

“Great is Thy Faithfulness”

Hebrews XI, 6 b and c ; James I, 6-8 ; Mathew VI, 24, 31-33 ; Psalm XCII, 1-2.

I have no address to give you to-night, only a story that I want to try to tell you, and my reasons for telling it are three :

1. In this year when the School is seventy years old Miss Haughton wanted you to hear its story. It is right that you should hear it, for it is your School and so its story belongs to you.

2. There may be some of you who, having been taught a lot about the Bible and the great foundations of the Christian Faith, still find yourselves saying, “ This is all very well and sounds admirable ; but have you anything quite *practical* to tell us, something in your own everyday experience which really does prove that there is a God and that *it works* to trust Him ? ” This story is my answer to that.

3. The story of God’s loving-kindness and faithfulness is told that we may “ ascribe greatness to the LORD ” and together praise His Name.

Clarendon was founded by Miss Flint in Malvern in January, 1898. It was a very small school, and I was a very young teacher when I joined the staff in 1917. For eleven years I worked under Miss Flint’s magnificent leadership, and then came the offer of a post in Egypt. I did not want to go and I refused it. But the offer was repeated. I wondered. Had God got something to say to me in this? But how could I leave Miss Flint? By that time I was taking a good deal of responsibility. I could not leave her ; it would not be fair, unless just the right person was sent to take my place. My answer had to be given by July 26th. On that very morning an application came from a well-qualified Old Clarendonian, Janet Capper’s aunt, who would be just what Miss Flint needed ; and with a rather sinking heart I cabled my acceptance of the post in Egypt.

But, after I had been in Egypt only a few months, a letter came from Miss Flint saying that she and her sisters had decided to retire in July, 1930 ; and that, as she suspected no one would be interested in buying and carrying on a very small school (there had never been more than 60 and by that time there were only 48 pupils), she imagined Clarendon would close down.

Now that seemed to me very, very sad. Clarendon, under Miss Flint, had been a place where God was honoured and where our Lord Jesus. Christ was the foundation of all its life. And it seemed to me very sad that even the smallest such school should close down. So I began to pray that God would raise up someone to carry on. But that it should be myself never crossed my mind.

And then one day when I was praying at mid-day about it (I was kneeling near the open window and I can still see the shadows of the leaves of a huge Eucalyptus tree just outside cast on the polished parquet

floor around me), a Voice seemed suddenly to say, "That is your job. When your contract out here is finished next year, you go home and take over Clarendon." And I said, "But, LORD, it's preposterous. I haven't any money." And the Voice said, "What I have done for others, I can do for you." Now for years I had read the great books of the China Island Mission and the Dohnavar Fellowship, telling of the wonderful ways in which God had supplied their needs just in answer to prayer without any appeals for money. As one of their leaders has written :

"My need was known to Thee alone,
I called upon Thy Name ;
None other heard prayer's whispered word,
And yet the answer came.
Thus secretly, 'twixt Thee and me,
Let traffic grow apace,
That even I may testify
To Thine exceeding grace."

So I said nothing to anybody, but I started praying about the money. In those days what was called the goodwill of a private school cost the equivalent of one term's fees and extras, to me a vast sum ; but within three or four days of beginning to pray about it, I had a letter from the other side of the Atlantic from someone who said they had heard that Miss Flint might be retiring in 1930, and if this was the case, they wondered whether I might be thinking of carrying on the School. If this were so they imagined I should be in need of capital, and in this case might they lend—and they named a sum within a couple of hundred of what I should need—as a loan which would carry no legal responsibility if it went astray.

That was a late hot summer afternoon, and I went down to the sea and swam out as far as I could to get away from the people. And I said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come," and He said, "Come," and I swam in and wrote and accepted the offer.

