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SUSIE SORABJI

*By the same Author*

SUN BABIES

BETWEEN THE TWILIGHTS

THE PURDAHNASHIN

'THEREFORE'—BEING THE LIVES OF  
HER PARENTS

GOLD MOHUR TIME



SUSIE SORABJI

# SUSIE SORABJI

CHRISTIAN-PARSEE  
EDUCATIONIST OF WESTERN INDIA

*A Memoir*

*by*

*her Sister*

CORNELIA SORABJI



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To  
*Her Very Own Children*  
of  
*St. Helena's and St. John's Schools, Poona*  
*past, present, and*  
*to come*



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## MISS SUSIE SORABJI

### A GREAT INDIAN EDUCATIONIST

From *The Times*, April 6, 1931

**M**ISS SUSIE SORABJI, who died at St. Helena's, Poona, on March 15, at the age of 62, was an educationist of wide influence in Western India. A correspondent writes of her:

Susie Sorabji was the sixth daughter of the Rev. Sorabji Kharsedji and Mrs. Sorabji, pioneers of progress and of education for women and children in the Western Presidency. She was born on May 15, 1868, and worked unceasingly for her country till she fell ill with pneumonia on March 9.

During her early years she threw herself enthusiastically into her mother's schemes of education. Later on she herself founded St. Helena's High School, chiefly for the Parsees, who claimed, on Mrs. Sorabji's retirement, one Sorabji at least for the education of their children. Susie Sorabji's American and Canadian friends helped her to acquire the premises and set up the buildings of St. Helena's. She transferred the property to the Church Missionary Society as trustees during her lifetime in order that the work might be continued after her death. But she retained the burden of finance and upkeep during her life.

St. Helena's represents a great experiment in education. It is international, for seven nation-

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alities attend the kindergarten and High School, and it is co-educational. Like her mother, Susie Sorabji believed that inter-racial friendships should be begun in childhood, and both Mrs. Sorabji's Victoria High School and St. Helena's have proved the value of that belief. If you talked to St. Helena's pupils of aggressive Communalism, you would not be understood. St. Helena's pupils know no differences except as differences of special gifts brought by one 'family' to the service of a common enthusiasm and a common loyalty. That word 'loyalty' is one which her pupils will always connect with Susie Sorabji; 'a partnership and self-government if you will, but within the Empire', was her constant teaching. It was her habit to sum up current topics in addresses to the school, and on March 6 she gave the last of such addresses, urging peace and understanding and service, and reiterating the foolishness of hatred and restraint of trade. St. Helena's Scouts and Guides stood firm during the difficult period of terrorism in 1930, when certain of these bodies forsook the flag, and Miss Sorabji was Regent of the Kaisar-i-Hind, the only Indian Chapter of the Canadian Daughters of the Empire. In her delirium, during her last illness, she believed she was addressing the Guides, but, her voice failing her, she said: 'I can't shout, Mehera' (the Parsee Girl Guide captain). 'Make them shout, "One Flag, one Throne, one Empire."' And another day to her nurse, not

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long before she died, she said: 'Sing "God Save the King."'

The last addition to her school is the beautiful science building and laboratory which Lady Sykes opened. It awaits the completion of a second story, and St. Helena's pupils and friends hope to make this her memorial. But her true memorial is in the hearts of those whom she loved and served or rescued and set on their way in life. Of her pupils some sit on the *gadis* of Raj estates; some proceed to universities and a professional life in India or oversea; many marry, and bring the second generation to sit on the kindergarten benches in their beloved St. Helena's. The one thing which is common to all, and which is never outgrown, is personal devotion to her to whom the true democracy was love unfeigned.

Miss Sorabji was unsparing of herself. In addition to St. Helena's, she supervised and controlled two vernacular poor schools, one for Hindus and one for Moslems, which had been founded by her mother, and to which schools also she gave premises and buildings. She visited prisons, leper asylums, hospitals, poor houses, the Soldiers' Home, served on the committees of the Council of Women, the National Missionary Association, the Temperance Union, the League of Mercy, the All-India Educational Conference, and other bodies. No one in need ever went to her unhelped. She was infinitely patient with ignorance, as with

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wickedness or (certain aspects of) goodness. And she was loving and broadminded and understanding of the narrowest bigotry of whatever kind, while she was a fearless missionary of the Christian faith. Among her gifts was public speaking—perfect diction, clear statement, and sincerity, with a humour which was all her own. She loved the countries she visited—America, Canada, and England—but the chief love of her heart was for India, putting no bounds to the capacity of Indian men and women for service and achievement.

## RETROSPICE

SHE was over 5 feet in height—but looked much taller because she held her head so high; and the long draperies fell straight from her head, past a short waist-line which also added to height. . . . Always one loved her eyes—black and large, with deep curling lashes; and even after a cruelly-wrong operation had damaged her sight, you still found them speaking to you, changing with the sorrow or gladness of her friends.

‘A friend of all the World, *and of me*’, you would say, for she could give (how rare that is!) all of herself to all her friends, and yet leave all of it over for the next claim whether of work or of family. ‘There is, that scattereth, and yet increaseth . . .’

Utter selflessness and a sympathy so genuine that she would, unaware, cry open tears with some poor soul who had come to her in trouble; or show a face all drawn with the pain of the sick one beside whom she sat.

Yet—not sorrow, but joy, was the key-note of her life. She was radiant. . . . And that indwelling glow of which you were conscious in her presence would often spill over, sometimes in just human fun, sometimes in that for which one has no name—a divine thing made human, a quiet effulgence, almost as it were a fountain of *Light*, flowing from

## RETROSPICE

some secret reservoir at the foundations of her being.

Life—and the particular form in which it was cast for her, centred in the work of her hands. . . . She loved intensely; so much so, that everything round and about her was deemed perfect.

With Poona, the city set among the Western Ghats of the Bombay Presidency—its scenery, its climate, its people, its facilities, nothing—no, not even in Europe or America (where she had travelled)—could compare.

‘Come and be cured here,’ she would say to ailing friend or sister.

And how often she has said ‘Come and share my lovely home.’ . . . And we have gone at her invitation, and come away refreshed in mind and body.

Yes, the view from her guest-chamber was superb; and the garden through which you walked to find her in her bungalow was pleasant with shade, and gay with flowers, in the time of flowers. The clump of bamboos outside the front porch (and who but she would plant bamboos in a flower-bed?) gave privacy to the house; and the gold Mohur trees in April and May made a flaming barrage of red and gold, stretching right across the garden in front of her rooms—‘Angels with fiery wands of Beauty to protect her’, we have said since she left us. . . . And her hospitality, was it not just the expression of herself?—unstinted love and thought.

## RETROSPECT

In your room you found in amazing detail, even to the stamps on your writing-table, the sewing-box, and the refreshing bath-salts—all that the most cared-for guest would find in an English home. And she remembered any particular dainty you had liked on your last visit, or any particular interest which you might wish to renew. She remembered—nor ever forgot and confounded you with some one else—she remembered because *her heart* remembered.

And so it was that what made your time with her so unique was just herself—whether face to face when you could get her thus, in her busy life, or face to her thoughtfulness for you.

I have begun this story of her thus, because we so delighted in her bodily form and presence that we want to hold that with us still, although we know that we have the closer communion of her triumphant and undying Spirit.

## *Chapter I*

### EARLY YEARS

SHE was born at Sholapur in Western India on May 15, 1868—the sixth daughter of her parents, the Rev. Sorabji Kharsedji and Francina Sorabji. She was called Susie after her godmother in her baptism on Whit-Sunday.

I who write this record was closest to her in age, and we had all our childhood memories in common. Together we had the measles, together got into scrapes and out again; did lessons almost together.

We had the same French governess, who wore all her money in bank-notes, quilted into a satin petticoat. The petticoat was turned into a bed cover at night; and I was all for climbing in through the window and running away with it while she slept; but S. was afraid she would die of heart disease, and painted so lurid an ending for her 'murderer' that the adventure had to be abandoned. But we both loved making her rustle the 'bank-note' petticoat; and if we were very good we were allowed to crease it ourselves.

When S. was about seven, she and two small English girls, one nine and the other six, friends of ours, went up with the governess to a hot-weather cottage at Mahableshwar, in the hills.



## EARLY YEARS

I had some small ailment, and was to follow later with my mother.

It was during this separation that the Big Adventure happened, which made me so terribly envious of those three.

The governess had taken them a drive to the woods; the programme was to leave the *tonga* (a kind of low jaunting-car drawn by ponies) outside the woods, and explore on foot a lovely glade known as "Tigers' Walk". Of course no one really expected the beasts to promenade; but the little party had not gone far that morning when a live tigress did really walk towards them holding her cub in her mouth, as a cat, her kitten.

The governess, clutching her skirts, promptly ran back to the *tonga*; and the nine-year-old took charge of the situation. 'If we stare steadily at her she won't hurt us,' she whispered.

And the three children stood sturdily in a line, hands joined, staring without a blink. They did not know how long they did this, but the tigress who had dropped her baby and was growling at them picked it up again, and turned back into the forest. The children ran sobbing to the governess, where she sat strapped (as was her habit for fear of being tipped out) in the *tonga*.

Needless to say, the children became heroes for ever, and the envy of us all. The governess was sent back whence she came.

That was how S. and I were delivered to the

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tender mercies of two elder sisters. S. fell to sister Pheroze and I to sister Mary. It was I who got the discipline. . . . Two of our most vivid memories related to our brothers. Framroze was the brother born after sister Susie. He died when he was a few months old. We had been sent away, but came back quicker than was expected, and before we could be stopped had run into the nursery where he lay.

We went to our mother—'Framroze is asleep, so still and cold, and we can't wake him up to play with us.'

