

the

Helen Cadbury

story



HOW IT FIRST BEGAN – OVER 100 YEARS AGO

In the late nineteenth century in England, in 1877, Helen Cadbury was born into a wealthy Christian family. Her grandfather, John Cadbury, had founded *Cadbury*, the great cocoa and chocolate company in Birmingham, later taking his brother, Benjamin, into partnership. Her father, Richard Cadbury, and his brother, George, relocated their expanding factory to a garden setting in Bournville, near Birmingham.

In a family of eight, three older brothers and two older sisters brought many interests into the lives of Helen and her younger sisters. Moseley Hall, their home for much of their lives, provided a romantic background for their varied activities. The large estate was ringed with fields and woods beyond the lawns and gardens around the old house. A lake, fringed with rushes and with a tree-shaded island, provided fishing and boating in summer and skating in the winter.

Richard Cadbury's joy was to share all these lovely things with others. Sunday school, Bible classes, Mothers' meetings and Christian workers of every denomination were frequent and welcome guests at Moseley Hall. There, the whole household met daily before breakfast for ten minutes of Bible reading and prayer.

When Helen was twelve years old, she went with her father one Sunday evening to a gospel meeting at the mission hall that he had built in one of the slum districts of Birmingham. She sat at the back of the hall, watching the mission members as they brought in people from the neighbourhood, all looking poor and hungry, and many affected by alcohol. She knew that some of the mission people had once been just like the hopeless people whom they brought to the meeting, yet tonight they were singing hymns with real joy and conviction. Something had dramatically changed their lives. Helen knew that it was the power of God.

The preacher finished his address and then asked all those who wished to publicly confess they were putting their faith in Jesus Christ to stand up. Helen had been brought up by devoutly Christian parents, but she now understood that that in itself did not make her a Christian. She knew Jesus Christ had died on the cross so that she might have eternal life and she now had to respond personally to what He had done for her. In her heart was a hunger, a desire to know God as her parents did. She stood up, along with several other people.

The preacher then asked them to go to a small room behind the pulpit where mission members would pray with them. Helen felt a struggle going on inside her, but found the courage to step into the aisle. Hesitantly she went forward feeling very alone and very young. There in the room was her father, talking with one of the men who had stood up in

the hall. After he had prayed with the man, he came over to her at once with a tender smile on his face and a joyful light in his eyes. Together they knelt by the hard mission hall chairs as Helen asked the Lord Jesus to come into her heart.

The heavy burden was gone and Helen could now confess herself as a Christian. From that day, she had a great purpose in life. She was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ now and her longing was to bring others to Him to receive the gift of everlasting life that He wanted to bestow. She was only a beginner as a worker for Jesus, but there was a mission field right at hand, among the girls at school.

So Helen put a Bible in her desk. Beckoning to the last girl to leave the classroom to come and look, Helen showed her a text, saying “whoever – that means everybody – that means you”. She and another schoolgirl, who was a believer in the Lord Jesus, prayed for their friends and led some of them to Christ. They discussed the difficulty of carrying a large Bible around with them in the playground where opportunities came more often than in the classroom. Gradually the idea came of always carrying in their pockets a small New Testament that they could use anywhere, anytime. Later, they formed themselves into a little organisation called “The Pocket Testament League”, members of which carried part of God’s Word with them, reading a portion of it daily and trying to lead others to Christ.

In 1904, the American song-leader, Charles Alexander, came to England with Dr Torrey to conduct evangelistic missions. He fell in love with Helen Cadbury and married her. The Pocket Testament League, first started by a schoolgirl in Birmingham, was revived and launched through evangelistic campaigns to become the worldwide movement it is today.

One thing stands out clearly: God has a purpose for every life and that purpose can only be fulfilled when we yield to Him and humbly accept the forgiveness and new life He extends through His Son, Jesus Christ. Have you accepted what He offers? You can do so now. The Scriptures say “Here I am, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.” (Revelation 3:20).

If you have accepted Christ, are you fulfilling His purpose for your life, to bring the knowledge of Him to others? You can start now. You can tell the people with whom you live, work or go to school that “whoever” means everybody – it means you – and that “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).

Reference: Fox, Simon: *Helen Cadbury and Charles M. Alexander*, 1989. Marshall Morgan and Scott Publications Ltd, London.



The Pocket Testament League of Australia
PO Box 353, BLAXLAND NSW 2774
Phone: (02) 4753 6277
Email: tptl@tptl.org.au. Web: www.tptl.org.au