All sorts of business negotiations followed. Dear Miss Flint was very pleased that Clarendon need not close. Out in Egypt I settled down to pray about staff, and in those months God showed me a very clear pattern for the future life of Clarendon. The government was to be upon His shoulder, and I was to seek as my fellow-workers on the resident staff people who would be wholly one with me in Christ, people with whom I could pray about every detail of the School's life, so that we could be truly workers together with Him and for you. Most of Miss Flint's staff would retire when she did, and the needs were very real. There were two, particularly, whom I felt I should need most urgently—an experienced second mistress (someone corresponding to Miss Pike to-day) and a really gifted music-mistress—for there was little music of any quality in the School at that time.

Well, one day, a member of the staff of St. George's School, Jerusalem, came in to lunch with us in Alexandria on her way back to Palestine, and during the meal she said she couldn't imagine what they were going to do at St. George's in the coming term because their senior mistress, who had been such a tower of strength to the Head and such a wonderful leader of

application to my right address. And we rang off. " I think I'll ring through to Coventry," I thought. " I'd like to share this with Hazel right away."

Late that afternoon, my niece had managed to get two hours alone with the Lord. It was the evening of January 3rd. He had sent us no-one to take her place at Clarendon. It must be in His purpose for her not to return to Lebanon. To-morrow, January 4th, she would 'phone to the Chairman of the Mission and ask him to tell the Council. She was God's child and God's servant, and she said, in effect, " Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

At 8.0 p.m. there was a 'phone call for her from Abergele, and I told her that Miss Haughton was applying for the post.

So Hazel St. John went back to Beirut in September, 1961, and I was joined by Miss Haughton. We had four very happy years together,—years marked by an wholly unexpected overweight of joy in the shape of a gift from an anonymous donor which provided us with an extra Science Laboratory and the beautiful new Geography Room—and then, in 1965, to my great joy, Miss Haughton accepted the invitation of the Governing Body to take over the Headship.

" Great is Thy faithfulness, O God, my Father ;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not ;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

*" Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see ;
All I have needed Thy hand has provided ;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

" Summer and winter and spring-time and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

" Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine Own dear Presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for to-day and bright hope for to-morrow,
Blessings all mine and ten thousand beside."

definite decision to the Mission by Wednesday, 4th January. I was about to go to London for more interviews when the name of a Miss Sheila Haughton was given to me. I wrote, telling her of our need and asking her, if she were interested, if she could meet me on the coming Friday evening at seven o'clock for dinner at the Euston Hotel ; and I arranged with Miss Macrae to open her reply and telegraph to me on Friday if she was coming. If I heard nothing I should know she was not interested. Friday came. I asked several times at the hotel desk, but there was no telegram. I had my interviews and at seven o'clock was on the point of stepping out of the hotel door to go across to the station for a light supper, when someone stepped up to me. " Miss Swain?" " Yes," I said. " My name is Sheila Haughton. You are expecting me?" " Well, no," I said. " I was not. But I'm very pleased to see you, and what is more, this gives me an excellent excuse for having a proper meal in the Hotel." Miss Macrae had sent a telegram, but some careless girl in the Hotel had failed to type it out. But, you see, God was caring for us, and He saw to it that I did not step out before Miss Haughton had stepped in. A fortnight later she came up to Clarendon for a brief week-end, and we prayed together ; but she was very uncertain, and, knowing that she could not come without a clear call from God, she wrote and told me I must not count on her. November and December are very busy months for people in schools, and I wrote to my niece's Mission and asked if they could not extend the time for decision till early February. They agreed, and I wrote and told Miss Haughton there was no hurry. But I did not know, for she did not tell me, that my niece felt January 4th was the dead-line. She had asked God to send someone by that date. If He did not do so she believed that it was His will that she should stay at Clarendon. But her heart was in Lebanon.

After Christmas she went to stay with her brother in Coventry, and on Thursday, December 29th, I went down to spend a week at a little cottage in Sussex where I sometimes went for complete quiet. On the Saturday evening, New Year's Eve, my landlady came in, and said, " What time will you be leaving on Monday, Miss Swain?" " But I'm staying till Thursday," I said. She looked dismayed, ran out and fetched my letter. " You're quite right," she said. " You booked for a week ; but I thought it was for a week-end. Whatever shall I do? I've promised the rooms to some other people from Monday." " Then," I said, " the other people must come, and of course I'll go on Monday." I did not feel like moving into a Hotel. I would rather go back and be quiet at School ; but I wondered why my holiday was to be cut so short. I was soon to know the reason why.