Then our mother told us about Death. I cannot remember what she said; but it must have been beautiful, for she told me in later years that I hugged her, and asked if any one would rob me of dying. What my father said both S. and I remembered. He took us out to look at the stars—the quiet ones and the twinkly ones, and he told us that we did not know about what happened afterwards; but that he always felt we would travel from star to star seeing all the wonders that God had prepared for us. . . . And to this day, I dream of going on tip-toe from one star to another, across the big arch of the sky.

Our brother Richard Kaikhushru succeeded Framroze, and play-time gained in fun, especially when sister Alice was added to the nursery. As they grew in years, the two youngest ones played many pranks upon us. But for some reason it was

## EARLY YEARS

I not S. who was most often their butt. And sometimes she would grieve for me, and sometimes she would join them.

The second vivid memory is of brother Richard, aged four, brought home by a run-away pony, dangling from the stirrup by one foot. That was a shuddering memory for months, and was our chief inducement to sit obediently as congregation to brother Dick, when we played Church, and he preached us sermons.

There is a story of these early years which I used often to tell in order to tease. S. and I were playing in our garden when one Mr. J——, who was conducting a mission in the town, came up to us. He addressed me—‘Are you saved?’ he asked. My reply, I believe, was prompt and boastful—‘No! But my sister Susie is!’

I could never persuade her to climb trees with me. There was a lovely *Champa* tree in the garden; the faint scent from the white-leaved flowers with their yellow hearts was delicious, and the branches made arm-chair seats low down enough to reassure the timorous. I did all my preparation sitting in this tree—and apparently S. also loved it, for I hear that she used to tell her school-children about my ‘dear and naughty’ tree-climbing, and of the *Champa* in particular.

In the Lanowli woods in holiday time, however, she did yield to my persuasions.

We had great games, pretending we were

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monkeys, and swinging from branch to branch. Our parents had a little cottage in the woods; and we children camped beside it, and loved our open-air tent life and especially fire-fly time. We would catch the darling things with the light that pulses in their tails, and put them in our hair and all over us, playing hide and seek in the dark forest, before bed-time.

Another great game was playing at keeping house under the trees, making furniture of sticks and bits of flint; and arranging meals for the fairies who ate off leaves and drank out of flower-bell cups. I do not suppose that all Indian children play thus, or were, in those days, taught to read English at three years of age as we were, or to speak more than one language; or that they were brought up on fairy tales and English nursery rhymes.

But then, there were our father and mother to explain all these privileges. And the story of the parents has been written in another book.

We had two big Mysore bulls to draw our 'Dummy', an Indian carriage rather like a baby omnibus. They took us to Church and Sunday School, and were mighty, fleet-footed beasts.

The driver sat on the pole, and twisted their tails while we egged them on to race the General's carriage and pair, on the way home from Even-song.

They became heroes fit for 'animal stories',

## EARLY YEARS

however, on the occasion when we children were ill, and could not go to Church. The driver missed them from the stables, and finally found them standing quietly in the place where he usually parked the 'Dumny' while we were at Service. They had walked side by side as if yoked together, to the Church when the bell rang!

Our pets included a succession of squirrels and monkeys. The squirrels were the little grey kind, with bushy tails and three lines on their backs—the finger marks these last, says the legend, of the Great God who stroked the first grey squirrel that deserved affection. We kept our squirrels in wire-net cages which we were taught needed daily cleaning, and a fresh supply of water in the drinking pans. We fed them on nuts and bananas—the nuts to sharpen their teeth withal. I still remember the fascination with which we used watch the nut dwindling in size, with such perfect symmetry, the squirrels' minute teeth might have been a machine.

The monkeys we were not allowed to keep beyond their sixth month in age. They were then given to the monkey man, who, in course of time, brought them back to be shown-off as strolling players. It was always the same drama—

### *'The Exacting Wife'*

The curtain rose upon Mrs. Monkey before her looking-glass, dressing in English clothes, and

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spluttering with rage because she could not tie her bonnet-strings, or button her jacket.

This was followed by a scene of domestic happiness on the monkey hearth-stone. . . .

Then crash!—Mrs. Monkey had taken to sulking because she was not given the clothes and jewels which she demanded. Mr. Monkey nobly made an effort to act—‘I will be master in my own house’—but was reduced to submission by Mrs. Monkey’s refusal to cook his dinner; and would slink in with a bright red dress on his arm, and an emerald nose-ring dangling from his claw. The curtain would fall on peace and smiles, and the scratching of sides with laughter.

This was of course both Indian history and high philosophy; though that we did not know at the time

How wise our parents were! They insisted on our learning the language of the country-side where we lived; and it was from them that we learnt of the manners and customs and history of other Indian communities, as well as of our own. Marathi we learnt from a Brahmin Pundit. Both he and our Brahmin *dirzie* or sewing-man wore their heads shaved, all but the little central patch which was allowed to grow long and was worn looped into a knot under their turbans.

The *dirzie* always took off his turban with his shoes when he settled to work on the veranda. Just in perfect position, there was a reliable nail

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knocked into the wall behind the *dirzje's* head, where he sat cross-legged. And we children would deftly lift the loop of hair on to the nail while the old man nodded over his sewing. We would watch round the corner to see him start awake as it pulled. . . . And he would shake a finger at us and threaten to tell the Mem Sahib our mother. But he really loved the game, and I suspect him of feigning sleep to help us play it.

Dear old Narayan! He was still sitting sewing on the parents' veranda when I returned to Poona from Oxford in 1894. . . .

Play and lessons and stories and fun all the days; and on Sundays lessons, too, taken by the elder sisters. In course of time we had learnt the Collects, Gospels, and Epistles in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer, proceeding to French Collects in charge of sister Lena, and also to special Psalms and Keble's *Christian Year*. Sister Mary often gave me *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* to learn by heart as a punishment. Sister Pheroze would let S. off with 'We are Seven'!

There was never any gloom connected with religion: the routine observances if rigid were alive and beautiful; and the parents were always happy and never censorious. . . . Both S. and I discovered in later years that our first consciousness of Lent was connected with a visit to a sugarcane farm in the country. We saw the cane pressed,

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and were offered a drink of the sweet treacly fluid. The 'Forty Days' were not over, and we had voluntarily, and doubtless with inward pride, cut ourselves off sugar and sweets—our usual rations being hoarded for an Easter gift to the children at the hospital. The sugar-cane juice and the crystalized *jaggery* were a great temptation. Our mother said that we could do as we pleased about the terrible dilemma into which we were put as to breaking our rule. But the twinkle in our father's eye made us feel that he'd like us to 'fall' that once!

And we fell joyously, nor repented.

Much of our training in right action was based on good manners.

I can still recall, for instance, the irritation with which we heard that we could not possibly try to 'get our own back' on our playmates when they visited us, because we were their hosts, nor when we visited them, because we were their guests. So, there you were! But 'manners', forgoing resentment, did help you to forget—and to laugh (if ruefully) when you were old enough to consider it 'not fair' that other children had not such well-mannered parents.

Those years in our common home together were good indeed. S. was strong and well. It was much later, when she was seventeen, that she took the chill which affected her lungs. Our mother was then in England and the doctors had declared that



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S. could not last long, when she came back post-haste, and took the invalid in hand.

She was wonderful, our mother, about illness; knew local remedies, the herbs good for sprains, the herbal oil which would cure asthma . . . and for all lung troubles and weaknesses she had great faith in the oil of the coco-nut freshly pressed.

The patient was put on this as diet. It solidifies into white butter, which must be freely eaten. And night and morning the patient must be thoroughly massaged, top to toe, with the oil. This treatment was tried with success on my sister, as on many others. And S. lived to be sixty-two—the doctor's verdict of one lung, notwithstanding. I dare say it was our mother's determination ("She *shall* live!" I can hear her say it now, when I was sick unto death myself some years later), as well as the coco-nut oil, working together with the Providence of God.

## *Chapter II*

### WORK—AND PREPARATION FOR MORE WORK

OUR parents were wonderful people, ahead of their generation as regards public matters, and both wise and understanding with their children. There is none of us who would not have chosen those two, and none other, to be our parents, if choice were ours.

Before the value of education had been realized in India, our mother had conceived a kindergarten system of her own, on which she taught all her children. The parents educated their daughters as if they were sons at a time when Indians generally married their daughters in infancy, and were of the opinion of the Pundits, who advised the early British Government that 'Women should not be educated, lest they refused to recognize and worship their husbands as their gods'.

Before the elder girls went to England their father himself taught them History, English Literature and Mathematics—at night when his day's work was over. And many an English cold-weather visitor or civilian friend would run in to help make our schoolroom a place of unique and joyous experiences.

By the time that the younger ones of us were

## WORK

of schoolable age, educational facilities had improved. But our mother, freed from her nursery, decided to carry out a plan which the parents had long had in mind.

They realized the value of Unity and Friendship among the different races of India, and were of opinion that friendship could best be formed in childhood.

If Hindu and Moslem, Jew, Parsee, Christian learnt and played together, they must find points of contact which would last just because of common memories, if the memories were made sufficiently vivid and abiding.

And so it would be with English and Indian also.

They were internationally-minded, those two, over half a century before the conception of a League of Nations.

And so it came to pass that when we migrated to Poona in 1876, our mother felt that the time had come to test her dreams and ideals. She had friends among all races, and she asked them to send their children to learn together at her kindergarten. There were seven children the first day, representing as many communities. The first day the Hindu edged away from the Moslem, the Parsee and European from both. But differences could not live in Mrs. Sorabji's atmosphere, and these seven units were the nucleus of the Victoria High School, which, in the course of thirty years,

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grew to be a model, visited by members of the Government, by Commissions on Education, and by students from all parts of India.

