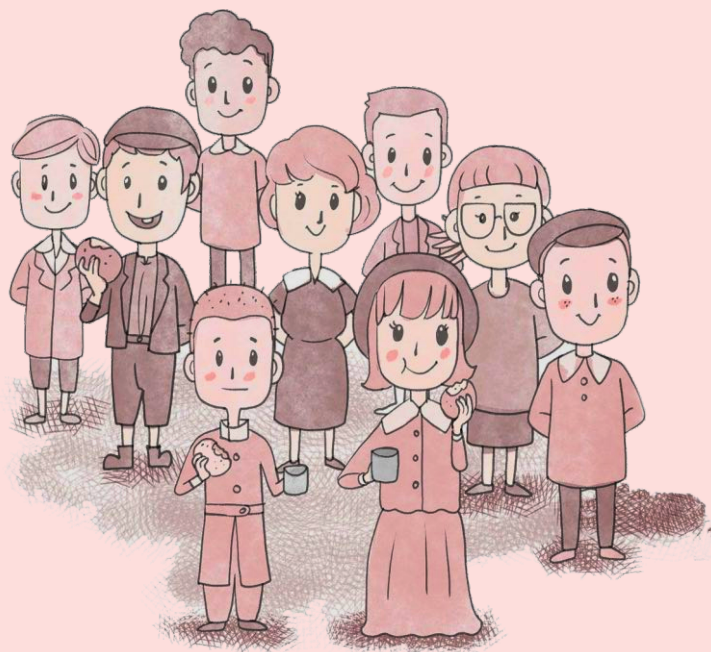
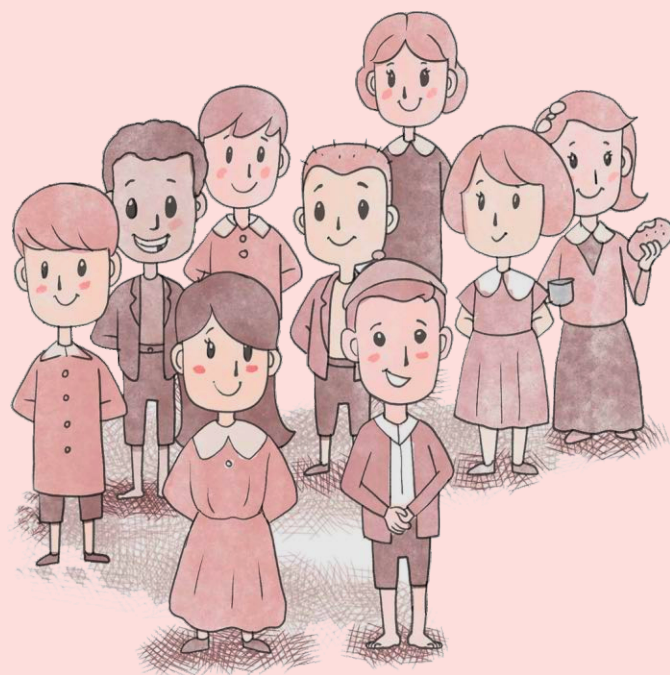


# Eglantyne Jebb

• a life dedicated to childhood •









## **Eglantyne Jebb: a life dedicated to childhood**

This book is a collaboration of Save the Children Switzerland  
and Save the Children Mexico

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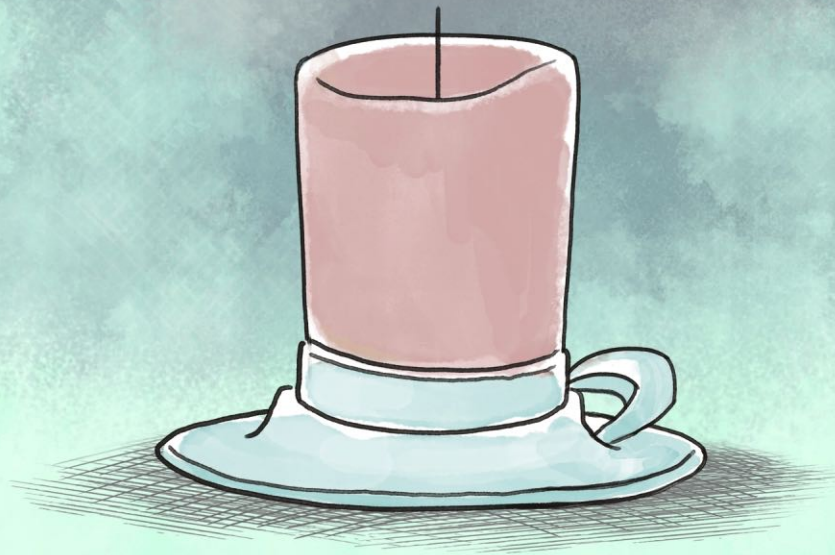






“Each generation of children  
offers mankind the possibility  
of rebuilding the world  
from its ruin”

Eglantyne Jebb



Before you start reading my story,  
ask an adult to help you safely light a candle.  
Look at it closely.



Look at the flame... and let me tell  
you about the intensity that can come with  
being a soft light in the darkness of the world.



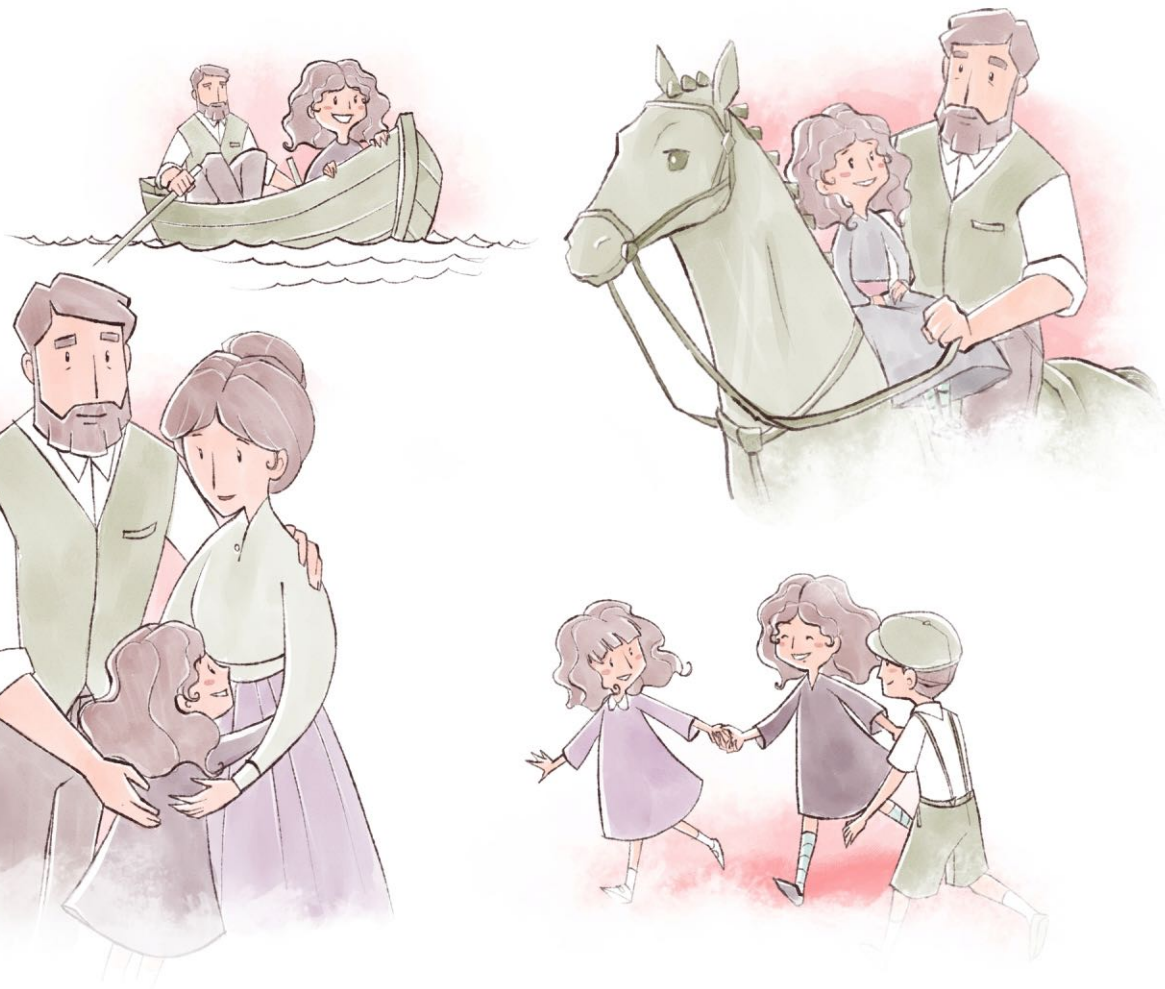
I was born on August 25 1876 in a beautiful country house in the United Kingdom, and five years later on 3 March 1881 my sister Dorothy, my life-long colleague and collaborator, was born.