I arrived late on Monday night and was told there had been a telephone call for me, but whoever it was said they would ring again the next evening. Tuesday evening came, Tuesday, January 3rd, and about 7-45 p.m. a personal call came through. It was Miss Haughton. She wanted to know what my address would be in the next few days as she had a letter that was personal to send to me. " That is very interesting," I said. " Can you tell me at all what the letter will contain?" And she told me that she had had a quiet week in Devon and time to be with God, that her doubts had all gone and that she was sure it was right for her to apply for the Assistant Headship at Clarendon. She wanted to post the formal letter of

the staff-room, someone whom they all loved and trusted, had had to return to England to be near her parents. I listened, and then I asked her name. Oh, her name was Margart Sowdon. Do you sometimes feel as if an electric light had been turned on inside you? That was how I felt when I heard that name, and a quiet Voice seemed to say, "That's Clarendon's Senior Mistress." So each day I prayed, "Lord, if this is Thy plan, please give me Margaret Sowdon." But I knew nothing more about her.

Then one day, a few weeks later, we were having tea in the garden when the Egyptian manservant escorted a young English woman across the lawn and announced a Mrs. Sowdon. She was the wife of a naval officer whose ship was due in Alexandria and she had come out to meet him and had called on the Campions with whom I was living because they were the local Secretaries of the Officers' Christian Union. So after tea I said to her, "I wonder if you are related to a Miss Margaret Sowdon who taught in Jerusalem." "Oh," she said, "I'm her sister-in-law." "Then," I said, "perhaps you can give me her address." And when I wrote to Miss Sowdon and she saw my signature, she recognized the name as that of the writer of a small book that she had been reading that last summer at night under her mosquito net in Jerusalem, and she knew that we could work together in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace; and while she was not free to join me until 1931, she did come then and was for thirty-three years the perfect fellow-worker, the perfect leader of the staff-room, and God's Own good gift to us all.

But what of the music? Very gifted musicians who are first and foremost lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ are few and far between. But in the Spring of 1930 there came to Alexandria a Mrs. Macauley, herself a great lover of music, and to her I talked; and she suggested that I write to a certain Miss Palmer, Peggy Spencer Palmer, who had moved in musical circles and might be able to help me. She had taken her L.R.A.M. at 15, had trained at the Matthay School of Music and had carried off every prize that it had offered and had been in the process of further training by Matthay and Vivien Langrish, who hoped to bring her out as a second Myra Hess, when she was suddenly met with the claims of our Lord Jesus Christ, and she knew that simply to spend her life in the concert-halls of Europe and America was not His plan for her. So for some years, after a Bible-College training, she had been pianist-secretary to Mrs. Booth Clibborn, the evangelist, and was now at home in Bristol, waiting on God for the next move. Her music had been described to me in such terms that to ask *her* to join the staff of an unknown little School of 45 girls would have seemed like crying for the moon; but I did write and ask her if she knew of anyone among her friends who might be interested. My letter arrived, and that evening she went down to help a Christian friend at a Girl's Club, and as she was leaving her friend put a book into her hand saying she thought it might interest her. She took it home and looked at it. The name of the writer was the same as that at the end of the letter she had had that morning! She read it, and a week later I had a letter saying Peggy Spencer Palmer herself might be very glad to fill the post! So Miss Palmer's great gift of music was ours for many, many years and has left its mark on us ever since. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all we ask or think."

So in 1930 I came home to England. The purchase-price of the goodwill of the School and its equipment was paid. The staff were all appointed, and a new little staff-room was furnished in bright Autumn colours ; but two more armchairs were needed to complete it, and I had only £5 left in hand. Just then there was a sale at a house in North Malvern. I was too busy to go, but I asked the Auctioneer to do what he could for me, and two armchairs arrived—at £2/10/-. They were in the staff-room for many years, and to-day they are the two big armchairs in the Entrance Hall.