It covered all grades from the kindergarten to the University. It was unique not only in being international but in being co-educational, boys and girls learning together with entire success. That was another of Mrs. Sorabji's inspirations. She knew her India and the over-emphasis put on sex by custom in both the two great Indian races, Hindu and Moslem. And she felt that one way of combating this was to give boys and girls common interests so that their minds could dwell inter-relatively on something other than an increase of the population.

She has been proved right by many generations of the children who went to her schools.

She put her schools under Government inspection so as to maintain a fixed standard, but she was a missionary first and last, and felt she must share that which most she valued.

A Christian religious education was then freely given throughout the schools; and non-Christians, realizing Mrs. Sorabji's influence and the value of what she had to give in character-building, sent their children to the Victoria High School in preference to sending them to schools which served their several denominations.

In the Victoria High School English was the medium of instruction. But upon new needs

## WORK.

asserting themselves, it was found advisable to open a 'Feeder' to the School, where the child's own vernacular was the medium through which he learnt English.

And then came a further extension still. The mother-heart of the Founder could not bear to see the children of the street neglected. They could not very well be admitted to her other schools. Apart from other reasons they would not get there what would fit them for the lives they had to lead.

She started therefore two 'Poor' Schools, one for Hindus, one for Moslems—co-educational both as in the case of the High Schools, but entirely vernacular and free; and mainly primary with vocational facilities for individuals.<sup>1</sup>

In all this work Mrs. Sorabji's eldest daughter, with her daughters Lena and Susie, were her able and enthusiastic fellow-workers.

Their devotion was absolute—that in fact of authors and creators. They were born teachers like their mother, and added to approved methods of Western training the intelligence which directed that adaptability was our need in India, rather than imitation.

But, in order that what was founded might endure, something else was necessary.

Mrs. Sorabji solved the problem by first housing the Victoria High School in suitable buildings and

<sup>1</sup> One of the Poor Schools boys has become a member of the Indian Civil Service.

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then making a deed of gift of the property to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, so that that body corporate might secure the continuation of the work, after she and her daughters had relinquished personal control.

The years as they passed had brought inevitable changes. The family had scattered. Marriage, Government service, and their professions had claimed individuals. Lena and Susie alone had stayed beside their mother to watch over the destinies of her great adventure. This work had now fallen into two distinct branches—the English teaching section represented by the Victoria High School, and the vernacular section covering the Guzerathi 'Feeder' to the High School, and the Marathi and Urdu Poor Schools.

Lena supervised the English, and Susie the vernacular work; and the Founder was still at hand to bless and inspire.

But her interests were so many and the claims made upon her in directions additional to the schools so great, that as she had really been declining in health since 1894—when our father died—her children felt that it was best that the transfer should be made while she was still with us, and they persuaded her to retire to a little property she had at Nasik, her first married home. This she did, keeping alive this old home to which her children could come at will for their common refreshment.

## WORK

The transfer to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission was made in 1907, and Lena left for England on a long overdue holiday.

Susie decided to stay on at home in charge of the vernacular work, which was not transferred, and because the Parsee community had begged that at least one Sorabji might remain to carry on the educational traditions which three generations of Parsees had learnt to value.

### *Chapter III*

## ST. HELENA'S AND ST. JOHN'S SCHOOLS: HER VERY OWN CHILDREN

THE vernacular work comprised, as has been said, the Anglo-Vernacular Guzerathi 'Feeder' to the High School, established mainly for Parsee children, and the two 'Poor' Schools for Hindus and Moslems, located in a hired house near the Bazaar.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 S. went on a lecture tour to America upon the invitation of friends, and collected the funds with which she purchased a suitable and permanent home for the Poor Schools. (The story of how this great piece of work was accomplished happily remains to us in her own words as told to the Hon. Emily Kinnaird a year or so before S.'s death.)

There was therefore no difficulty about the 'Poor' Schools, or St. John's Schools as they were called, upon the transfer of the Victoria High School Property. But the Anglo-Vernacular Guzerathi School was held in the Victoria High School Compound, and a new home had to be found for it.

S. willingly shouldered this burden, and rented a house not far from the Victoria High School itself.

<sup>1</sup> In her time the Vernacular Poor Schools together served about 300 children; St. Helena's, 250.





**SUSIE SORABJI with her Lieutenant, NAJA KABRAJI (*left*)  
and some of her Staff. St. Helena's, Poona**

## ST. HELENA'S AND ST. JOHN'S SCHOOLS

After her death, when examining the title to this property, we found that by a strange coincidence S. had fallen upon the one house in Poona which had value for the children of their father. It had been the house of the Bishop of Bombay in 1842, and was our father's home when, after his conversion to Christianity, he lived and travelled with the Bishop.

It was this same house in which S. died in 1931.

How she eventually purchased it—that one-storied bungalow—standing in its large grounds stretching the width of a street—can also, happily, as with St. John's Schools, be told in her own words.

In course of time S. enlarged the original building, which is still the Principal's house, with a wing for resident pupils.

In the early days, when she rented it, it was very small indeed, and she and her lieutenant, a Zoroastrian Parsee girl Naja Kabraji, her beloved and faithful co-worker, lived in it, in the tiniest possible space, devoting the rest to the Guzerathi School, which was then a day-school only.

In a way which we are accustomed to call miraculous S. was led to push out farther and farther in regard to this School, till it grew into the magnificent educational work which as 'St. Helena's' serves not only the Parsee community but all Indian communities and nationalities—a second League of Nations venture, like her

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mother's Victoria High School, of which it is the lineal descendant, uniting at the moment, when Unity and Friendship, inter- racially, are our greatest need, Parsees, Moslems, all castes of Hindus, the new 'Nationalities'—Jains and Sikhs, with Arabian Khojas, Persians, Christian-Indians, and Jews—children representative of all parts of India, and of more than one shelf in life.

Within the area of influence of St. Helena's it is no longer possible for the Bengali of Hindu origin to talk of the Western Indian of Hindu origin as 'a foreigner'—while St. Helena's *esprit de corps* is finding a road 'towards democracy', which is based on something less unreal and fugitive than political slogans, and less destructive than hates and resentments.

The School is co-educational, as was the Victoria High School, and like that begins with the babies in the kindergarten, carrying them straight through, if they will, to the Indian University or to the examinations which fit them for entrance into universities across the seas; or preparing them for a home life and the fulfilment of domestic and social duties. The Nawab of Sachin, one of the youngest of the Indian princes, is a St. Helena's pupil, and went to sit on his *gadi* (throne) almost directly from St. Helena's.

In 1931 he behaved so wisely and courageously in a political crisis that *The Times of India* had a leader about him. 'It has been left to the



**SUSIE SORABJI with the Staff and Children of her 'Poor' Schools for girls. St. John's, Poona**

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youngest of the Princes', said the editorial, 'to show the way.' . . .

This was read to the Nawab's late colleagues in assembly at St. Helena's, where news of Old Students is shared and rejoiced over.

'Why, of course,' was their comment. 'Is he not a St. Helena's boy? What else could he have done!'

Girls, begums, and others, who ordinarily would have been secluded at an early age, are allowed to continue their education at St. Helena's—and if they must go into purdah after marriage, at least they carry with them that which enriches and which helps to 'right doctrine' about the need for fresh air, for health and sanitation. Torches can glow, and maybe because of the realization that they are the sole possibility of illumination, may burn the brighter in the darkness of seclusion behind shut doors.

S. was too wise to tear down ruthlessly the 'curtains' or other restrictions enjoined by custom and religion. She made acceptable what she had to give or teach to others; she made the ignorant and illiterate understand and desire the reforms which in her opinion and the opinion of those in touch with modern science and ways of health were desirable—and she knew that she might safely leave the rest to her pupils themselves.

Time and again, and in many directions, has wisdom been justified of Susie Sorabji.

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As has been indicated, some of her pupils are ruling their own zemindaries and estates, some are making good—both girls and boys—as doctors, professors, teachers, welfare workers. Many are overseas, and to the day of her death the members of her large spiritual family continued to correspond with her. Such letters! To one entrusted with the duty of looking through S.'s correspondence it was a revelation of Love, emptied of Self, greatly giving, greatly receiving.

They came alike with troubles and joys, with confessions of failure, with anxieties in temptation, with every kind of puzzlement and ache—whether of mind or body or soul. Joys and successes waited to be savoured, till she could know, and send her rejoicings.

And for her, nothing was too little to ignore, nothing too stupendous to tackle, nothing too remote to be as it were her own personal experience—true fellow-feeler and friend.

She kept no diary and no record of the answers sent to her many correspondents; but the masses of papers in her lumber-room have spoken for her.

All her life she had been too busy to sort and destroy papers. They had been accumulating since 1904, when St. Helena's took shape; and her instructions were that if the sister to whom she had entrusted the work of looking through her papers were not at hand, everything was to be destroyed, unread, upon her death.



**A STUDENT**, typical of the class who but for St. Helena's would have been married and secluded in infancy

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The sister in question was at hand, and we are thus able to learn something of what she meant to those who loved her. . . . And gaps are being filled up from day to day.

When she died, her pupils came from all parts of India to pay their last tribute to their friend. Many stayed on to comfort themselves with talk of her. 'This, and this, she did for me.'

'You ask', she wrote to one, 'how you are to make your life happy. Serve others. There is no happiness such as is to be found in loving and serving others.'

And she to whom this had been written came to tell of how she had taken many a wrong turning on the road to true happiness, till she followed that prescription.

But what was found in the lumber-room, those sad days of 1931, will come later. Now we turn back to the story of St. Helena's.

It grew, then, into a High School. Further visits to Canada and America gave to this School also its permanent home. S. bought the property which she had rented, retaining the bungalow as quarters for the Principal and Staff, and putting up a magnificent School House 'named for', as they say in America, Helen Gould (now Mrs. Finlay Sheppard), the main donor to the Purchase Fund. This sufficed for several years. But St. Helena's was a fast grower; it had barely been short-coated when its arms and legs were sprawl-



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ing, and a joyous parent turned undismayed to meet its further needs.