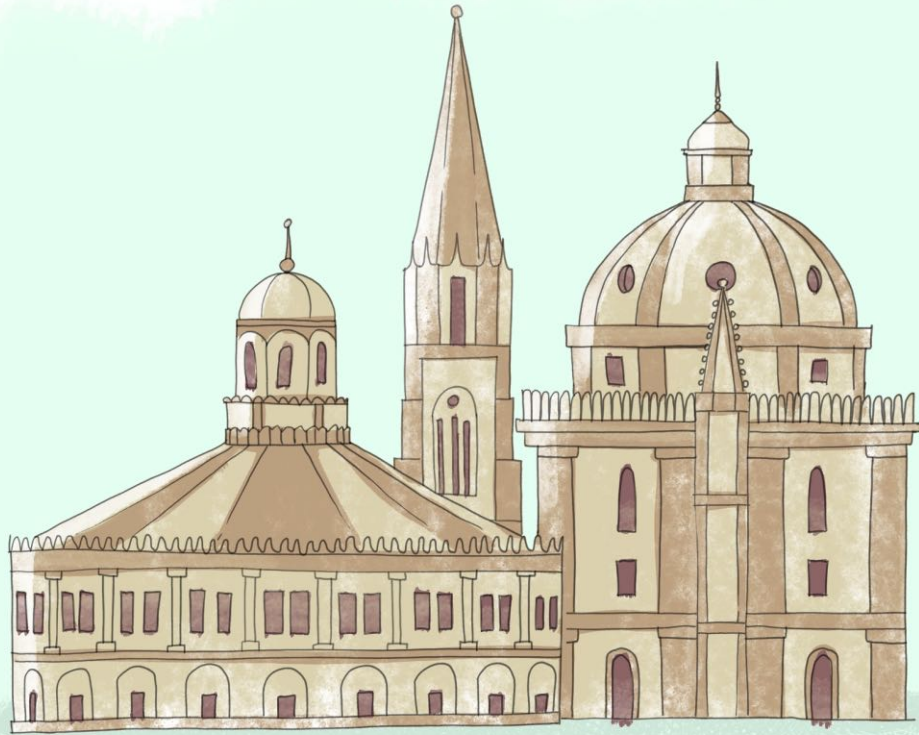


My parents, Arthur and Eglantyne Louisa,  
were always interested in helping others.  
My mother started a movement to teach home  
economics and handicrafts to the local people in our  
town and my father, a man of the law, was always  
interested in participating in local affairs.