So term opened. Forty-five boarders and three day-girls ; and after a week had gone by I sat down again to go over my accounts—anticipated income and expenditure for the first term ; and you know however carefully I went over them, I could not see how the income was going to meet the expenditure. It was mid-day again, and I got on to my knees and told the Lord all about it, and I added, “ Oh, Lord, if we could have just one more pupil, I think we could manage.” And as I got up from my knees the telephone rang. It was Mr. Harris speaking from London. His daughter, Monica, had been in the School before. “ Miss Swain,” he said, “ I’m not very happy about Annette’s day-school. Her term has started, and I know yours has too. But could you put her in right away?” “ Yes, Mr. Harris,” I said, “ gladly.” So Annette came, and our accounts for the term balanced.

“ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Now I knew that the day of very small schools was over, and that we must set to work to grow. Miss Sowdon joined me in 1931, and the first thing we had to do was to work for Recognition by the Ministry of Education. In 1932 we applied for it, and in May of that year we were inspected and recognized, and the last thing the Chief H.M.I. said as she left the premises was, “ Well, Miss Swain, you need a new dining-room if you are to grow.” Yes, I thought, and a new drawing-room, and a new junior dormitory, and a Library and a Prefects’ Study. So towards the end of May the staff and I began to pray about it. By that time I had saved just £200. How much a new wing with all these extra rooms would cost I had no idea. But in the following weeks I received two letters—one from a relative saying she was leaving me £1,000 in her will, but that if I liked to have it now for some school purpose, and at a small annual interest, she would be very happy for me to do so ; and the other from a friend who said she was selling out War Loan and if I would care to have £1,000 at a low interest, she would be glad so to invest it. £2,200.

So we sent for an architect who drew up plans for a new wing to be built between the two School houses, and in due course the plans were sent out to four different builders for estimates. I was in Cambridge in early August when the Architect sent me the four estimates. The lowest was from a builder named Evans. It was for £2,200. And I sent a telegram asking him to start work right away; for once more we knew that God means what He says when He says, “ The silver and gold are Mine,” and that our accounts were being done in Heaven.

So work on the New Wing began, and in September we gathered on the site and held a short service of dedication. Miss Flint laid the foundation-stone. The wall of the old small drawing-room came down and a huge

The last Prize-giving in Malvern took place at the end of term. Mr. Laing came down to give away the Prizes and he was very cheerful and friendly, knowing nothing of our completely empty hands. And the next morning Pickford's first vans arrived, and the move began. Ten more days passed, the move was in full swing, and then one morning I was called to the telephone and the agent's voice said cheerfully, "We've sold Clarendon and Applegarth to those people who came to look at Clarendon in February. They wanted it for a Prep. School, but there was not enough land. They only realized yesterday that Applegarth with its orchard and tennis-courts is also for sale. That suits them, and they are buying both for £13,000."

Can you see why God had kept other people back from buying Applegarth separately? "He Himself knew what He would do."

So Clarendon left Malvern and settled in at Kinnel Hall, and Kinnel Hall became Clarendon just 20 years ago this spring. But God knew that we should need more pupils to finance a place of this size, and in the first three terms up here He sent 67 new boarders, more than in any year before or since.

"Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of."

So the years passed, and by 1956 I had come to feel that it was no longer right for us to remain a Private School, dependent on the thread of one person's life. The School had belonged to Miss Flint; then it had belonged to me; but I don't think either of us ever thought of it in that way. We knew that really everything belonged to the Lord. But now I felt the time had come for us to stop being a Private School and become, instead, a fully-fledged Public School, and in that year we were recognized as such by the Ministry of Education, and God gave us a group of men and women, with Professor Norman Anderson as Chairman, who were wholly one with us in Christ, to become our Governing Body, people with whom we could pray and trust God for the future.