The Gould Building contained classrooms and dormitories for the resident girls. Further classrooms and a laboratory were needed. So S. went off on yet another lecture tour, to the far West in 1923-4. . . . This was made possible by sister Lena coming to the rescue from retirement in London, and taking complete charge of all the Poona work at St. Helena's and St. John's, while S. was out of India.

That double service of love brought its reward. The new building with a large Assembly and Drill Room, a Library, Science and Class-rooms, were the result of S.'s lectures, her mind at rest from anxiety about the conduct of the work at home. And how happy she was upon her return, inspiring architects and builders, hustling that odd and composite business machine with its army of coolies which any constructive work necessitates in India, forestalling and meeting obstacles—in order that the children might enjoy their new gift as soon as possible.

The extension was opened by Lady Sykes, wife of the Governor of Bombay. S. killed herself working to this end. But there it is, the first story of the lovely new building facing the Helen Gould. When completed it will be a replica of the Gould Building, with new dormitories for the resident boys, and a lovely Tower Room such as is known



**SUSIE SORABJI with the Staff and Children of her 'Poor' Schools for boys. St. John's, Poona**

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in the Gould to many English, Canadian, Indian, and American friends who used to visit S.

For the Tower Room was her guest-chamber. From its windows one had a view of the hills surrounding Poona and of the misty belt of trees and towers which lay between.

'As the hills stand round about . . . So . . .'

Many a guest must have whispered that to herself at bed-time looking across the moon-drenched garden; since at St. Helena's one has indeed a sense, appreciable to even the least mystical, of . . . 'The Lord standing by' . . .

The new building is to be called *The Sorabji* and completed 'in remembrance'.

Her Canadian and American friends are helping S.'s Indian friends and children to secure a memorial after her own heart.

As to curriculum—St. Helena's works for the Senior and Junior Cambridge Examinations, for the Trinity College London Music Examination, and for the Matriculation Examination of the Bombay University, together with all Presidency Examinations in Arts, Needlework, &c.

Both children and staff work joyously, determined on expressing the best that is in them. English is the medium of instruction. History, Literature, Geography, Science, Mathematics, Psychology are among the subjects which have to be taken as a matter of course, alongside of some second language. Sanskrit, Persian, Latin, French,

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are all taught as second languages; and the Founder's rule was that every child must also learn to read and write its own mother tongue.

But, in her time, the reason for St. Helena's was, first and last, something beyond the equipment requisite for an examination; and every child who came to St. Helena's had, with the consent of its parents, a Scripture period, when it came into contact, in whatever class it was, with the Principal herself.

This, to S., was her opportunity for giving the message, the giving of which was to her the reason for her existence, the lifting of life on to the highest plane for the children whom she would send forth into a world of varied strata, of conflicting ideals. Her pupils were given 'The Shield of the Spirit'; they would be safe.

No one was compelled or forced or indirectly approached. They were the non-Christian parents themselves, who, as in the case of her mother, would ask S. to give to her pupils the 'measuring rod' which she used for her own life.

And S. was certain and unafraid in all things essential.

She studied and understood the religions into which her non-Christian pupils were born; she knew the customs and superstitions of the various races represented in her schools; she mocked at none.

Beauty she saw, when beauty was to be seen, but



**SUSIE SORABJI with some of her little RAJAHS and NAWABS  
Resident Pupils. St. Helena's, Poona**

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she never made the misleading or blasphemous comparisons which even Christian missionaries have made or countenanced in these latter days, in the belief that they were being broad-minded.

Her Ideal was apart; but just because it was so, it was for all. In the end it was this very sincerity and unafraidness which made the appeal of *her*, as S. S. to those among whom she worked, as will be understood by those who know the religiously minded Indian.

Her staff was mainly trained by herself. She believed in the mechanical training which is available in India; but she had no hesitation in accepting a born teacher with possibilities, in preference to the goods turned out by the gross in some training class or college.

St. Helena's has a *personality*, and she demanded *that* in her teachers which would preserve and develop this personality not only in the body corporate, but in each individual member.

Nor were modern methods of education neglected. She kept in close touch with both America and England. Improvements conceived in the best Western schools were to be seen in action at St. Helena's. One instance of this is to be found in the illustrations on the walls of the Upper School—charts prepared by the pupils themselves of the dress or life of the period which covered the study for the term in History or Literature. They went farther, including their

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ideas of 'Puck' or 'Shylock' transplanted in India. *Transplanting*—that word, indeed, represents the principle underlying the work in all these schools. How often one has been faced with antagonisms in schools scattered over India; antagonisms created by ignorance of local inhibitions. . . . Quite good English stories about cows and butchers' shops, or of pigs among the clover, wounding the sensitiveness of Hindu or Moslem children. Or books describing English trees and wild flowers and English farm-yards, presented to children who could not connect their books with the life around them, and were thus hipped in a necessary training in observation.

S.'s teachers made their own kindergarten games and illustrations in the Vernacular Schools; even the sums were about the depth of Indian wells in their relationship to the bullock-run; or to the distance of an Indian pilgrim's journey, or as counted by the 'lowing of a cow' or the sound of the sheep-bells in the cowdust hour.

The interesting thing was that while ignoring the accepted methods of cramming, St. Helena's pupils yet made so creditable a show in public examinations. It gave heart to the true educationist who bemoaned but could not avoid the grinding down of intelligence in the examination mill, since no entrance door other than examinations in India, as in England, has yet been found to the wonder house of the professions and of the public services.



A GROUP OF ST. HELENA'S PUPILS  
They belong to Raj Estates, and will sit on the  
*gadi* on attaining majority



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In 1931, after their Principal had left them, St. Helena's pupils decided to offer to her memory their work for the year's public examinations which at first they had felt too heart-broken to face.

'We'll not fail her, and St. Helena's,' they said, buckling to. And when lists were out, it was found that St. Helena's had secured cent. per cent. results not only in the Matriculation Examination of the Bombay University, but in the Senior Cambridge and Trinity College London Music Examinations; tests shared by students both sides of the water. While in the Needlework Examination held for the Presidency it was St. Helena's which took all the eight prizes.

It seems allowable to boast thus of victories with which the recorder has had nothing to do—and the boasting is prompted by the desire to emphasize not alone the success (which is admirable in its way), but the exquisite tender devotion to their friend, and the *esprit de corps*, the team spirit which India finds it so difficult to acquire and practice. S. was emphatic about the necessity for this latter. The Girl Guides and Scouts and Blue Bird Companies, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and the Junior Red Cross (which she was organizing when she died), all testify to this.

The Girl Guides captain is a Parsee, her lieutenants include a Persian begum; and the Division is representative of Parsees, Hindus, Jews, and Moslems.

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The officers dress in khaki-coloured saris, and the company in the usual uniform.

One has to live and work in Northern India to appreciate the value of that smartly turned-out division. S. had visited the Baden-Powells in their home in England, and had brought back fresh inspiration to her Indian Guides from that happy memory and interchange of mutual appreciation.

She was Regent of the Kaisar-i-Hind, the only Indian Chapter of the Canadian Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. This international coupling was very near her heart, and was the precursor of a touching incident.

To Lord and Lady Willingdon S. was deeply attached. She had known them in the days of their earliest Indian connexion, and she rejoiced greatly that they were to return to Delhi.

She had written a letter to Lady Willingdon which was to have been posted to Aden to greet her as she entered Indian waters. After S.'s death this letter was found in her desk ready for dispatch. It was then too late for Aden—so the Governor of the Presidency was asked if the Guides and Daughters of the Empire might be given an opportunity of delivery to Lady Willingdon herself in Bombay.

Permission was graciously granted, and Captain Mehra Patel took her company and the letter to Bombay. The Guides were to be inspected on the departure platform at the railway station, before



**SUSIE SORABJI, Regent of the Kaisir-i-Hind Chapter, Canadian Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, with some members of her Chapter**

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Their Excellencies left for Delhi. With the courtesy with which India is familiar, St. Helena's deputation was given more than a perfunctory inspection, the letter was delivered, and Lady Willingdon, telling the Governor of Bombay and Lady Sykes about her own connexion with the Canadian Order, said to Captain Mehra 'Could they give the motto of the Daughters of the Empire?' And thus it happened that the Viceroy and Lady Willingdon left for their new and difficult work in India, with the Canadian cry—'One Flag, One Throne, One Empire!' ringing in their ears. How this would have pleased that loyal soul! The Empire meant a great deal to her. Human beings are apt to fall into two main groups—unifiers and disintegraters. Acquaintance with Women's Committees will confirm this surmise. S. was a Unifier, and the One Family of Empire appealed to her as suggesting a potent reason for holding together, and rubbing out differences.

Her loyalties were always the high lights in her temperament. . . . Loyalty to God, and King, and Country; to Friends and Family.

What a heartening champion she was when you were not appreciated as she believed you should be! Those she loved were never in the wrong, if the outside world accused or criticized.

It was an early Victorian assumption which had its uses: for those most worth saving tried to live up to her over-estimate.

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'Many a man', said Jowett of Balliol, 'by being thought better than he is, has become better.'

It was true of many of whom she thought maybe too highly. But the aggressive or obverse side of Loyalty was hers, too, in no uncertain measure.

She saw straight through shams and slogans, and was outspoken in challenge when great issues were at stake. In the political crisis in India she early realized the danger of Gandhi's appeal to the young and to those immature in judgement. She knew India, and that the call to sacrifice themselves for their country stirred in the blood of Hindu women the same impulse which had resulted in Suttee.