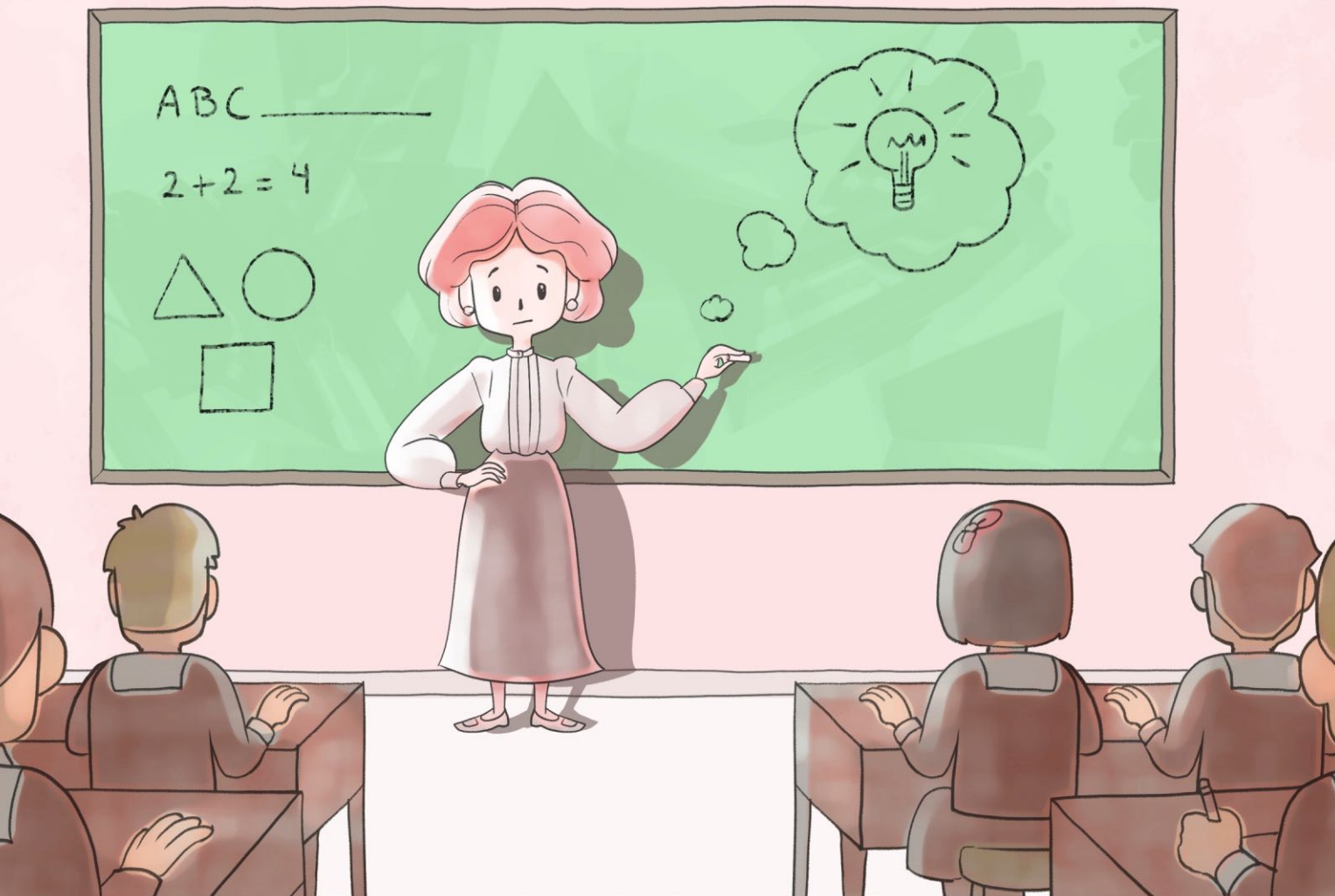




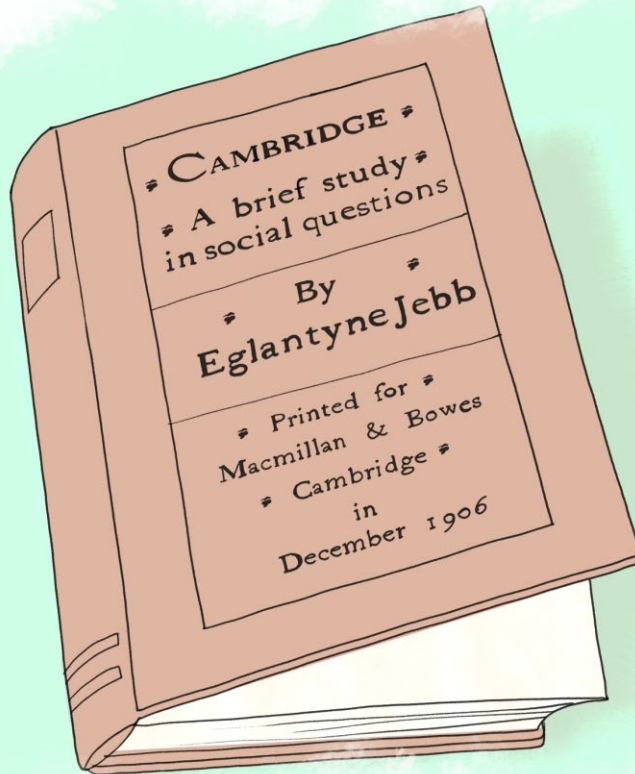
I had five siblings. I loved horseback riding, swimming, boating and reading. I was lucky enough to have everything I needed for a happy childhood.



At 19 years old, I had the opportunity to study at Oxford University, where I studied history; but something told me my path was linked to children... and I decided to become a teacher.



What a decision! Being a teacher was very challenging. I tried hard, but I just didn't know if what I was doing would actually improve the lives of my students, most of whom came from very poor families. I wanted to do more. I asked myself, how can I make a real difference in the lives of children most in need.



I decided to become a member of a charity organization in Cambridge, England. There, I wrote a book about the poverty of the town. One of my conclusions was that it was important for children to go to school until they are at least 14 years old.





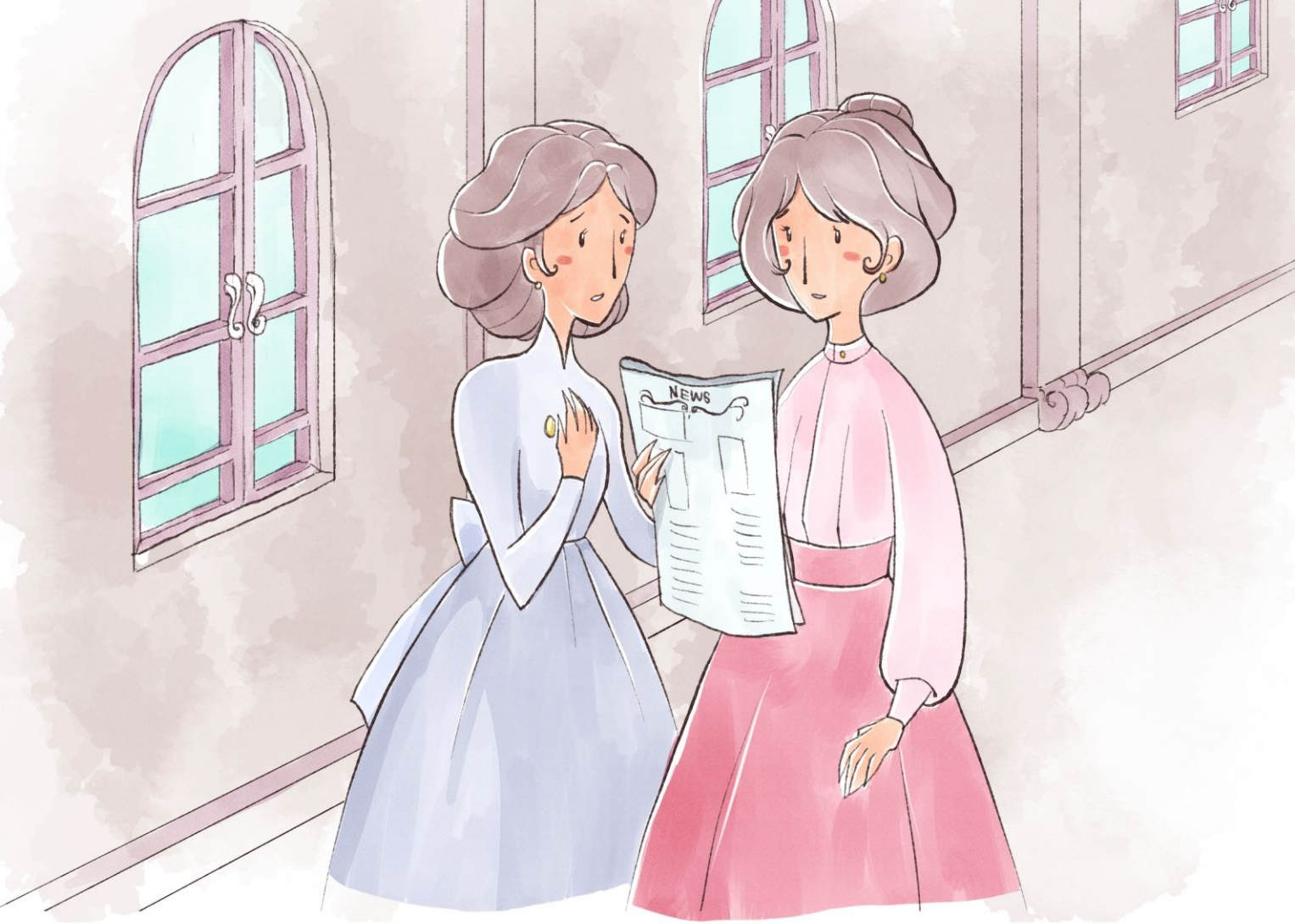




Around that time, the Balkan War broke out. In 1913, I went to join the war effort. I wanted to directly help the thousands of sick and injured refugees waiting in long lines, just to receive a bowl of soup.

The sight of the sad faces of the little ones who no longer played or smiled, but just cried as they thought about their homes lying in ruins, made a strong impression on me.