In 1958 we had another full inspection by the Ministry and were urged to start Domestic Science. And at that point the Garden House became available and could accommodate two mistresses and twelve girls, just the number of girls who had occupied the big dormitory on the Mezzanine floor which then became the Domestic Science room.

But I was getting older. My thoughts and prayers often turned to the future, and I wondered whether a dream that I had dreamed for many years might perhaps come true—that I should one day be succeeded by my niece, Hazel St. John, the Principal of the big Lebanese Evangelical School for Girls in Beirut. She wondered this, too, and when she came home on furlough in 1959, she told her Mission that she wanted to work with me for two years and then see if God was calling her to return to Lebanon or remain here. So she came, and it was grand to be together. But every post seemed to bring letters saying how much she was missed and urging her to go back, and by the summer of 1960 we both felt that we must ask God to show us if He had someone else in mind for Clarendon. We were much in prayer, and the staff joined us in this, and I began to make enquiries as to another Assistant Headmistress, and in the coming months I met and talked with eight different people with suitable qualifications. But nothing further happened. It was now mid-October and my niece had to give a

with vast basement kitchens, or too few bathrooms, or no flat land for playing-fields ; and so it went on. Then, in September, 1947, our agents sent details of a place in North Wales, and it sounded ideal—spacious enough, big windows, central heating, a ballroom large enough for an Assembly Hall, thirty-six bathrooms, newly decorated from top to bottom, 300 acres of park and level land for games-fields. BUT the price that was being asked was so vast that I knew we could never afford to pay a rent that could provide any sort of reasonable interest on Mr. Laing's outlay ; and I put it right out of my mind.

A week later I had a letter from Mr. Laing's agent telling me of the same place in North Wales. He had written to the vendor's agent, had told them he had a client who might be interested, but he would not even advise her to go and see it unless they halved the price. They had hummed and haw-ed and said, " Well, get her to go and see it." So on the 1st October, 1947, on a misty Autumn evening, Miss Macrae and I drove up the drive, and Kinmel Hall, at that point an Hotel, loomed up out of the mist.

Next morning, a brilliant October morning, we seemed to walk miles, all over the buildings, the outbuildings, the grounds, and we knew we had seen nothing to compare with it. The whole place seemed prepared for us in every way, which I am sure it was ; and in November of that year it was bought for us by Mr. Laing.

I could tell you endless stories of how God provided for us concerning the details of the move, the furniture, the furnishings, the loose covers, but there isn't time for that to-night. We must get back to Malvern and start arranging for the sale of the houses and the leases that then belonged to us there. Property was in very great demand at that time, and sales and tenancies were quickly arranged in the case of all the houses except the main building, Clarendon, and Applegarth. Applegarth we had bought for £1,850 in 1935. It was now worth £6,000 ! The 99-year lease of the main building had cost nothing in 1930 except the Stamp Duty. It's value was now £7,000. The agents assured us we should have no difficulty in the sale of these two, and the £13,000 was urgently needed to pay for an enormous move by Pickfords (28 pantechincons) and all the additional furniture and equipment and floor covering that was needed. But December, January, February, March went by, and they did not sell. Many people came to see Applegarth, liked it, nearly bought it, but not quite.

The move was to take place in early April, and in the middle of March we had a whole day of Prayer. Every member of staff joined me when she was free to do so, and we laid our great need before God, reminded Him of His promises and asked Him to glorify His Name. And in the early evening one of our Continental helpers, a girl called Miss Gamst, came in and knelt down beside me. She did not know very much English and she opened her prayer by saying, " Now, Lord, You know what You ought to do." She was thinking of that verse, " Jesus Himself knew what He would do." I heard no more, for again there was that feeling of a light turned on inside me, and I knew the thing was done and we could wait quietly for God's time to reveal it. And we kept the matter entirely to ourselves.

tarpaulin was hung up over the gap just as Juliet Chadwick's grandmother, Mrs. Brownrigg, came to see me about sending Juliet's mother and her twin sister to Clarendon, and I really thought the draught must blow all thought of it out of her mind ; but it didn't, I'm glad to say, and by April the New Wing was completed.

