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Entre Nous.

John Edgar McFadyen.

It has not been found possible to give in this issue, as we had hoped, an account of the life and work of Professor J. E. McFadyen, D.D., whose death occurred in Glasgow, with tragic suddenness, on Christmas Eve. For over ten years Professor McFadyen had been closely associated with this magazine, where his contributions on Old Testament language, literature, and theology were of the utmost value. The Editors wish to place on record their deep gratitude.

'Something Happened.'

About ten years ago a number of missionaries belonging to the China Inland Mission held a Retreat in the Valley of Water-Mills. Among them there were three middle-aged women all already experienced missionaries—Evangeline French, Mildred Cable, and Francesca French, known to their friends as 'the Trio.' To them 'something happened'; there came a call to go out to the unevangelized areas which lay beyond the farthest north-west post of the mission. Feeling that they were divinely guided they began a lonely ten years' missionary journeying along the Great Trade routes in Kansu and Turkestan. The record has now been written by Mildred Cable and Francesca French in *Something Happened*, published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton (5s. net). So quietly is the story told that at times one almost misses the significance of the amazing fortitude shown. How were they able to do it? Let us answer in their own words. 'On this Christmas Day their fare was but tea and bread, and they were in the hands of a bandit General [Lei], whose next whim might be to carry them off anywhere, yet their hearts burned within them as they said: "For Christ's sake it is worth it, a thousand times over." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who only doeth wondrous things."'

At every crisis, relying on immediate Divine guidance, the three believed that something would happen. On one occasion it is told that as they were crossing the Gobi Desert some scouts of General Lei stopped them and demanded to know where they were bound for.

'"We are travelling to Turkestan."

'"How is that? The General forbids anyone to go that way."

'Seeing how confident and unperturbed the women looked in the face of this challenge, the soldier hesitated and said:

'"Have you a special permit?"

'In a flash the man's words gave a clue to Mildred, who, alert for guidance, stood waiting. Turning to Evangeline, sitting inside the cart, she said quietly, "Give me a passport."

'Then, without a word, she handed over to the bandit, her Central Government Passport, the credential which every missionary carries. At the sight of this impressive paper with its scarlet seals, the men stared. In the mercy of God they were wholly illiterate. Not one single ideograph could they recognize, but it was incredible to them that a document so magnificent could be issued by anyone save their own war lord. The spokesman looked it over, then without a word he folded it, handed it back, saluted, and said:

'"Pass on!"'

What the Desert teaches.

In their journeyings the missionaries (the 'Trio') were taught much in their contact with the great wastes. 'In its fierce, torrid middays the desert teaches you how to distinguish the real from the illusion. Always, seemingly near at hand, but just out of reach, is the lapping water of the mirage lake. It tempts you out of the way to quench your intolerable thirst at its brink, but it is only to find yourself on a mad quest, chasing the unreal. . . .

'Still more dangerously deceptive are the weird sounds, the call for help to which it seems inhuman not to respond, but too many have been lost that way, and your guide is adamant: "That's not the call of a man. Whoever answers that will be lured to his death." Those strange voices always call one aside from the right road; but who can say what *is* the right road over such a trackless plain? It is a far more imperative line than any other path men follow, for it leads direct from well to well, and water is life. The tracks are so ancient that, even when the blizzard crashes down and carries mountains of sand from one place to another, the road is only temporarily smothered, and in a short time it will unobtrusively reappear. By that old road which cannot be finally obliterated the spirit of the desert teaches the fundamental laws of moral rectitude. The dust of a lawless genera-

tion may blow across, and the old rut may vanish, but wait a while and it surely reappears, for its foundation is more enduring than any of the storms.

'One of the strange sights of the desert is the whirling dust spout. On the calmest day, often in couples, they come pirouetting across the plain.

'"See the pair of them, male and female," shouts the old leader.

'"Has sand a sex also?" asks the traveller.

'"There is more than sand in that! Those are the desert *gwei*. You can tell male from female by the way they wrap the dust around them."

'The shrewd old fellow talked on about the spirits which shelter in the wilderness, always inimical to man and anxious to turn him from his straight course, whether by the snare of an illusion or by the ascendancy of fear.

'"What they want is a body, and for lack of a better one they pick up a shroud of sand," he went on. "There is many a bleaching skeleton among those sand-dunes for which they are responsible." Some things he said were amazingly scriptural. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none. . . ." The travellers listened, thought and pondered their own ignorance, while the Gobi warned them: "Hold your curiosity in check. There is no need for you to explore every avenue of questionable knowledge. In this trackless waste, where every restriction is removed and where you are beckoned and lured in all directions, your safety is in austerity and in deliberately accepted limitations. One narrow way is the only road for you. In the great and terrible wilderness push on with eyes blinded to the deluding mirage, your ears deaf to the call of the seducer, and your mind undiverted from the goal."'[1]

'Seek those things which are above.'

In *God's Adventurers* (Harrap; 7s. 6d. net) we have an account by Marjorie Hessell Tiltman of seventeen men and women who gave their lives to God and to the service of their fellow-men. The subjects include C. T. Studd (of whom a full length biography also appears this month by Mr. Norman P. Grubb); and the three women—Mildred Cable, Evangeline and Francesca French—who carried the gospel through the Gobi Desert. Curiously enough, we have also a fuller account of their journeyings published this month ('Something Happened'). Chapters are also devoted to Aggrey of Achimota, Grenfell of Labrador, Schweitzer of Lambarene, Kagawa, and Laws of Livingstonia. She has had personal contact with several of the men and women, which adds to the value. The illustrations are excellent.