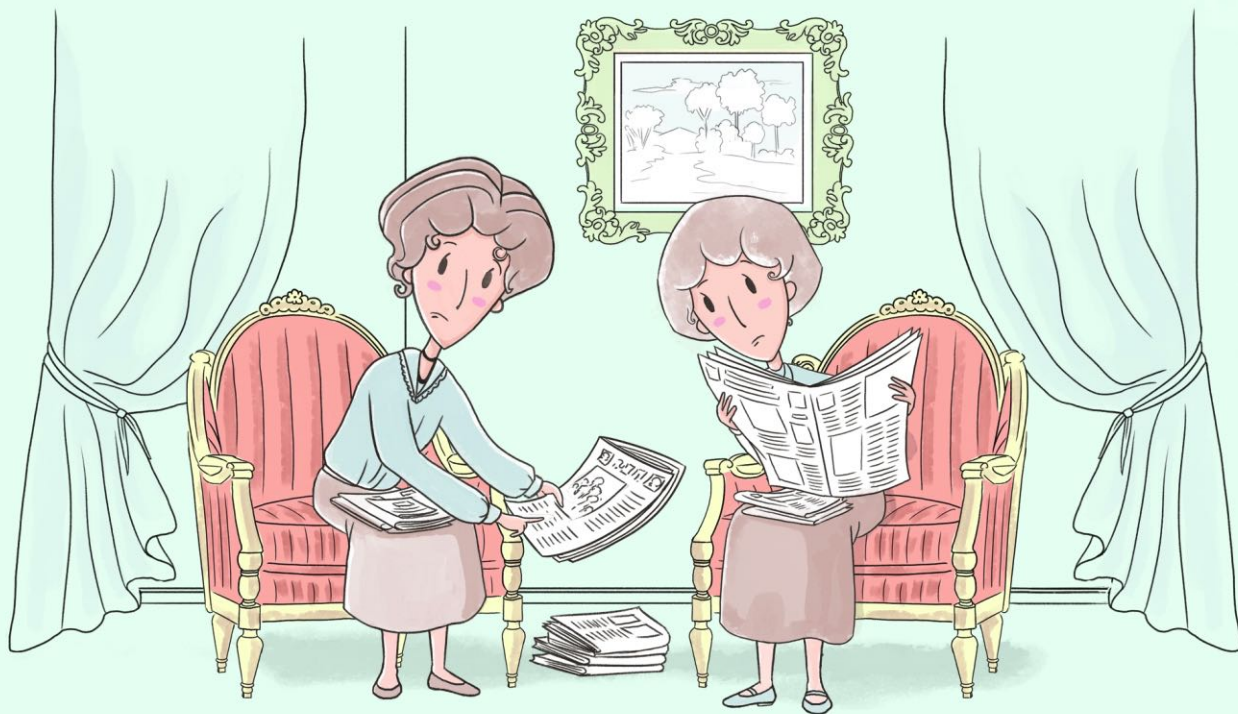
With those little faces imprinted on my mind, I returned to the peace and quiet of my home in London. I did not sit there twiddling my thumbs.



I launched a campaign to collect money to help the victims of the war, although I did not have the success I expected, and that made me feel very bad. My sister Dorothy shared my heartache and my concern for the children, and also my desire to contribute and try to improve the situation.

Things worsened in 1914 when the World War  
I broke out. The future looked very bleak ...  
how could one person achieve anything in  
the face of such a terrible tragedy?

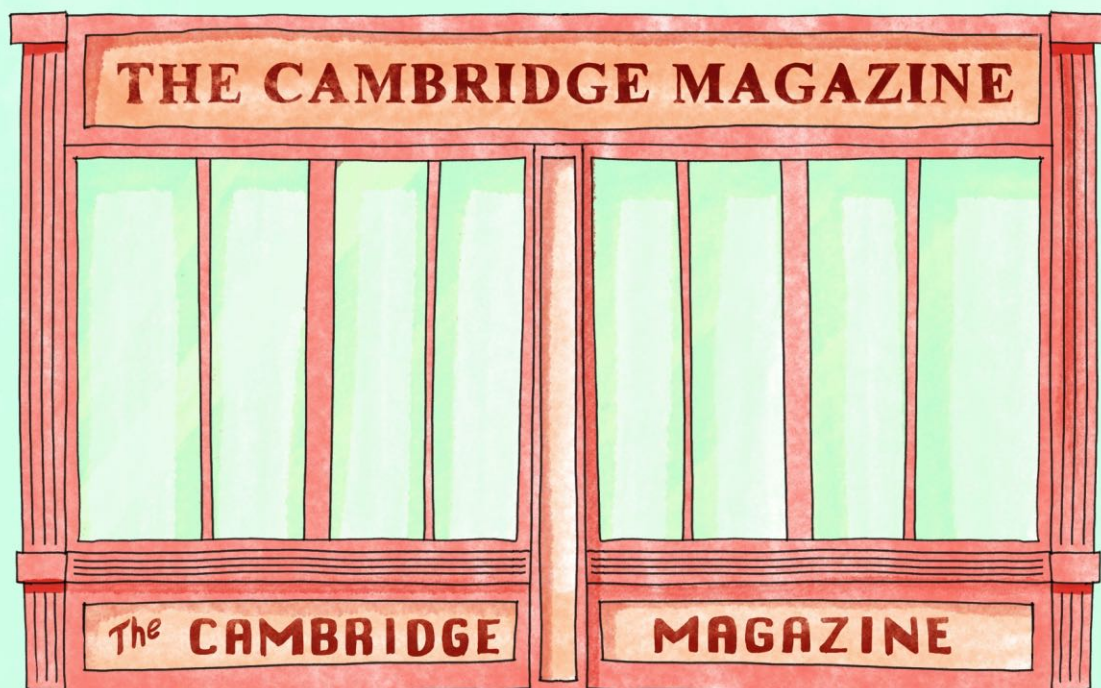




My sister was convinced that the first step in bringing about change was to make sure people were well-informed, beyond their local newspapers. So she dedicated herself to bringing to London a hundred or so newspapers from all over the world, all with different points of view. I helped her translate the ones that were in French and Italian.