She could not bear the waste and bad manners (to put it at its least offensive) incidental to picketing; she was genuinely angry that Indian women should be exposed to the hazards of hooliganism, and habituated to love the limelight, when there was so much work for India to be done in quiet places.

The record of acts of violence and terrorism in 1930 tore her heart; and she made a pathetic appeal to Gandhi himself, telling him how his cries of 'no violence' were being interpreted by his disciples, and begging him to use his leadership in the pursuit of Peace unfeigned. She also urged him to confess Christ, if (as at one time he led many to think was the case) he did indeed believe in his heart that Christ was God.



**ST. HELENA'S GUIDES** with their **CAPTAIN, MISS MEHRA PATEL,** and **LIEUTENANTS**  
They represent many races—all Indian. One Lieutenant is a Persian Begum

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Gandhi never answered that letter.

That St. Helena's pupils were incorruptible in loyalty he must have known, for more than one woman disciple renounced terrorism when she came in contact with St. Helena's 'constructive' influence; and the Scouts and Guides of St. Helena's dealt on their own initiative with such external Scouts and Guides as trampled on the King's Flag. How humorously she solved for her pupils and friends the subtle casuistries, which were used to their own advantage by the lawbreakers—confusing Patriotism with Revolution!

She helped her children to be proud of their birthright without jealousy of those outside their own particular group; she made them anxious to share and exchange the 'gifts' of their inheritance, in the realization that we existed as separate races in order that each might devote its separate and individual gift to the Glory of God, and the service of all things created.

That is how it came to pass that notwithstanding the firm stand she took as to Congress methods and propaganda, when one division of Gandhi's 'National' Scouts at Poona was found eager to develop on scout lines apart from politics, she gave them a rally ground in her Vernacular Schools compound trusting them not to betray her confidence. And to this day they have proved worthy of trust.

She had a genius for organization. As a public

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speaker she used the graphic and material word, adding thereto the rare charm which carries straight to the heart and intelligence. . . . Both gifts were put at the disposal of many causes.

For years she paid regular visits to the Bhopal State at the request of the late Begum Sahiba, in order to help and advise about the education of women and children in that leading Moslem State, and her influence in other parts of India is discernible.

‘There was no work for women and children in Poona which did not owe its inspiration to her,’ said the members of the Local Council of Women at their memorial meeting, upon her death.

Women of all races would come to her in times of difficulty certain of finding the busiest woman in Poona at leisure to listen and help. . . . She would put aside her important work as if the trouble of another were too paramount and urgent to compete with anything concerning herself. . . . And then at night the balance was restored—time stolen from sleep.

What inroads she made upon ‘the silence of the sleep time’! and not only for work; her greatest demands were for prayer.

On her death-bed she had said to her doctor, to assure him that she was quite better, only tired . . . ‘I’d like to sleep from seven in the evening to seven in the morning.’ Some of those who heard knew the pathos which lay behind that poor little wish.





**SOME OF ST. HELENA'S GUIDES—Parsees, Moslems, Hindus, Jews  
with their Parsee and Persian Begum officers**

## ST. HELENA'S AND ST. JOHN'S SCHOOLS

She would throw herself into the caller's trouble, going with her herself maybe, to carry through some difficult bit of business, or setting out forthwith to acquire the information, or get into touch with the contacts needed. She held the hand of her friend and stood by her, identifying herself with her, till the calamity, whatever it might be, was over-past.

With the mentally defective she had a special gift. A poor lad—one of the cases undertaken within a few days of her last illness—told upon his recovery of how it was she who, when the uncontrollable thing took him by the throat, persuaded him to go with her to a place where he would be cured. And he says that all the time in the Mental Hospital it was remembrance of her words, and realization of the nearness of her spirit, which helped him to the self-control which has eventually proved his salvation.

It must have been the emptying of Self which gave her wisdom in these matters. She lined her heart with thought of God and of His power to heal—and the rest followed. . . . How else could one account for her discovery of the effective appeal in any particular case—for her assurance, for instance, that one such patient could be led back to the normal by cultivation of an early gift for writing verse? But so it was, and not the least touching tribute paid to her 'passing' was the poem written by this once mentally deranged friend.

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The Mental Hospital, the Leper Asylum, the Poor House, the Widows' Home, the Soldiers' Home, the Children's and General Diseases Hospitals, the Jail—she visited these regularly, besides attending in every detail to her own three schools, teaching, supervising; keeping in close touch with students past and present, and with a large circle of friends in three continents, as well as with her family, to whom, when in India, she wrote daily letters.

Unsparring of herself and generous in her thoughts and opinions of others, she was not only generous but reckless in the giving of her substance. The occasions when she was imposed upon were not few, but they left her unrepentant. She took it as a great joke that she had been so neatly 'fooled'—'poor things!' she would say. She knew how it must feel to be on the rocks for want of money to meet the day's obligations, for she was so often there herself!

But experiences, which would have left most of us cautious and parsimonious only enriched the springs of her sympathy, and swept her to the danger zone again at the very next chance.

With no training in business, she carried through big business adventures connected with her schools. It was only after her death that we realized how often she was in real anxiety about finance.

Not the least admirable of her qualities was the ability to keep silence about the worries of her daily life—except to God.

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And this is the more praiseworthy in that she was not self-sufficing. She was by nature terribly dependent upon her family, and upon *expression*—both in giving and getting. She must have ached to share many a fugitive danger or misunderstanding when it was at its worst. . . . But when we were far away, she never uttered for fear of adding to our anxieties, and when—far too seldom, alas! for work had scattered the family—we were at hand, she was overflowing with happiness, all worries forgotten, counting the seconds that we could be together, and unable to make enough of us, for her satisfaction.

'Are any of my own with me?' she asked in a moment of consciousness, when she lay dying. And being reassured about this, turned over with a sigh of contentment—'How nice!' . . . Memories of her press upon one's heart.

'Tell about her parties,' says a friend overseas, 'and how St. Helena's was always ready to help those in need.' She loved entertaining. Her parties, as to the nurses on Empire Day or to the school-children or her friends, were great occasions—beautifully arranged always, lovely surprises every time.

Often there would be a fairy-story play (not infrequently written by herself), a clever little step-dance, or an operetta. One has met people in Canada and America who talk, for instance when referring to St. Helena's, of 'The Light Drill' as

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one of their most exquisite memories of India. This was really only physical exercises done by Indian girls in flowing draperies, holding coloured lights in their hands; but her sense of form and colour and beauty had made them unique.

Many a visitor to India has had his first contact with the real India through her. And if the visitor were a lecturer, or had some special gift to impart—as Mr. Stanley Jones, or Mr. Hickson of the Church of England Healing Mission—she would see to it that their message reached the widest circle possible, gathering together her friends and neighbours on her lovely roof-terrace or in the big School Assembly Room; and taking the invitation in person to the Orthodox, as required by Indian etiquette.

To her purdah parties came many who left their seclusion for no one else; and she delighted in piling up delight for them to carry back behind their shut doors. She knew the value of memory, of the pictures you could turn your head to look upon, when the curtain had fallen.

She loved all lovely things. She loved lovely clothes. 'Do let me listen,' said a Purdahnashin once in my hearing—'She is saying I am beautiful and that my clothes are beautiful. There is no one in the Zenana with me, except my mother-in-law, and from her I hear no word of praise. Oh! her words are to me like attar of roses. I want to sniff them up. Am I really beautiful?'

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Then she sighed—'Yet—what use? Still am I son-less. And the owner is displeased.' . . .

Well did S. know that heartache in her friends of the Zenana, and the value of distraction. She herself dressed exquisitely, and by her example encouraged her pupils to express in fit combinations of texture and colour that individuality which is otherwise denied in national costumes which are *de rigueur* and date back to the seventh century or earlier.

'St. Helena's was always ready to help those in need'—yes—that is true. It is a tradition of St. Helena's. The children might be raising money for one of their regular School charities; but that was not allowed to be an excuse for refusing appeals for help from outside.

The teaching behind that had wide intention, in a country where circumstance places us in pad-locked enclosures.

And so old Time drove his caravan through the years—beloved years all of them to her.

She seldom left Poona, and never took a holiday, facing the heat summer after summer in order to get abreast of the personal concerns which had stood aside in term time, for the concerns of other people. Occasions when she travelled were always special, to attend a conference, to see a sick friend or sick member of her family, to meet an incoming boat, always something 'extra-regarding'.

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It was definite school business which took her to Europe or the far West; and as she was a wretched traveller, whether by land or sea, every journey was an act of Faith and Courage.

Of her co-worker, Naja Kabraji, something should here be said. Naja and her brother and sisters, belonging to a leading Parsee family of Bombay, had been in the Victoria High School from infancy. Their mother was dead and school was home to them, their remaining parent living in the north of India and not easily accessible.

Between S. and Naja a great love and friendship burgeoned with the years. And when S. branched out from the Victoria High School in charge of the vernacular work, Naja went with her.

Together they faced all the difficulties of the foundation of St. Helena's, and together they rejoiced in its successes. The relationship between these two was at the same time and as it were reciprocally both filial and maternal. S. cared for and watched over Naja as if she were her child; and Naja protected and scolded, tended and loved her through her many illnesses, and was a tender loyal soul, making up to S. for the isolation from her own large family. N. shared S.'s sense of fun, and her enthusiasm for St. Helena's; the 'cords of love' were secure indeed. In one thing alone during her lifetime God had not granted S. her desire. She had longed for Naja to share her own deepest thoughts and her own living aids in the

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inner life of the Soul. But she could not (nor would) force what God alone could reveal. . . . And immediately after her death, this wish also was fulfilled. And the two friends are now bound in a common allegiance at all points.

