

Chapter 10 – Who's for China? November 1923



Mr. and Mrs. 'Daly sat out on the verandah enjoying a rest. For once Mother had no patching or darning on her hands; Father had insisted on her having a few idle moments. All the children, even Baby Bet (accompanied by Polly Dollykins), were down at the school attending a Children's Lecture and a picture show about China.

"They are very keen on the conversion of China, aren't they?" said Father. "I wonder how long their zeal will last."

"Oh," Mother cried, "I hope it will last all through their lives. When they are men and women I hope they will continue to be missionaries. It seems play now to us, but you know they are very much in earnest and do their good work."

"They do. Poor Teddy is very earnest. He used to have such an opinion of himself, but the Little Missionary spirit has changed in him."

"Well"- Mother had an excuse for everybody, even for Shamie when he used to chew slippers and pipes, and tear the paper to shreds - "Teddy is the eldest son, and perhaps he was a little too much inclined to think he knew much more than the others." she acknowledged, "but he has been so good lately, poor Teddy, especially since - "

"Since The Adventure."

"I think he deserves the watch at Christmas; he hasn't been late for weeks and weeks, and he is more gentle, more thoughtful for others."

"Yes, Teddy has certainly improved and I am sure the Little Missionary spirit has helped him," Father agreed.

"I really believe it has had a great effect on all the children. Of course, we thought them good and sweet before, but the missionary spirit has done much for them. It has taught them restraint, to deny themselves for others, to be unselfish. It has helped each to see and ac-

knowledge the good work of the others. Look at the lesson in values. They will never be money-grubber', and I am so very glad of that. I'd hate to think of my boys and girls growing up too fond of money, thinking that money means everything. And then their pleasure. The Little Missionary spirit has taught our children, and thousands of other children, that pleasure is not to be sought after constantly. They don't crave a 'good time' all the time, as so many children do these days. Pleasure is not their first thought. They enjoy their little pleasures certainly, but see how ready they are to 'give up' a pleasure for the sake of another. They were always good, but don't you think their piety now is a wonderful thing? I think we should be very thankful that our children imbibed so readily the spirit of the Little Missionary. Many other parents must think the same. Our Angie was always a little angel, but now - "

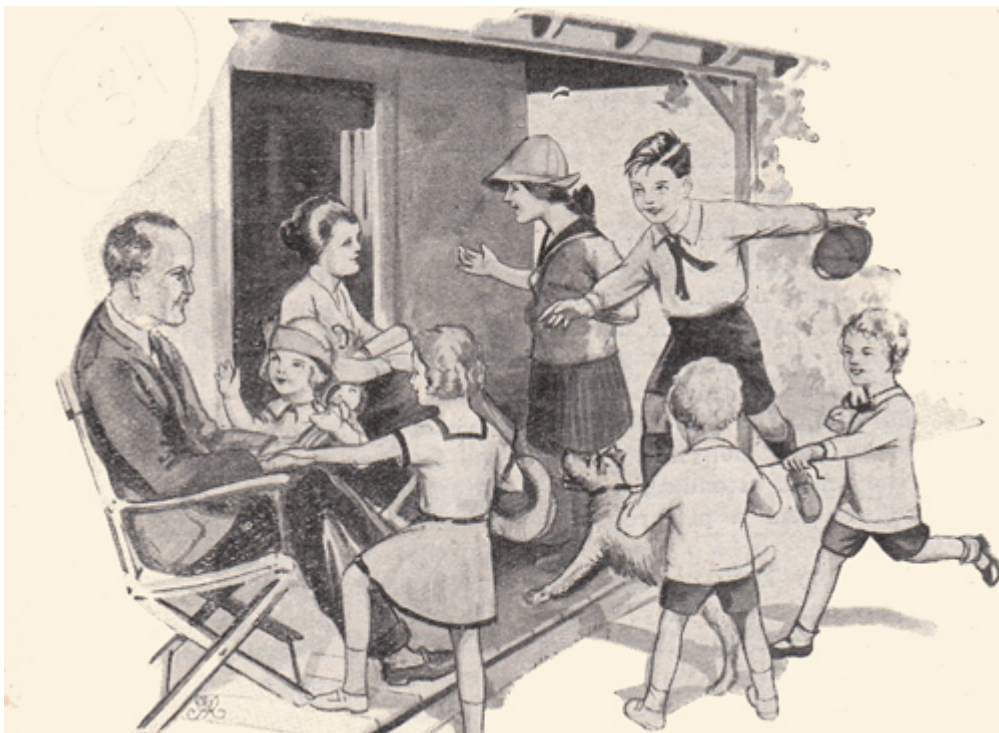
"I suppose you think her an Arch," laughed Father. "How you mothers run on in praise of your children! You never hear me making out I am the father of little saints."

"Well, I do not praise them to anyone else," said Mother, slightly troubled. "Surely I can to you."

"Praise away, Mother. I agree with all you say - but don't tell anybody or they'll think us mad."

"Poor Mick, now. Did you ever see so young a child make such efforts to curb his temper? I hope and pray that as they grow older they will not lose their wonderful spirit; I hope our children will continue to help the Church in her missionary work. Our generation in Australia has neglected the duty (or perhaps the time had not come), but our children will carry it on gloriously, please God."

Father's lips smiled, but his eyes were serious as he said: "I wonder will any of them go."



"To China?"

"Yes."

"I wonder." Mother smiled, too, but her eyes were serious and sad too. "But that's a long way off. We'll have them for many years yet, except perhaps -" They looked at one another, but neither said "Angie," although each knew the other meant it. "Yes, we must enjoy every moment of their childhood, while they are our very own. If God wants any of them later on, you and I will be only too glad to give them."

Both were silent for a few moments, and then Mother looked up brightly. "Isn't it beautiful to have them now? Let us make hay while the sun shines, and surely, in our old age, we'll have one of the six."

"Here are the whole six now - plus Shamie. We'll enjoy a noise."

The children came pouring in the gate, all talking delightedly.

"Oh, Mother -"

"Father -"

"The priest asked us -"

Father called for order, and Mary was allowed to tell the tale.

"The priest asked all the children in the hall who intended going to China to stand up -"

The others could not remain silent at this important part.

"And we all stood up!" they cried in one voice triumphant.

"All of you?" questioned Mother.

"Yes."

"Baby Bet?"

"Yes, and Shamie was waiting outside, and we asked the priest if we could bring him too, and he said yes."

"Not one to lean on in our old age," laughed Father.

"I'm going to be a doctor," Mick said, "and Mack is going to be a priest, and Teddy's going to teach, and Angie and Mary are going to be Sisters, and Baby Bet a nur -"

But Baby Bet here interrupted, and in a very determined little voice turned down the cause of China.

"I isn't going. I've changed my mind, Mummie. I've going to stay with you. I might turn all yellow and get a pigtail, and so might poor Polly Dollykins and the Teddy."

The other children teased and coaxed Baby Bet, but she would not alter her decision.

"I isn't going," she said determinedly, and ran to Father's arms.