Well, it's one thing to build and another thing to furnish. The other rooms were provided for, but I had no money left at all for the drawing-room, and the carpet alone would cost a great deal. So it looked as though the new drawing-room could not be used for a long time. And then, one morning, a rather dull looking letter in a brown envelope arrived from some solicitors in Leamington, and in it I read that my own old Headmistress, Miss Constance Ruspini, who had died in the previous October, had left me in her will a piano and £100. Now £100 was worth a very great deal more in those days than it is to-day. It was enough, with care, to carpet and furnish adequately the new drawing-room.

Then we began, in all earnest, to grow. The years passed ; the entire Terrace of small houses on the opposite side of the road was taken and filled ; four rooms were turned into one to make our first proper Science Laboratory ; a lovely house called Applegarth was bought, and there Mrs. St. John lived and cared for Clarendonians in term-time and her own family in the holidays ; another house named Westbury was taken and turned into classrooms for the little ones, and when I prayed for a Froebel-trained mistress to take charge, Joy Broomhall's mother, who was then on the staff, told me she had a friend called Miss Joan Drury who might be interested. Well, she was interested. She still is ! That was 1938. Some years previously an Old Clarendonian, an Honours Graduate named Evelyn Pike, joined the staff and carried our English right ahead, and in 1935 the perfect secretary was given in the person of Miss Macrae who later became Bursar and whose presence among us was of incalculable benefit to the whole resident and administrative life of the School. I must not stay to name others who were given in those critical days. I can only say that when the war came I found myself surrounded by wonderful colleagues who were in every sense God-given.

War broke out in September, 1939. I had foreseen and dreaded it for years, fearing most of all shortage of food for the School. On that September a.m. when Poland was invaded our Housekeeper ran into the room and said, " The war has begun." I switched on the radio to see if any news-bulletin was coming through and clear and strong round the room rang out these words : " Fear not, your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of." The morning service was in progress.

For the next fortnight we seemed to live at the telephone—so many parents anxious to get their children out of London and the big cities into the comparative safety of the country rang up to know if we could take them. So on the opening day of term I went up to Paddington to meet a crowd of unknown parents and equally unknown new pupils and bring the latter down to Clarendon. What the years ahead would hold for them and for us of sorrow and strain we did not know ; but God's word to us had been, " Your Heavenly Father knoweth."

The war years were not without their difficulties. Science staff were at a premium, for Scientists were needed by the government and the military. But God sent us Miss Barter-Snow to take charge of our chemistry, and the coming of the Telecommunications Research Establishment to Malvern provided us with Physicists who were willing to give us part-time help ; and we continued to grow and grow, till by the end of the war we were running round ten little houses as well as the main school building and, down the road, " Little Clarendon "—a boarding-house for the Juniors where Patricia St. John was in charge.

How well we remember that evening, May 8, 1945, when we celebrated Peace in Europe. We had listened to the crowds outside Buckingham Palace cheering the King, we had listened to Mr. Churchill's great announcement, and then we took a picnic supper to the Bluebell Woods nearby. The woods were seas of blue, the young green clothed the hills, and we looked over the distant plain and the far hills in the light of a perfect spring evening and thanked God with all our hearts for Peace.

And yet—we knew that we were faced with enormous difficulties. In war-time people will put up with anything for the sake of safety, but now parents would want something different : better accommodation, better playing-fields, better grounds . . . Eleven little houses with small gardens, the main building with only a very small garden, a gymnasium down the road. The girls did not really suffer ; but, though they never complained, I felt I was killing my staff. The domestic staff, for instance, had literally to go across the road if more marmalade was wanted and down the road if more porridge was required. To reduce our numbers was financially impossible. We had to recognize that we must either move or close down.