As to S.'s illnesses—alas! how many they were! Her heart was always unreliable. One lung had been damaged since she was sixteen. Her eyes had been wrongly treated in quite good faith, in 1908, by a doctor in Poona; and she hovered close upon a month between life and death, eyes and head in an agony of pain. When she could be moved it was for treatment by the painful process of tapping the eye-ball. The tapping had to be continued through months. She would face her week's work at Poona, and run up to Bombay at week-ends for the tapping.

I can never forget my one sight of her at that time. It was when she was supposed to have recovered—holding the score to her dim eyes, as she led the School in some joyous madrigal. . . .

Later, eye specialists in Calcutta and London gave her some measure of relief, and contributed to her last happy decade of eyesight. These great surgeons, however, as did her doctors, always testified to the Faith which had really wrought her cure.

Fever, pneumonia, a major operation in 1926, when her heart almost gave out—how many things she faced and came through triumphantly.



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... 'Thank you,' said one of her sisters, after one of these hazards, to her beloved Zoroastrian physician at Poona, Dr. Coyajee, who kept tender watch over her—'Thank you for taking such care of her. Thank you for pulling her through.'

'God is great!' was his reply as always. 'It was her own faith in God which cured her.'

No record of S. could be complete without mention of her dogs—mongrels most of them. She loved her dogs, and cared for them as if they were human beings. Two of them successively had special 'stations' in her room; and if they were ill she would recklessly use for them her best linen and softest blankets. She has often sat up all night with a sick dog, or taken him to the veterinary surgeon, rejecting a less-loved deputy, that she might herself encourage her dog-friend through the necessary attention which made her wince as if she were in truth the patient. When Togo, one of her mongrels, lost his tongue, she kept a special servant for him, so that he might be fed like a child and given the liquid which his poor truncated tongue could not lap up.

Her dogs accompanied her on her official inspections of the classrooms in her schools, coming on duty with serious regularity; and in her latter days when she had to be carried up and down stairs, they assumed the dignity of men-on-guard—no capers, an armed escort!

'There will be five of them to leap at me in



SUSIE SORABJI and her friend  
and helper NAJA KABRAJI  
1908

#### ST. HELENA'S AND ST. JOHN'S SCHOOLS

welcome', she said to Naja one day about the dogs whom she loved and who had died, 'when I, too, pass over.'

'Kim' and 'Fluffy' were her last little knights; and none of us who saw Kim's face as he lay beside her death-bed, or looked for her in and out of every room in the house, or saw the real tears which he cried when later on we were packing, and her clothes were being handled, can ever doubt the understanding heart of a dog.

. . .

#### POSTSCRIPT

Oct. 26, 1932

News has been received to-day by Air Mail that the citizens of Poona have, with the co-operation of the Legislative Assembly of the Province, re-named the main road which passes St. Helena's School. They have called it *Susie Sorabji Road*, as a tribute to the public services of a woman citizen.

Their Excellencies the Viceroy and Lady Willingdon opened the *Susie Sorabji Road* by driving through it upon their visit to Poona, October 15, thus graciously putting their *imprimatur* upon a rare act of commemoration.

## Chapter IV

IN JOURNEYINGS OFTEN . . . IN PERILS . . . IN  
LABOUR AND TRAVAIL . . . IN WATCHINGS  
OFTEN. . . . 2 *Cor.* xi. 26.

REFERENCE has been made to an account in S.'s own words of her lecture tours in America, and how she was enabled by God to provide both St. John's and St. Helena's Schools with the wonderful property and buildings of their foundation. Not even her own family had been told of what was in effect a Calvary of Pain. We knew she was a wretched traveller, we knew of her delicacy of health; we had not imagined the act of courage involved in facing the Unknown, in the fear of failure, in the isolation and privation which were hers—partly unhelpably in the circumstances, partly because those who had led her to believe in an organized programme had omitted to take any steps whatever in the matter. On her first visit in 1904, she did not even know where to drive upon landing; and her bankers had not sent her American advices to await her arrival. She knew not a soul in New York; but bravely adventured Wall Street, and was able to make arrangements which sufficed till the cable established contacts.

One knows the difficulties of touring in a

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strange vast country, even when under the protection of a lecture agent. She had not even heard of such people, and when the friend who had invited her to America, and had promised to have her programme ready against her coming, failed her, she had to feel after the right procedure, groping in the darkness of her ignorance, through many and diverse ways. . . . The first was through the editor of the *Christian Herald*. That paper was pledged to send a certain amount of money, yearly, to Pundita Ramabai's work at Khedgaon. The editor suggested that the *Christian Herald* should arrange a tour for S., and that in return she should speak for both Ramabai's and her own schools.

When she found that donors ear-marked *all* the money given in consequence of her addresses for her own work, she refused to touch their gifts; and she felt it unfair to the original object to hold the *Christian Herald* to its contract.

With high-hearted courage she sought another path to her goal. Eventually two personal friends materialized, who formed a committee and arranged an independent programme for S. She speaks with glowing affection of these two—Miss Martin and Mr. Hutton. Miss Martin she calls her 'Guardian Angel', and tells of how this beloved friend, who was herself too great an invalid to accompany S., would send a letter to await and greet her at each stage of her journeyings,

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travelling with her thus in spirit, and upholding her with her prayers.

It was for the 'Poor Schools' that S. made her first tour. The schools were then held in a hired house. She had set herself the task of providing them with a building and home of their own. But before the amount required for the purchase of a property she had in view as suitable in every way was collected, she fell ill, and the doctors said that she must not face the winter in America.

In this, as was her habit in all difficulty, she just 'threw herself on God, and seeking' she 'found Him'. The tale in her own words is of a soul laid bare; one is treading on holy ground. So simple was her Faith that, opening her Bible, she would find a text which was to her, as the Voice of a Friend, Living, All-Powerful, All-Loving. Walls fell down, and barriers slid away; physical disability simply did not exist. Whether the 'Scripture' given her were Hebraic, or the recorded words of Christ, whether connected with a story at which Science and the new criticism would scoff—these things never troubled her. To the end of her days she held her Faith in childhood's simplicity, unquestioning, undoubting. . . . When she prayed, it was to her as living a conversation as if she were talking to a flesh-and-blood friend whom she could see. She knew the secret of mystic Communion; she listened, as well

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as 'talked'. She was able to hold herself still in the presence of God.

So she gently refused to follow the advice of the doctors; her passage could not be taken back to India (to which country indeed she was aching to return) until she had fulfilled her mission. God would provide a way of fulfilment. And the record tells of how God did indeed reward her trust.

Before winter set in, the entire and exact amount needed was sent to her, miraculously as it were, coming in instalments from differing and unexpected directions. So, St. John's Schools, as they now began to be called, were safe.

But she was to be tested farther. Upon her return to Poona she found that the necessity already described in this story had arisen, for a separate establishment for the Anglo-Vernacular work. A suitable house close by the Victoria High School came into the market, and S. was compelled to secure this by borrowing the necessary moneys, there was no other way—a course particularly distasteful to her.

In her ignorance of business, she was put upon, and in her rectitude she refused to take advantage of the discovery that this had been so, once the preliminaries to the mortgage were settled. She tells of a vision, in which she was bade go forward, and of the peace of mind which followed obedience.

The new property consisted of a bungalow in

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large grounds. At the moment of purchase, the bungalow was sufficient for both school and residence, if S. cramped her own needs. This she joyfully did; but the school expanded so rapidly that a second visit to America was peremptory; and nothing daunted she went forth, trusting in God, as if led by the hand. . . . On her way through London she had to face her first blow—the news of the death of her dear friend, Miss Martin. But other friends took over Miss Martin's office; and a programme was in due course arranged.

From America she went to Canada, addressing enthusiastic meetings everywhere, often speaking three times a day, making everywhere the friendships which were so utterly dear to her heart, and leaving behind her a real awakening to the best that was in them, whether those who responded to the call of Love were to be found in schools and colleges or in the clubs and luncheon-parties of fashion.

But even the physically strong cannot give all of themselves in the way she did without paying for it. The breakdown which followed was not surprising. And on this occasion eyes, as well as lungs and strength, failed her. . . .

And then—in the fullness of God's time—the miracle happened. Helen Gould, now Mrs. Finlay Sheppard, who had been a dear friend since the earliest days in America, heard, incidentally, of S.'s need for her Schools, and of her brave



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refusal to fail her children, cost what it might to herself. She sent her secretary one morning to where S. lay ill at her hotel, with the wonderful message, 'You have never told Miss Gould that you needed money for your School. She has just heard this, and sends a blank cheque which I am to fill in upon your direction.'

Thus, instantly, was the mountain of difficulty beaten down into a joyful highway, leading straight home!

We can imagine S.'s happiness. She rushed to the telephone and asked her committee to take her passage and cable to her mother of the generosity of Miss Gould, and the consequent success of her mission.

To this initial gift a strange chance led Miss Gould to add yet more. In 1906 Mrs. Noble, an American commended to S. by common friends, came to stay at St. Helena's, in the little guest-room, at the bungalow. She loved her visit. On her way back to America, Mrs. Noble met Miss Gould in Jerusalem—a first visit to Palestine for both. Miss Gould, who had continued to take an interest in S.'s work, had asked for a photograph of the School; and S.'s letter and the photograph forwarded from America happened to arrive one morning while Miss Gould and Mrs. Noble were together.

'Why,' said Mrs. Noble, 'that is Miss Sorabji's School. I've just been there.'

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'But,' said Miss Gould, 'why is it a bungalow, and not a suitable school building?' Mrs. Noble was able to explain just why—the unforeseen expansion, for which in announcing her needs in America, S. had not accounted.

Once more Miss Gould's love and generosity came to the help of her friend in work in which she so thoroughly believed. And the Gould Building at St. Helena's, with its classrooms, its large Assembly Hall, its dormitory, and the wonderful Tower Room, remains to witness, as S. writes, to the glory of a prayer-hearing God, and the goodness of His 'appointed ones'.