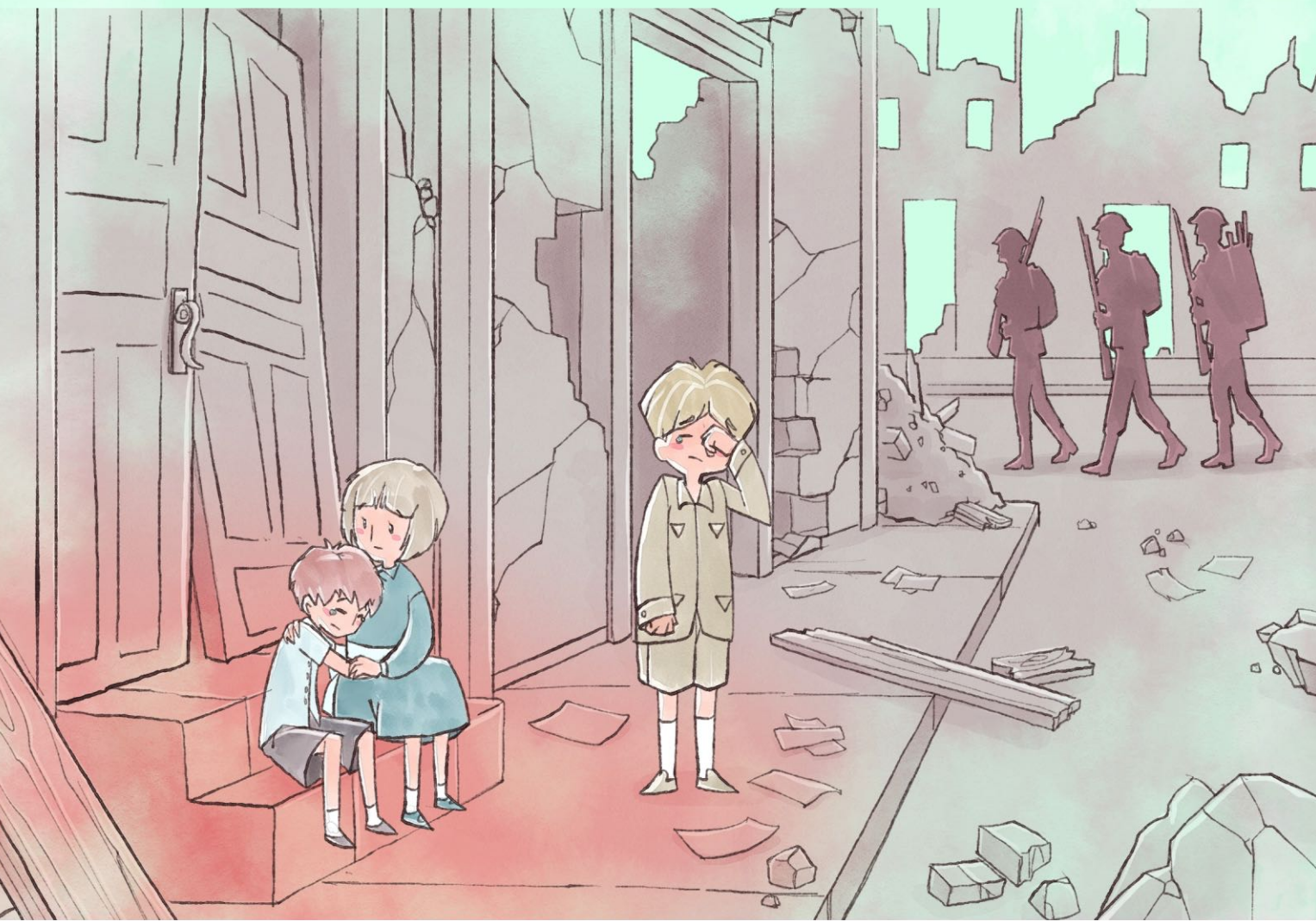




Dorothy started her own newspaper, and also wrote very successfully for "Cambridge Magazine".

We were both very well-informed about the atrocities suffered by the victims, especially the children. We wanted readers to see the reality, so they would realize how important it was to help them.





World War I ended on November 11, 1918.  
It had lasted 4 years, 3 months and 14 days.  
10 million people died  
10 million people were left homeless, and sought  
refuge mainly in Russia, Serbia, France, Belgium,  
Germany and Armenia.  
6 million children were orphaned.

The figures were horrific. We had to fight this tragedy!

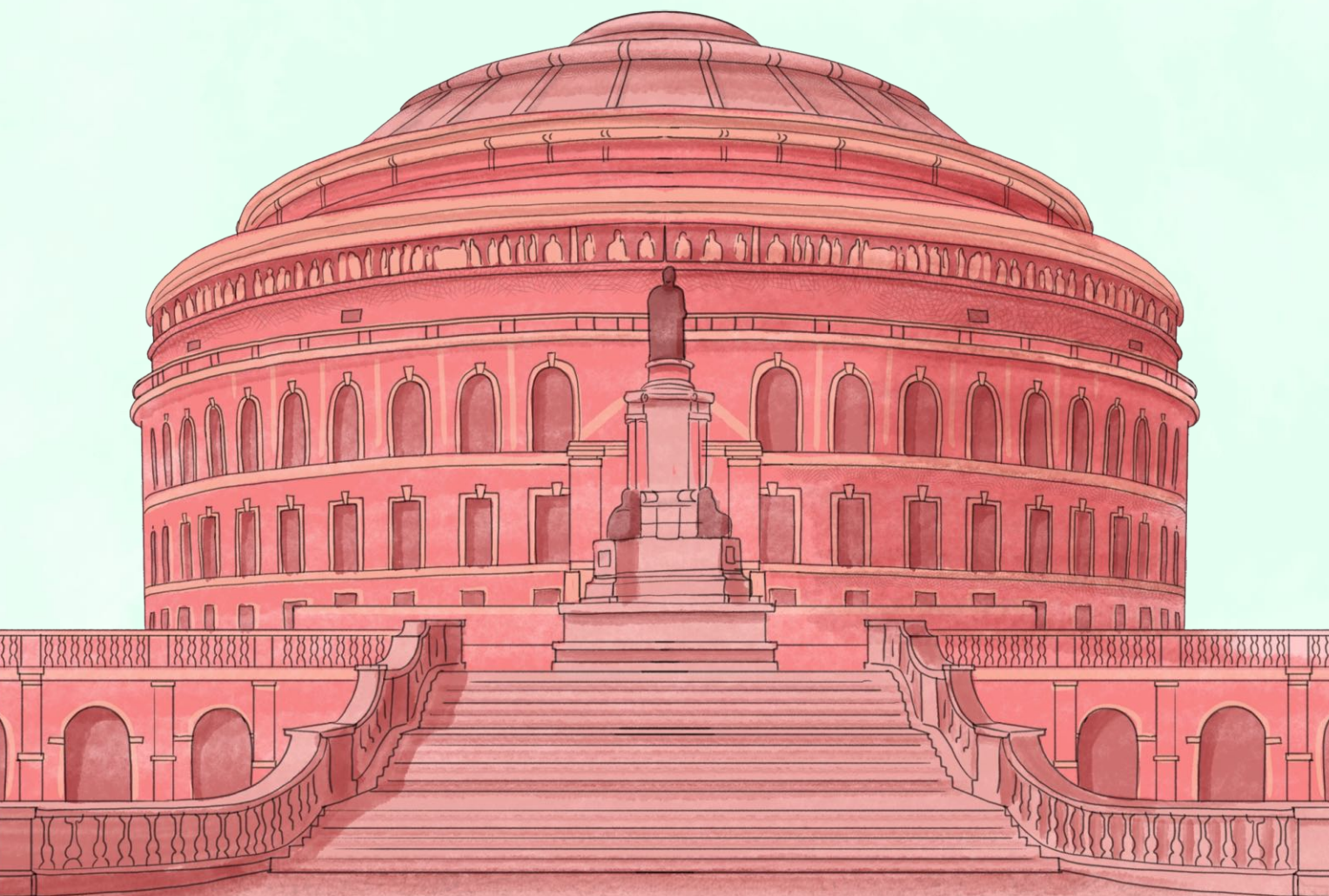
Days later, I distributed leaflets on the  
streets of London showing actual photographs  
of starving children in Austria, and that caused  
the police to arrest me.



I explained to the judge that the little boys and girls were so weak and sick, they needed our help. I was so convincing that he too donated money to save the children, and let me go free.

