makes children of us all. And looking up as the train moved round the bend, he saw a beard streaming in the wind, and an arm brandishing a battered old felt hat.

## XII

Mrs. Pegler breathed heavily as she climbed the stairs for the dozenth time that night. She was stout and a little short of breath. But she smiled as she looked at her handiwork. Everything was in place. Everything was spick-and-span. She looked at the flowers she had picked herself and put in the mistress's bedroom. They were her favourite. Funny she had never thought of doing that before. She and the two girls had gone out together and bought her a box of chocolates. They had never done that before either. It was a pity Dorothy was not still with them. It was like losing one of the family. But Dorothy had gone away to get married. The last thing the mistress had done before she left Oxford was to take the flowers to the church for the wedding. A successor to Dorothy would have to be found. But the mistress had already said something about that in her last letter from Switzerland. They would all of them, she said, sit down and have a quiet time and decide together who Dorothy's successor should be. It wasn't the usual way of doing things between the mistress and maid, but nothing in the household had been quite usual since . . . Mrs. Pegler recalled so many things. That first day the pair of them had come downstairs to the kitchen for a quiet time. The Provost was a bit shy and sniffing more than usual, though he passed it off with some of his jokes. Mrs. Pegler hadn't known what to make of it all. She wasn't sure she approved. "Let everyone stick to their own place and station in life," was what she had always said to the girls. Things worked out quieter that way and better for all concerned. But

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one look at the mistress's eye, and she knew she meant business. "I am coming off my pedestal," she had said, "and from now on we are just a couple of ordinary sinners, you and I, and we will have to work things out together that way, you telling me what you think and I telling you." It wasn't easy at first getting used to the new idea, especially when the girls started speaking up too and saying what they thought. She didn't hold with young people putting themselves forward. Yet the work had gone smoother. That she couldn't deny. And they had had some fun together, more like the old days at home on the farm when they were all one happy family. Why, they had even all of them talked over together the clothes they would buy! She had kept on the quiet times with the girls while the master and mistress were away. *She* would want it that way. Besides it was surprising what notice the girls took now when she spoke to them about their work. When it came to the things *they* had said to *her* . . . ! Mrs. Pegler still breathed a little more quickly when she thought of some of them. Yet perhaps after all it *was* the right way to get along together, no offence taken or meant, as the saying goes. Anyway, she was glad she had told the mistress she would stay on with her to the end of their time in College. It might be another ten years. They let these professors go to a good ripe old age before they made them retire. But she had given her promise. "I'll never leave you," she had said, "and I'll always carry on the way you like." And she meant it every word.

She picked up the last letter from Switzerland. It was full of affection and trust and plans. It was getting late. She wished they would come soon.



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There was so much that she had to tell, and so much to decide. The old gentleman too. The long rest had done him so much good. He would be funnier than ever — and kinder. Besides he wasn't old really. It was only that beard of his . . . .

### XIII

The brilliant sunshine had suddenly turned to fog and rain. It was almost as dark as night that Friday afternoon, as the twin-motored plane on the Berne-Basle service flew blind through a five thousand foot bank of mist.

At the controls sits one of the best pilots in Switzerland. He has had fourteen years' experience of aircraft. In front of him the airspeed indicator shows nearly a hundred and ninety miles per hour. He knows every hill on the route. But the conditions are unusually bad. It is hard to gauge the force of the wind. He must be over the top of the range by now. He leans over to the radio operator at his side. "Tell them at Basle that we are going to drop a thousand feet through this fog to see where we are."

Behind in the eight-seater plane a couple sit alone. They are the only passengers.

Suddenly the tail of the aeroplane catches some saplings near the mountain top. In an instant the plane spins violently to the ground. The heavy engines with their ring of cylinders smash through and splinter large trees like twin thunderbolts. The frail wood and fabric structure of the body crumples, as if the spirit has flown from this air-borne wonder of the twentieth century which stands to man for a terror or a triumph.

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At once the end comes to the two sitting in the cabin and to the pilot. The radio operator survives. By a merciful anæsthetic of oblivion even he is unconscious for four hours until the rescue party finds them.

The plane fell without burning. It made a clearing in the trees on the meadow crest. From the spot one looks out over three countries — France, Germany and Switzerland. You can stand there and see, as it were, a whole continent in the breaking and the making. Yet the place itself is peaceful. It happens that it is a favourite haunt to which tired city dwellers of the region come for refreshment of body and mind after the week's work. In winter skiers meet at this very point before swinging down over the slopes to the valley. It is a spot fitted for a wayside place of prayer and encounter with the Christ Who there took two of His friends to live with Him together.

They were laid to rest in the quiet village cemetery close by. After the service Frank Buchman and others of their friends met to thank God for all they had done. The friend of the Atlantic voyage read to them the story of how Mr. Valiant-for-truth crossed the river.

“Then said he, I am going to my Fathers, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill, to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a Witness for me. that I have fought His Battles who now will be my Rewarder.”