What was God's purpose for us? There seemed no indication that we were to close down; and Mr. Fred Mitchell, the Home Director of the C.I.M. and a close friend of the School, seemed sure that Clarendon was to continue and that God would provide a place. So we began to pray, very privately, for this thing could not be broadcast ; and in March, 1946, we began to hunt.

The first place we saw was in a remote part of the Cotswolds, a lovely old Elizabethan house and grounds covered with daffodils. We could have rented it, and that would have suited us well, for although the original loan was by that time paid off, I had no capital whatever with which to buy any estate. But—it was not big enough. We should need to add to large dining-hall, a gymnasium, classrooms, laboratories. I wondered how much it would cost to put up the necessary sectional buildings.

" I wish I knew a Christian builder whom I could consult," I said to a friend, and they replied, " Why don't you consult Mr. Laing?" (now Sir John Laing) and I'm ashamed to say, I answered, " Who is Mr. Laing? Is he a builder and is he a Christian?" " Oh, yes, he's a Christian and he's a builder," and they gave me his address. I wrote to him and got a very kind reply saying he'd be glad to see me at 8-30 a.m. in his office at Hendon one morning in May. 8-30 a.m. Well, I thought, he's a hard-working man, anyway, and I wrote and said I'd be there. Then another letter came,

asking where I should be staying in London and saying he would send a car to fetch me. I said I should be staying in Bethnal Green. The morning arrived, a beautiful car arrived, and I was transported to Hendon and shown into Mr. Laing's office. He himself would be there in a few moments. I looked at photographs on the walls. They were pictures of the invasion ports, the Mulberry Harbours, built for D-day in Europe, 1944, built largely it appeared, by Mr. Laing! And, as I have often said, I felt like a grass-hopper that had come to consult an elephant! However, then Mr. Laing arrived, a kindly grey-haired man who went straight to the point and to whom I explained my problem. He asked me how many square feet of sectional buildings we should need. I told him. He took a pencil, did a rapid calculation and said, "Well, that would cost you some thirty thousand pounds". "Then," I said, "that cannot be God's way for us. Thank you very much for seeing me. I must not take up more of your time." And I got up to go. But he said, "Wait a minute. Sit down and tell me something about this School." So I told him, and he said, "Miss Swain, you must know a good many wealthy people (I didn't); why don't you get out an appeal for a Building Fund for new premises?" "Well, Mr. Laing," I said, "I am quite sure that is the way God leads some people; but I have not been led that way. I have always made my needs known to Him. Then if He sends what I ask for, I am quite sure it is in His will and purpose. I should not feel safe any other way." "Well," he said, "you might talk it over with a Mr. Fred Mitchell. He'd understand your point of view," and I said, "If you mean the Home Director of the C.I.M., I have an appointment with him this afternoon about their Prayer Conference." "Well," he said, "you talk to him," and we said good-bye. I talked with Mr. Mitchell and, as I knew he would, he agreed that I must go on quietly in the way that God had led me hitherto. So we just continued praying.

About three weeks later I had another letter from Mr. Laing asking me to come and see him again, at 8-30 a.m., Hendon, and again his car would fetch me. I went to London, and the evening before my appointment I had a note from Mr. Mitchell saying that he felt I ought to know that Mr. Laing had told him that if I would get out an appeal, he himself would contribute the first £15,000. I had a very bad night. What should I do? Was I going to throw away a wonderful opportunity for the School by refusing such an offer? And how ungracious I should seem! And yet, and yet . . . I turned to my morning reading, and I came to these words: "Wait on the Lord and keep His way; and He shall cause thee to inherit the land." That settled it.

Arrived in his office, I was met by Mr. Laing who greeted me and said he wished to dictate a letter to his secretary in my presence. She came in, and he dictated the letter. It was an offer to buy any suitable estate that we might find for the School, to put it in the hands of trustees and allow me to become the tenant.

Then the hunt began in earnest. From June, 1946, to October, 1947, as the big mansions became de-requisitioned, from Somerset to Lincolnshire, from Kent to Shropshire we hunted, but they all had serious drawbacks: beautiful but unmanageable, or not large enough, or not light enough, or