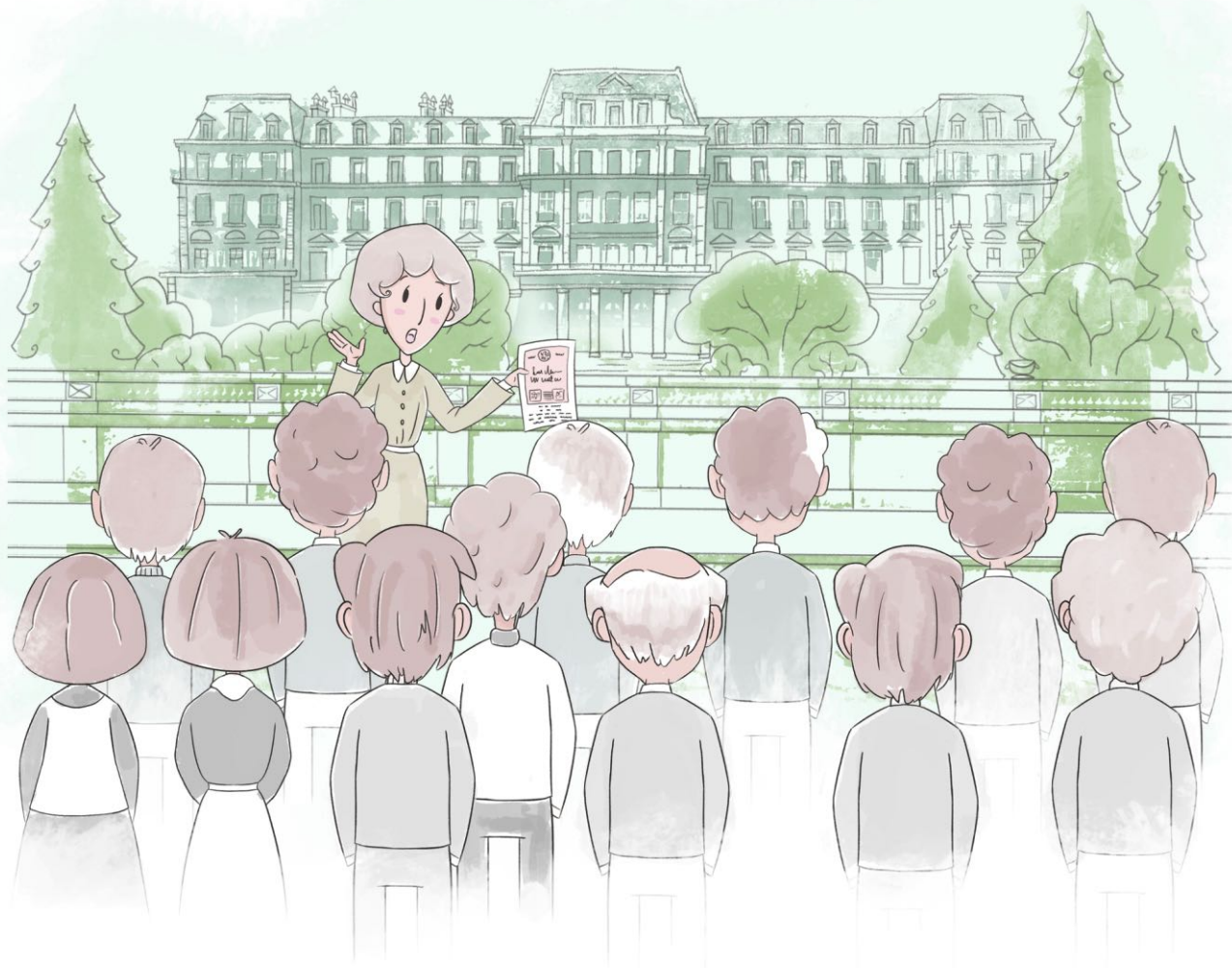


Shortly after, my sister managed to bring together  
a group of people interested in helping  
the children of the worst-affected  
countries, and that is how we created  
the **Save the Children Fund**.



On May 19, 1919, Dorothy and I went to the Royal Albert Hall in London to explain to a large audience why it was so important to help children who were victims of war.

Many insisted we were traitors, because we were trying to benefit the children of enemy countries. It was a very tense situation for everyone, including some members of the audience who had rotten apples at the ready, waiting for the right moment to throw them at me.





But my words ended up convincing them that: “All wars are wars against children”.

That day we succeeded in raising 10 thousand pounds (or about 13,000 U.S. dollars)! A huge amount of money, which we used to buy food to distribute to the children in Austria and Berlin, the capital of Germany.

We opened our first office in Scotland. Now, **Save the Children** was a name that people were starting to recognize, but I felt we needed to make more of an effort to make our movement global.

So I travelled to Geneva, in Switzerland,  
in January 1920, and created  
the International **Save the Children Union**.  
Now we would no longer be helping only  
children who were victims of war, but  
all children in need.



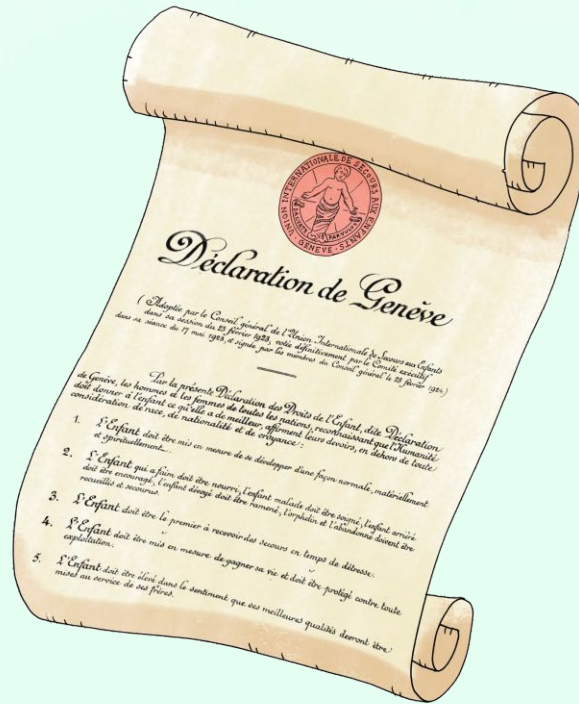


In 1921, humanity suffered another tragedy: a great famine in the Volga region, in Russia. We helped, and we saved thousands of lives, but I insisted that our efforts were not enough.



One afternoon in 1922, I climbed Mount Salève in Geneva.  
Feeling very inspired, I drafted a document which  
in 1923 I announced with the name  
“Declaration of the Rights of the Child”.