'In each step that we took', writes S., 'we prayed that every stone of the building might be to the Glory of God.' And not Christians alone, but every non-Christian child in the School prayed that prayer.

To one who had the privilege of spending five months at St. Helena's after S.'s death two facts were primarily apparent throughout the School—the belief in a God who heard and answered prayer; the urge to give God the glory for all achievement, all success. . . . And in reading her personal record of the evolution of St. Helena's, one realizes how simply this belief and recognition have come to pass.

To and fro she went during building operations, consulting the architects in Bombay, encouraging the workmen at Poona, checking the estimates. . . .

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As the building grew the Hindu workmen claimed the performance of ancient building rites . . . as for instance about the main entrance door. This, they said, must be 'inducted' with prayers, the breaking of coco-nuts, the anointing with red sandal-wood paste, with gifts of fruit and flowers and money.

S. delighted in all things picturesque, and joined the workmen at their ceremony; inviting them in return to join in a Christian 'blessing of the door'.

And, as the representatives of every Indian religion in her School crowded with the workmen round the unfinished threshold, she prayed that that main entrance door might prove to be the Door to the Fold for all the children who attended the School; and that the School itself might be for each one a ladder between Earth and Heaven; finally, that the flag of goodwill, floating in the Light of the Sun of Righteousness, might always fly from the beautiful tower which lifted its head above the buildings round about—a flag-post for the countryside.

Fling out the banner, let it float  
Skyward and seaward, far and wide;  
The Sun shall light its shining folds,  
The Cross on which the Saviour died—

sang the children. . . .

Her record tells next of a time of stress under which the strongest must have wavered. The

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direction of the building, the attention to details of finance and such, the necessities of all three Schools organizing, teaching—should not have fallen upon one person alone. . . . But there it was! She had no committee, and her family was then no longer at hand to help. 'In my need, God gave me', she writes, 'a wonderful memory. Though I had no experience or knowledge, I was enabled to remember all that the contractor and architects told me in our interviews as to estimates, quantities, &c. In the two hours that I was in Bombay, the only time which could be spared from the work of the Schools, I was helped to pack their instructions into my mind, and carry them safely to the workmen, so that the Building of St. Helena's was completed.' (And so well completed indeed that it did not need substantial repairs till thirteen years later, the year that S. died.)

S. puts that great achievement into a simple statement in her record.

'Lord Sydenham, then Governor of Bombay, opened the Gould Building on October 3, 1908, and on October 8 I went down with terrible fever.'

Later, she writes: 'My illness lasted eight months; I would cry aloud, "Take my eyes out,"—the pain was so terrible.'

One can never understand why she had to go through this trial, except, maybe, to prove to the many to whom she was a leader and example that pain and the threat of blindness, the worst of

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disabilities to such as she, could be faced and conquered.

She suffered agonies, hovering between brain fever and total blindness; and all this aggravated by the wrong diagnosis and treatment, adventured in perfect good faith by a doctor with a great reputation.

After the fever was got under, blindness seemed inevitable. She tells of how her sister Lena came to her aid, and of how her aged mother, then in retirement at Nasik, while herself awaiting an operation for cataract, came and carried her off to Bombay to see Colonel Kilkelly, the great oculist; of her demand, 'Give my child back her eyes'; of Colonel Kilkelly's response to one whom he so greatly respected, and of his wonderful skill and care, while at night she would walk up and down her room fighting the thought of blindness.

Treatment was a long and painful business; eleven injections, each one a fresh torture. . . . 'It was a life of agony,' writes S. 'From time to time I was comforted by the words of the hymn—

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

But I could not remember where the lines came from.'

Then one day a friend told her the story of how

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George Matheson had come to write them. 'He was threatened with blindness, and nothing could be done. He went blind, his college days were over, would he get a charge? He wrote to the girl to whom he was engaged, and offered to release her. She accepted the offer, saying that she could not marry a blind man. It was then broken-hearted as well as sightless that he wrote—

O Love that wilt not let me go.

I understood now how it was that his words so comforted me. These lines and a little luminous cross which I could not see, but which I could feel with my fingers, became for me the concrete example of what I was going through.'

Her friend Naja Kabraji visited her at week-ends and was a great solace, reading to her, and bringing her the latest news of her beloved Schools.

When she had been some time under treatment in Bombay the Medical Conference met in that city, and she was able to have the further advice of consultants from other parts of India. But it was a painful and wearisome 'pilgrimage' towards an unsure end.

One day when patience had worn almost threadbare, she tells of how she took up *Daily Light*, one of her morning books of devotion; and tried to read the verses for the day. She thought she saw—

'I will make thee fruitful in the land of thy exile',

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and 'I will give thee the treasures of darkness.' Her sister Mary coming in just then, was asked to confirm what S. thought she had seen.

But these words were not on the page.

'It is wonderful that I should have seen them,' said S. And maybe, just because it was not there concretely, that message brought the greater comfort to her mystical yearnings. That, and a message from her doctor sister, 'Hold on to your faith: even a film can vanish at the onslaught of Faith', were her 'strong tower' at the time.

'My memory became abnormal,' she adds. 'Naja would read me Shakespeare and Tennyson, and I could repeat pages with perfect ease.' . . . In course of time she got back to her Schools at Poona; but the pain and disability lasted a year.

'I could not do without a bandage for more than ten minutes,' says the record. Her real healing came as she loved it to have come. . . . 'By 1913 our mother had died. Mr. Arnold, Chaplain of St. Paul's, Poona, was preaching on divine unction. I said to Mrs. Arnold, "Do you think Mr. Arnold would anoint my eyes?"' So, it was arranged, and he sent for the little service used by Bishop Pakenham Walsh. I went to Holy Communion, and Mr. Arnold anointed my eyes. I came home and rested; as I lay on the veranda the first thing I said was, 'Is there a light blue wash, above the dark blue, on the wall of the house opposite?' It was so.

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‘It was my custom to take my little children to Church with me and to let a small boy find my place in the hymn-book—that day I found it myself. On coming back from Church, I told Naja of these incidents. She said, “I want more proof; go to Sunday School in the middle of the day without a shade.” I had never been able to keep my eyelids open in a bright light; but I went out into the mid-day sunlight that day with both eyes wide open.

‘This was April 13, 1913—and the message for the day in my reading was, “I will perfect that which concerneth thee.”

‘I felt that I was going to see permanently. I could now use a magnifying glass; and could do all the text-work that was required of me for my teaching.’

In 1923 St. Helena’s had again outgrown its accommodation, and she went to America for the third time, her sister Lena coming from London to take her place at St. Helena’s.

S. was away nine months, and visited Sir Richard Cruise in London for examination of her eyes. She tells of how at first he could do nothing for her, as he thought her not strong enough for an operation; and her eyes were not in fit condition for glasses. Next day she happened to attend the Healing Service at Mr. Mailard’s Church.

‘Light seemed to be streaming in as we went





**THE SCIENCE BLOCK, A GIFT FROM CANADA**  
opened 1st September 1930. It is to be completed (a second story and tower) by  
Canadian Daughters of the Empire, and her Indian friends and pupils, to the memory  
of Susie Sorabji

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up to the seats set apart', she writes, 'for those who needed blessing or healing. Mr. Mailard anointed my eyes, and prayed for me, that I might go back to my work fully restored.'

S. immediately returned to Sir Richard, who found so marvellous a change that he was able to prescribe glasses; and she saw with comfort and sufficiency till her death, eight years later.

Upon the last visit to America, she arrived at a further stage still in her life of Faith. She was able to return to India, although she had not accomplished the task which she had set herself. She writes:

'The time had now come for me to leave America, and though I had not got the money needed, I was not disappointed and despondent, but came back to my work full of hope.' . . . Then—

'But, I was to be further tested; my health failed again.'

This time a major internal operation was found essential, and she went to Miraj, where Dr. Wanless brought her safely through the greatest of hazards.

Back from hospital, she was greeted with the news of a small legacy left her for her work by Miss Angela Grote. She took this as an indication that she was to go ahead with the Science Block, so badly needed for the Upper School.

The foundation-stone was laid on July 26, 1929,

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by Lady Sykes, wife of the then Governor of Bombay. 'On the stone', writes S., 'are the words: "To the Glory of God, and in the cause of Education, this Building is erected by the Friends and Well-wishers of St. Helena's."'

'As Lady Sykes laid the stone we released three spotless white pigeons that fluttered upward and about her, and then disappeared into the dim distance—a symbol they seemed to me, of the spiritual forces that we set in motion when we educate the children in our School.' . . .

In 1930 the block was completed and opened by Lady Sykes, not long before S.'s death.

## *Chapter V*

### ... AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING ...

THE end came unexpectedly. She was happy as usual, and well, and full of work on Monday the 10th of March, 1931. She was taking her Matriculation Class in English when she had a shivering fit, and was compelled to go to bed with a mounting temperature.

She never left her bed. The Doctors diagnosed pneumonia and complications, which, however, had been got under; in the end it was her heart which failed. She fell asleep painlessly, her last look for her friend and fellow-worker. Most of the time through her last illness she was unconscious. She was spared the sadness of farewells, and the wrench of being torn asunder from her children and the work which she loved so well.

We were told that the last missionary address which she gave in Poona was to a group of workers at their convention, and that she took for her text, 'And all her children shall be taught of the Lord', urging her audience to care-free-ness about the work which they might not be able to see through to the end. . . . Alike unforgettable were her last addresses to other Women's Organizations. Those closing days seemed prophetic.

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For our comfort our doctor sister, Alice Pennell, was able to be with her from March 12 to the end; and could help to see that everything was done which love and skill could devise.

And so she passed . . . 'Triumphant over Death, and chance, and thee, O Time!'