An interesting chapter is the one devoted to Dr. Howard Somervell, of Mount Everest fame. Educated at Rugby and Caius College, Cambridge, he took his medical course at University College Hospital, London. In 1921 he was chosen by General Bruce as one of the first Everest Expedition. After the descent he decided to see something of work in India before going back to England to start in Harley Street. 'One of the first calls that he made, quite naturally, was upon the local hospital at Neyyoor, then in charge of a certain Dr. Pugh. He wanted to see what was being done, what there was to do, and to hear and learn about the medical aspect of conditions. He discovered more than he had dreamed of. The hospital itself, with its many branches, constituted the largest medical mission in the world. It covered a tremendous area, and served no less than a hundred thousand patients a year—that is, about three hundred a day—an impressive figure, conjuring up immediate visions of innumerable clinics, white-coated doctors and nurses galore, and whole offices of organization. Actually, ridiculous as it sounds, Somervell found that the whole show was being run by this one doctor, with the aid of a few Indian medical assistants and one or two European nurses. It sounds impossible—it almost was.'

Dr. Somervell decided to spend the three weeks that were left to him, not in sight-seeing, but in helping Dr. Pugh. At the end of the three weeks he offered his services permanently, but with the stipulation that if there should be a second Everest expedition he should be allowed leave so that he might join it, which he did in 1924.

Those who have read 'Rose from Brier,' Amy Carmichael's last volume of letters, written from her invalid bed, will remember her chapter on Everest, from which we quote. 'On the morning when the climbers of the second expedition were at their highest camp, there was a question about going farther. The night before, Dr. Somervell, who, like all the others, was worn by tremendous toils, had read in his pocket Testament from Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." In the translation he was using, the words ran thus: *Aim at what is above*. They were in his mind now as he looked at that summit, so near but so far, and he and his companion decided to go on climbing. They had to take five breaths to every step, five in and five out, but that day those two men got higher than

[1] *Something Happened*, 190 ff.

man had ever gone before without oxygen, for it was the day of the "splendid failure." This little incident, unrecorded, of course, in any of the books written about that famous climb (though it seems to me to express all such endeavour in a single luminous phrase), came out by accident one day in talk. I was asking Dr. Somervell about that last day's struggle uphill, and he told me about his little pocket Testament and its word to him. I was well then, and never expected to be anything else. . . . Often during these months it has come and spoken to me. It has shamed slackness and cowardice; *it has set me climbing again.*'

Of the third Everest Expedition, in the spring of 1933, Somervell was not a member. Ten years had intervened, most of the time filled with gruelling hard work. It has been said of him that he was 'the most overworked man in the world.' And he had gone through the terrible plague of cholera which spread over South Travancore in 1928. 'Sometimes half of the family would be dead; sometimes only one would be left, digging the grave of his dear ones and wondering whether it would not be as well to make it large enough to receive his own body too, in a few hours, perchance. . . . One of the worst things that the doctors had to fight was the numbing fear which had the people in its grip, striking them dumb and hopeless and inactive, even before the disease had yet seized them, with the not unexpected fatal result. But the coming of the sahibs and their little band to their aid changed their whole attitude. Somervell says of this: I never before appreciated what a great thing hope is. Faith and charity we are apt to take for granted as wonderful things; but here was the whole life of a community completely changed from the listlessness of despair to activity and intelligence by hope. They were no longer lonely.'

The Influence of Newman.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones says: 'He [Newman] taught me so much I do mind—things that will never be out of me. In an age of sofas and cushions, he taught me to be indifferent to comfort; and in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen, and this so early that it was well in me when life began, and I was equipped before I went to Oxford with a real good panoply, and it has never failed me; so if this world cannot tempt me with money or luxury, and it can't, or honours or anything it has in its trumpery treasure-house, it is most of all because he said it in a way that touched me—not scolding, nor forbidding, nor much leading—walking with me a step in front. So he stands to me as a great image and symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world's life in one splendid venture that he knew, as well as you or I, might fail, but with a glorious scorn of everything that was not his dream—of course it touched me.'[1]

Sacrifice.

'Lord Grey mentions an instance of his anxiety to find some simple word which might remain in the mind of those he sought to help. "Some," he said to a mother who, in the first days of the war, had heard that her son was missing, "have more to lay upon the Altar than others."'[2]

So dull a Way of Life?

Mr. G. C. Wheeler had an excellent idea when he decided to prepare an anthology of letters, in English, from famous men to their mothers. He calls it *Letters to Mother* (Allen & Unwin; 7s. 6d. net). The anthology is of the widest range—seventy-three writers are included, from John Paston (1471) to Captain Scott of the Antarctic (1911). We do not find anything outstanding, but if there is no great light thrown on the lives of famous men in this volume of their letters, still there are many revealing touches. Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing in 1821 at the age of seventeen, has no great opinion of the attractions of the Christian ministry. 'I don't read so much now as I did, because I am more taken up in studying. I am quite reconciled to going to college, since I am to spend the vacations with you. Yet four years of the best part of my life is a great deal to throw away. I have not yet concluded what profession I shall have. The being a minister is of course out of the question. I should not think that even you could desire me to choose so dull a way of life. Oh, no, mother, I was not born to vegetate for ever in one place, and to live and die as calm and tranquil as—a puddle of water'!

[1] Lady Frances Horner, *Time Remembered*, 120.
[2] *Ibid.* 152.

Printed by Morrison & Gibb Limited, Tanfield Works, and Published by T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, Edinburgh. It is requested that all literary communications be addressed to The Editor, Kings Gate, Aberdeen, Scotland.