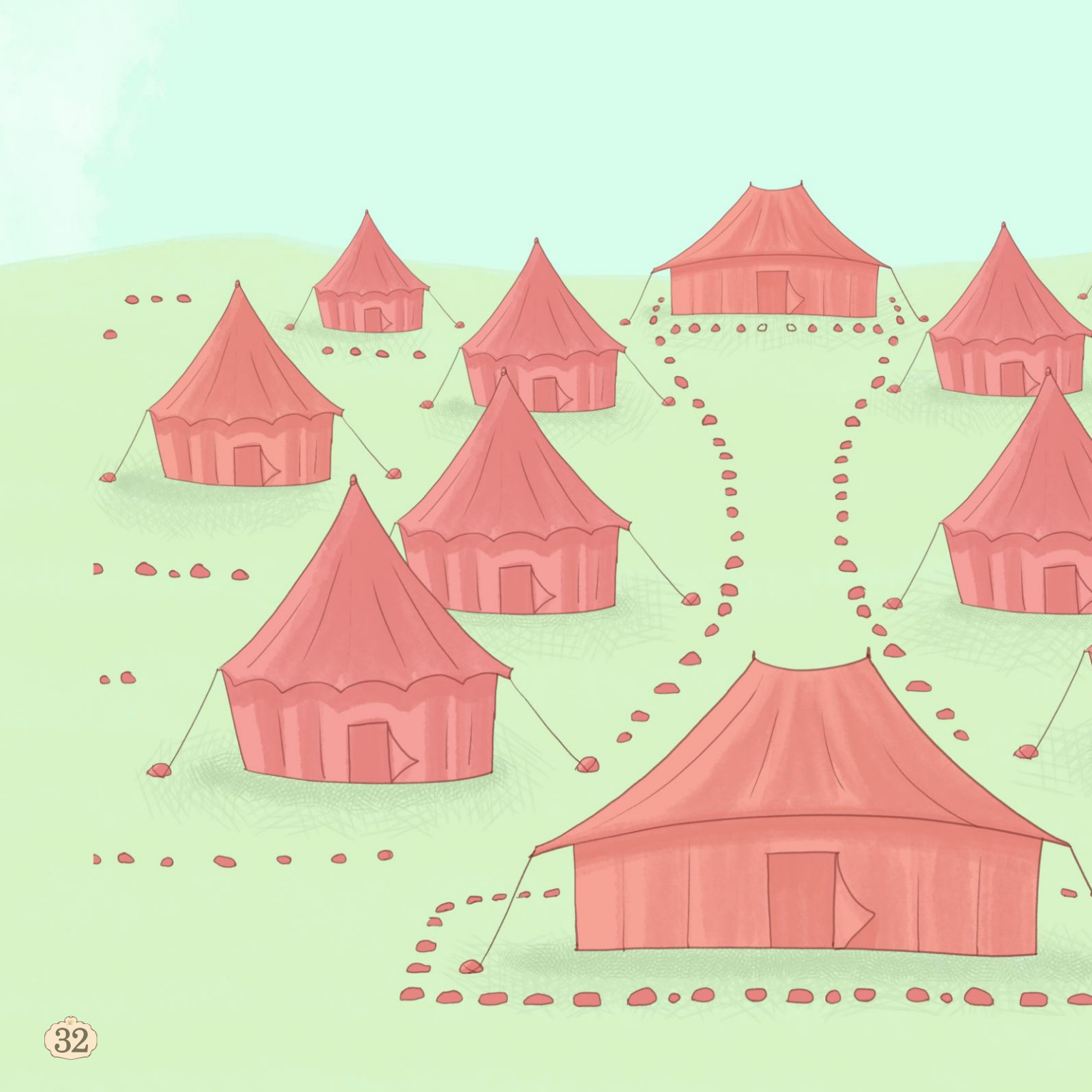


A year later, that declaration was endorsed by the Fifth General Assembly of the League of Nations – a very important event.

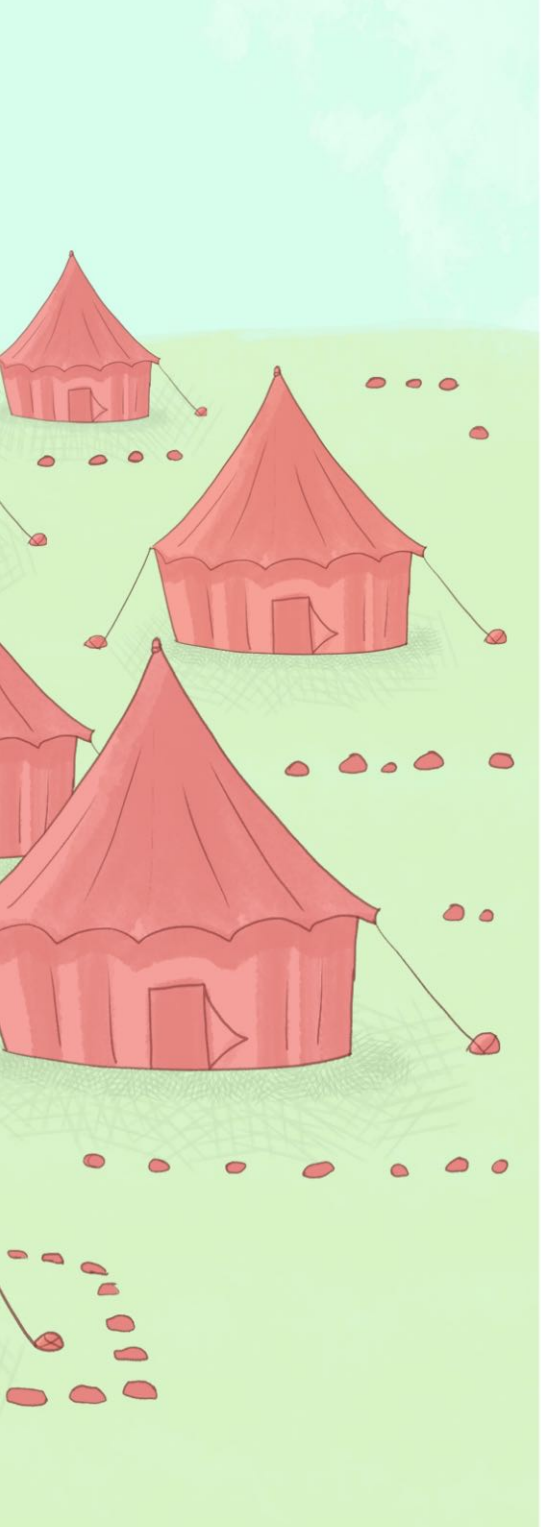


“We should claim certain rights for the children and work for their universal recognition”.









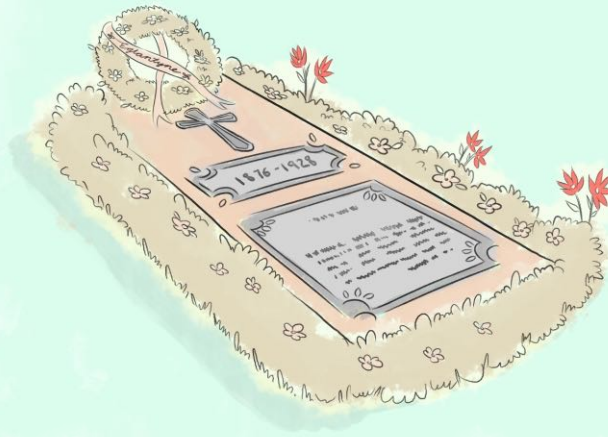
At **Save the Children**, we worked very hard. It was 1925, and we created villages for refugees in Bulgaria and Albania.

In Hungary, we offered professional training to young people. What had started as a small flame was becoming a bright light of hope for children, but it was a light that did not yet illuminate other continents.

There were more children in need in Africa and Asia than in Europe, I thought, and started to develop a plan to reach them.

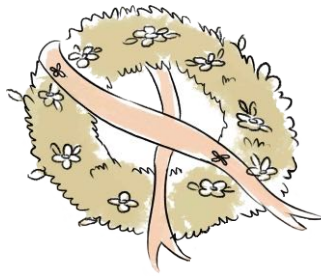


“As there are undoubtedly more children suffering in Asia and in Africa than in Europe, we should demonstrate the sincerity of our claim to universality by working in those continents as soon as we can raise sufficient funds for that purpose”.