The gates were wide when she lay for the last time in her flower-strewn room in the bungalow; and they came unbidden, her friends and children to empty their hearts of love at those still feet; to weep a little; to speed her on that unknown journey, which for so many she had robbed of fear in the days that were gone.

Silently and softly they came, lingering beside her, softly and silently 'to remember'. . . Parsees and Moslems, Hindus and Jews, Persians and Arabs, Christian and Unbeliever, Western and Eastern, Princes and Commoners, old and young, great and lowly, trades-folk and servants. . . The street beggars—the blind, the halt, the maimed—they came too. How good she had been to them, and not only in the bestowal of alms.

'There is not a street in this city', said a Parsee girl, 'which is not mourning for her.'

Only a few days before she died, she was shopping in Main Street, and outside the druggist's passed an old beggar woman who sat by the roadside complaining, talking aloud to herself in her vernacular.

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‘What shall I do with this God—a God who leaves me to starve!’ said she.

S. turned back to her, and putting a generous coin in her hand, said, ‘He has not forgotten, He has sent you that!’

The night of vigil, Sunday the 15th of March, was kept, at their request, by her non-Christian teachers and elder pupils—dividing the watches, so that even as on the Zoroastrian altar, the flame of prayer and remembrance was lovingly tended, nor allowed to die out. St. Helena’s Scouts and the National Scouts claimed the privilege of escort at the funeral. The first part of the burial service of the Church of England was read at her Church, St. Paul’s, close by the School, in the presence of an overflowing congregation representative of all races and religions. There were no dividing lines that day . . . and the Priest conducting the Service spoke afterwards of the thrill of reading the beautiful opening sentences ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life’ . . . to mourners such as these.

S. was buried in her mother’s grave in the old cemetery at Poona, where her father also lies. Alice Pennell was the only one of S.’s family who was able to be present; but her beautiful and poignant descriptions of the scenes at the house, the Church, the cemetery, are for the depths of the hearts of those to whom she wrote, and of that great company of the loving ones who stood beside the newly-opened grave.

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Many memorial meetings and services were held in Poona. At the service at St. Matthew's, the C.M.S. Church, the Sermon was preached by Father Williams of the Cowley Mission, from 1 Thess. i, ii, and iii.

He applied the words of his text to Susie Sorabji. He said: 'Faith means being confident about the things which one hopes for, and being certain about the realities which one believes, but does not see. So it was with Miss Susie Sorabji. A simple, vivid faith in Jesus her living and loving Saviour, present here and now and able to help and to save—that was the foundation of her personality and her work. And faith was kept glowing warm by frequent prayer and regular sacramental communion, a loving, trusting intercourse with and dependence on an unseen Divine Friend. So she lived in the atmosphere of heaven; she could speak of spiritual things naturally and simply, without awkwardness or self-consciousness, because they were real to her, the air that she breathed, the environment in which she was at home. A friend has told how by a few words of loving earnest sympathy she could dispel a gathering cloud of misunderstanding and estrangement—or lift up a social gathering, which had begun by being nothing but a social gathering, into the heavenly atmosphere in which she herself lived—and this by just being herself, by speaking out of her heart; she could do it because she

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was consecrated to Christ and He dwelt in her heart.

‘And this intense, living faith always issues in work, in the “Work of Faith”. For real faith is an aggressive force. It drives men on to action; it gets things done; it tackles problems with imagination, energy, and capacity, and leaves its mark on the world, because it not only discerns the eternal and unseen realities, but goes on to act as if they are true. And so with our friend who has been taken from us. Faith for her inevitably meant the Work of Faith; the Schools, the prison visiting, the social service, the active charity to the poor, the ministry to the outcast and afflicted, the correspondence with old pupils all over the world. She *believed* in Jesus, and went forward with magnificent courage on the adventure of His Kingdom, claiming the World for Him, and bringing goodness and sweetness and light and love wherever she moved.

‘Then we thank God for the “Labour of Love”. Faith takes up tasks; it discerns what is the will of God and initiates the venture, and then comes the Labour of Love, carrying on through years of toil and sacrifice. Miss Sorabji’s life was a laborious life. How did she find time for all she did? It is astonishing to think of the mass of sheer work that she got through—often worn and tired, and often suffering from ill-health. It was the love of Christ that constrained her; His love in her heart urging



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her on. And it was the labour of *love*, not merely the strenuous activity of a busy philanthropist, but the generous outpouring of a warm and loving heart.

‘She loved her country intensely, and felt acutely the sorrows and anxieties of recent events. It was an open-eyed love—not blind to faults and weaknesses. The noblest love is not that which says “My country right or wrong”, but love that mourns over sins and stains, and that works and prays and agonizes to put things right.

‘And then, the “Patience of Hope”. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” “To walk and not faint”, that, so it has been said, is the greatest and most exacting demand of the spiritual life. The worldly heart faints and flags—becomes weary and cynical and disillusioned. The Children of God, the heroes and heroines of faith, have within themselves an inexhaustible spring of life and hope. They have discovered the secret of eternal youth, which is Christ crucified and risen and living in the heart. And how nobly this servant of God showed us the meaning of the Patience of Hope—that radiant look that told of a heart stayed on Christ victorious over sin and death!

‘An ardent and beautiful soul—a great loving heart consecrated to God and His Church—a

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masterful personality disciplined by the spirit of Christ and all its gifts offered up as a whole burnt-offering—this is what we are thanking God for to-day. Let us treasure this sacred memory, and let the inspiration of it lift us up out of sloth and selfishness and littleness of soul. “We bless Thy Holy Name for Thy Servant departed this life in Thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow her good example that with her we may be partakers of Thy Heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen.”

Mr. Yardi, priest-in-charge of St. Matthew’s, spoke in Marathi. He said that her life was like the box of precious ointment that was broken at Our Lord’s feet, whose fragrance filled the house.

‘Susie Sorabji’s life’, he added, ‘made fragrant not only her home, and Schools, and the town in which she lived, but the distant parts of the world, where her influence was felt and recognized.’

*The (London) Times* of April 6, 1931, had an obituary notice, and the newspapers of India, America, Canada, paid tribute to the widespread appeal of her character and personality. While more touching still, as was natural, in their intimacy were the letters received by her family from friends all over the world.

Poor St. Helena’s dragged a broken wing those early days of loss. But miracles happen even now. In some silent heartward way we all felt that our friend was not far off.

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It broke our hearts to see everything as it was wont to be; her desk, her books, and pictures . . . all in their accustomed places; the rooms full as always we had known them, and yet full, for us, of emptiness.

It was a non-Christian girl who spoke the word which reached our need.

'If I go not away the Spirit cannot come unto you, but if I depart', she quoted. 'Miss Susie explained those words to me once—Do you think it will be the same with her? "But if I depart" . . . Will it be the same with us, with her matriculation class and the babies, and the old students, her friends, her family? . . . Oh! will it be the same for us?'

Then after a pause—

'It must be the same, for I know she is alive and with us.'

A small eight-year-old Zoroastrian boy whom she had loved through a bad attack of pneumonia came one day in the recess hour to say, 'May I look into Miss Susie's room?' None staying him, he went in and stood silently looking about him.

When he came out, he said: 'I had pneumonia once, Miss Susie sat beside me and asked God to make me well; and I did get well. When she had pneumonia I prayed and prayed to God to make her well—why did He not listen to me? Even small boys can talk to God, He likes them, Miss

‘ . . . AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING . . . ’

Susie told us the *Pattewallahs* are not allowed to drive them away; then why did He not listen to me? Did I not know how to pray?’

Poor baby boy up against the Big Puzzle! . . .

But she did and does help her friends and her children, as they know by many infallible proofs from day to day.

Her spirit, her teaching, her example, her love—these abide.

It was Scripture revision at the end of the term during which she had left us; they had been studying the parables of the New Testament and the children were telling their teacher individually which was their favourite parable.

One child cited the Parable of the Vine. Did she understand what it meant, she was asked. ‘Yes,’ she said, explaining; and then added, simply, this beautiful reason—‘You see, we knew Miss Susie.’

S. had planted a creeper, the *Bauhinia*, beside the tamarind tree, up against the trellis-work of the tennis courts. It was a species which had lovely lianes that were apt to make natural swings as the creeper grew and toughened. The swings were there, but in many years the creeper had never once flowered; and S. would bemoan this fact though rejoicing that the ‘swings’ were safe enough and low enough for the babies, under the big shady tamarind tree over which the creeper wandered at will.

## SUSIE SORABJI

After her death, the creeper flowered and flowered. We were able to cut great trails of it, all abloom, to lay upon her grave.

And the parable—of that late blossoming, an offering to her memory, a repaying of her love and thought—was taken to our hearts.

Gradually the children came to realize that Happiness and Joy, not Missing and Mourning, were to be connected with her. Breaking-up day that term was the glad festival which she always had made it, with races and competitions and prizes.

And the day chosen by the children as Founder's Day is not that of her birth or of any fugitive event connected with the School, but of her entry into Life Eternal.

Many of us have felt that the mere 'understanding' behind that choice would in itself alone be worth while 'harvesting' for any worker.

The children have made in her memory a Garden of Remembrance; and at planting time before the sun gets level with the horizon, friend after friend will slip in with some little tribute which in course of time will release its fragrance, or its beauty of form and colour to tell of a love which lives and grows. . . .

It is her friend N. K. who has chosen the words to be engraved on the fountain. They are T. E. Browne's—about 'God in Gardens when the Eve is fine'.

'... AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING ...'

Nay, but I have a sign.

'Tis very sure God walked in mine . . .

. . . .

And here my love-tale hath an ending.

. . . .

She loved—she gave;

She gave all that she had;

She gave even herself—also.

A lover, greatly beloved.