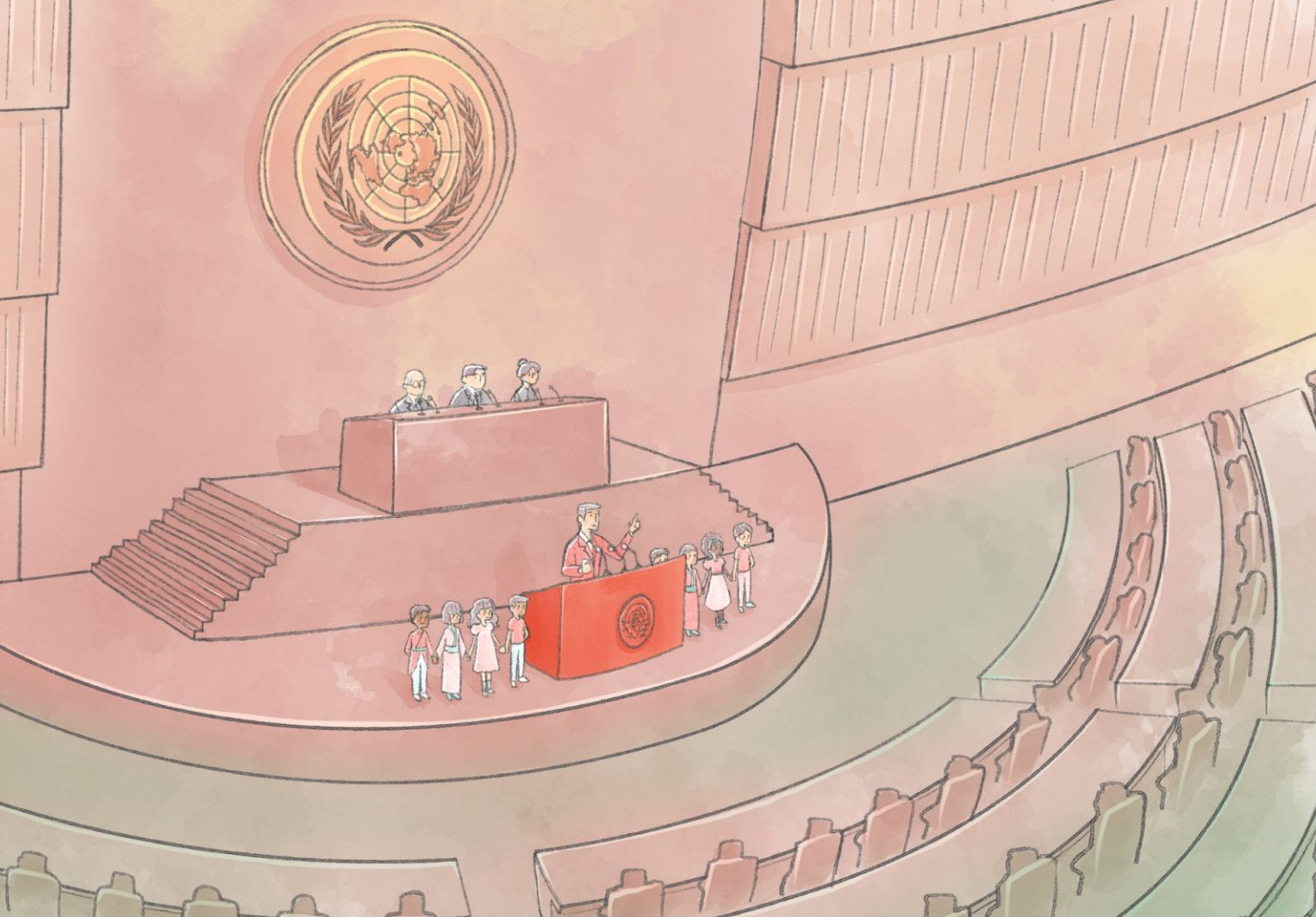


But my life had run its course, and on December 17, 1928  
I was laid to rest in a Geneva cemetery.

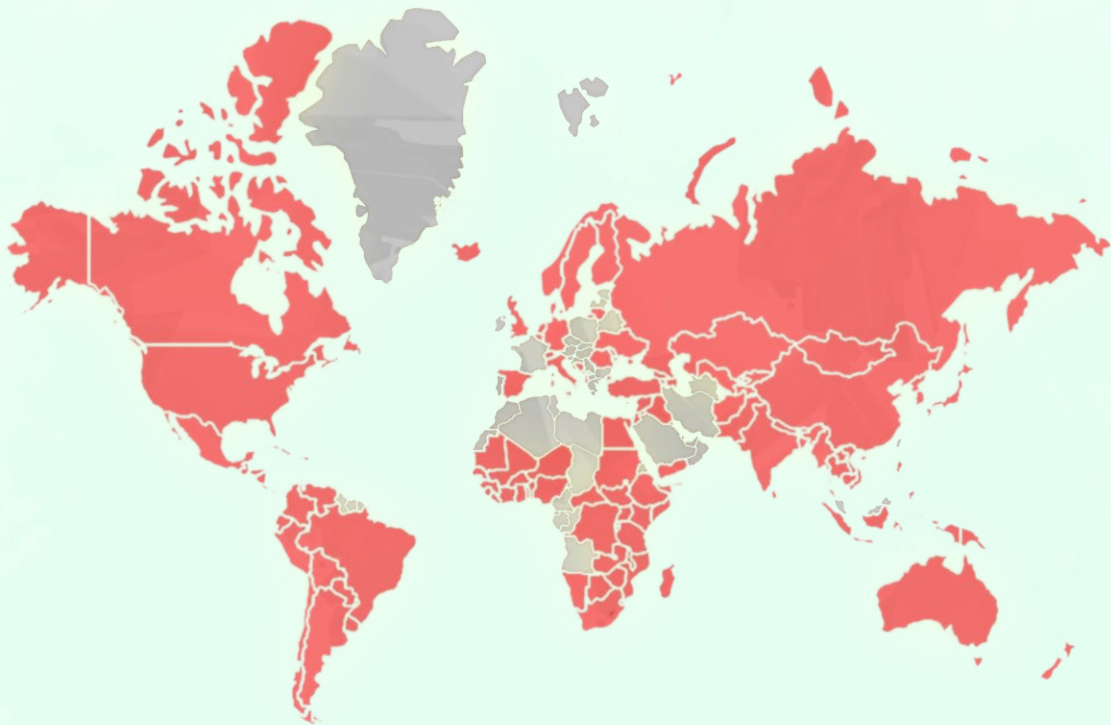




My sister Dorothy remained  
committed to humanity until  
she died in 1963.



In 1959, my legacy was recognized by the UN when they adopted a new Declaration of the Rights of the Child, based on my original, which later became the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** on November 20, 1989. It's an agreement that's still in force today.



Currently, **Save the Children** is working  
in **120 countries** on six continents,  
and it has helped millions and millions  
of children grow up healthy, educated and safe.



We may feel that we are insignificant in the darkness that surrounds humanity. But, in reality we are light, and although tiny by ourselves. If we unite, our flames can become brighter and brighter.





Now, look at your candle again, and promise to take care of it, so it doesn't go out, for it can become the bright, white flame that illuminates the world.



And if anyone doesn't believe you,  
tell them my story.



“To succeed in life  
you have to offer life”

**-Eglantyne Jebb-**

## Glossary:



**Convention on the Rights of the Child:** a treaty signed at the UN on November 20 1989, guaranteeing children the same rights as adults and highlighting those rights that arise from their special status as human beings who, as a result of not yet having reached full physical and mental development, require special protection.

**Declaration of the Rights of the Child:** document approved by the United Nations Organization in 1959, with the objective of protecting the rights of children.

**War:** armed conflict between two or more nations or sides.

**The Balkan War:** an armed conflict which took place in 1912-1913 between the Balkan League (made up of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia) and the Ottoman Empire.

**First World War:** also known as the Great War. It began on 28 July 1914 and ended on 11 November 1918. 32 countries were involved, on two sides: the Allies and the Central Powers.

**UN:** United Nations. A global government association that facilitates cooperation on issues such as international law, international peace and security, economic and social development, humanitarian affairs and human rights. It was founded on 24 October 1945.



