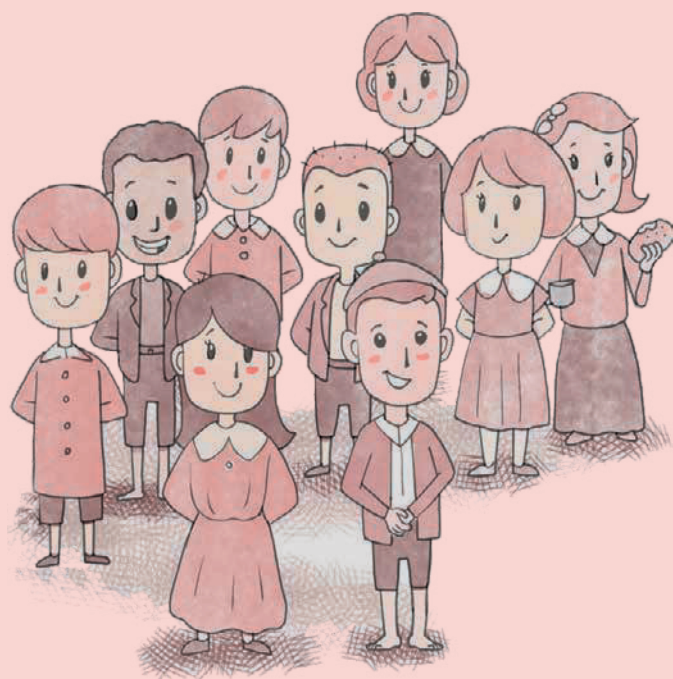


Eglantyne Jebb

• a life dedicated to childhood •







www.savethechildren.ch

Eglantyne Jebb: a life dedicated to childhood

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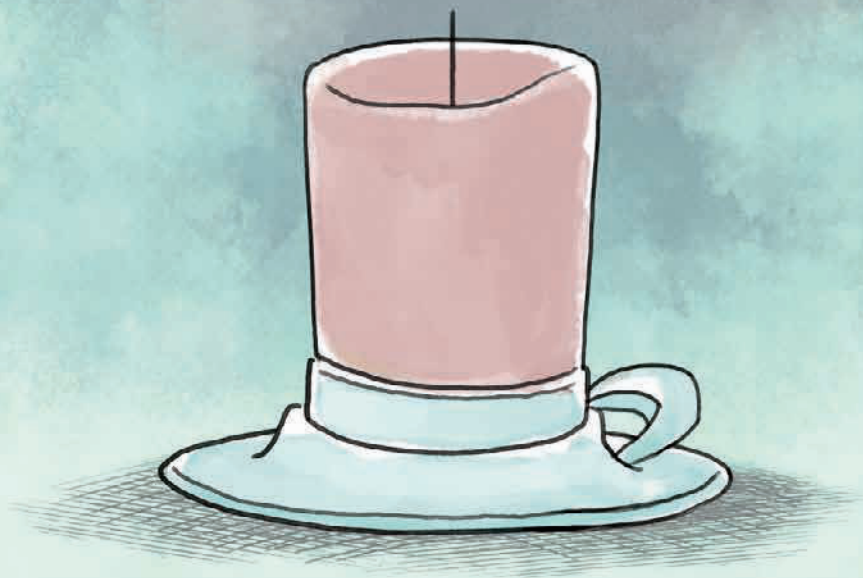
María Josefina Menéndez Carvajal (CEO Save the Children Mexico)
& Ömer Güven (CEO Save the Children Switzerland), 2019





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

Eglantyne Jebb



Before you start reading my story,
I'm going to ask you to light a candle.



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



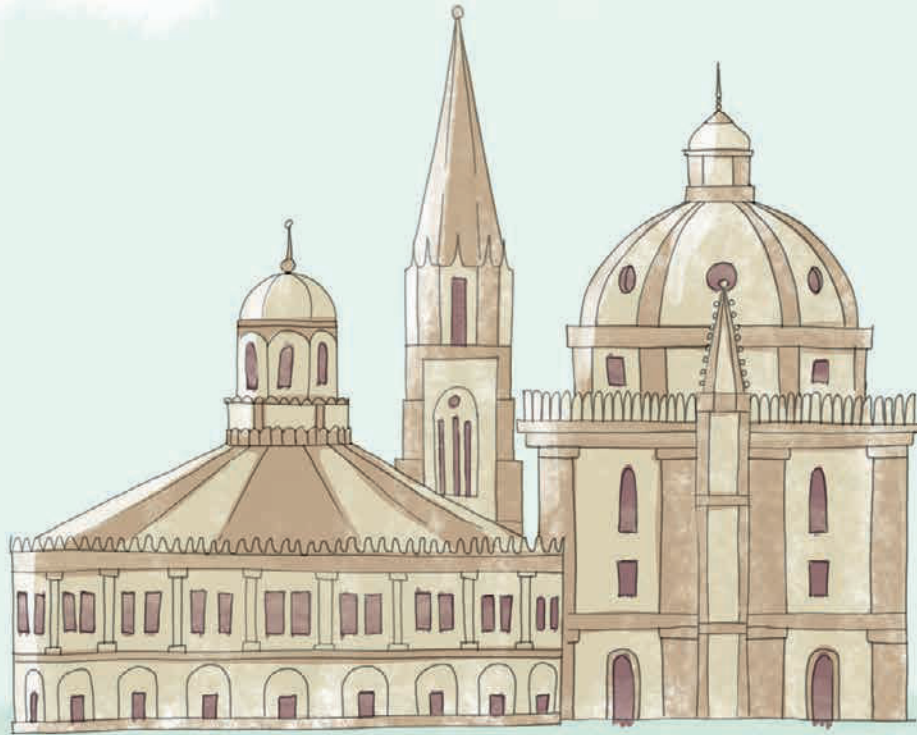
I was born on 25th of August, 1876, in a beautiful country house in the United Kingdom, and five years later on 3rd of March, 1881, my sister Dorothy, my life-long colleague and collaborator, was born.



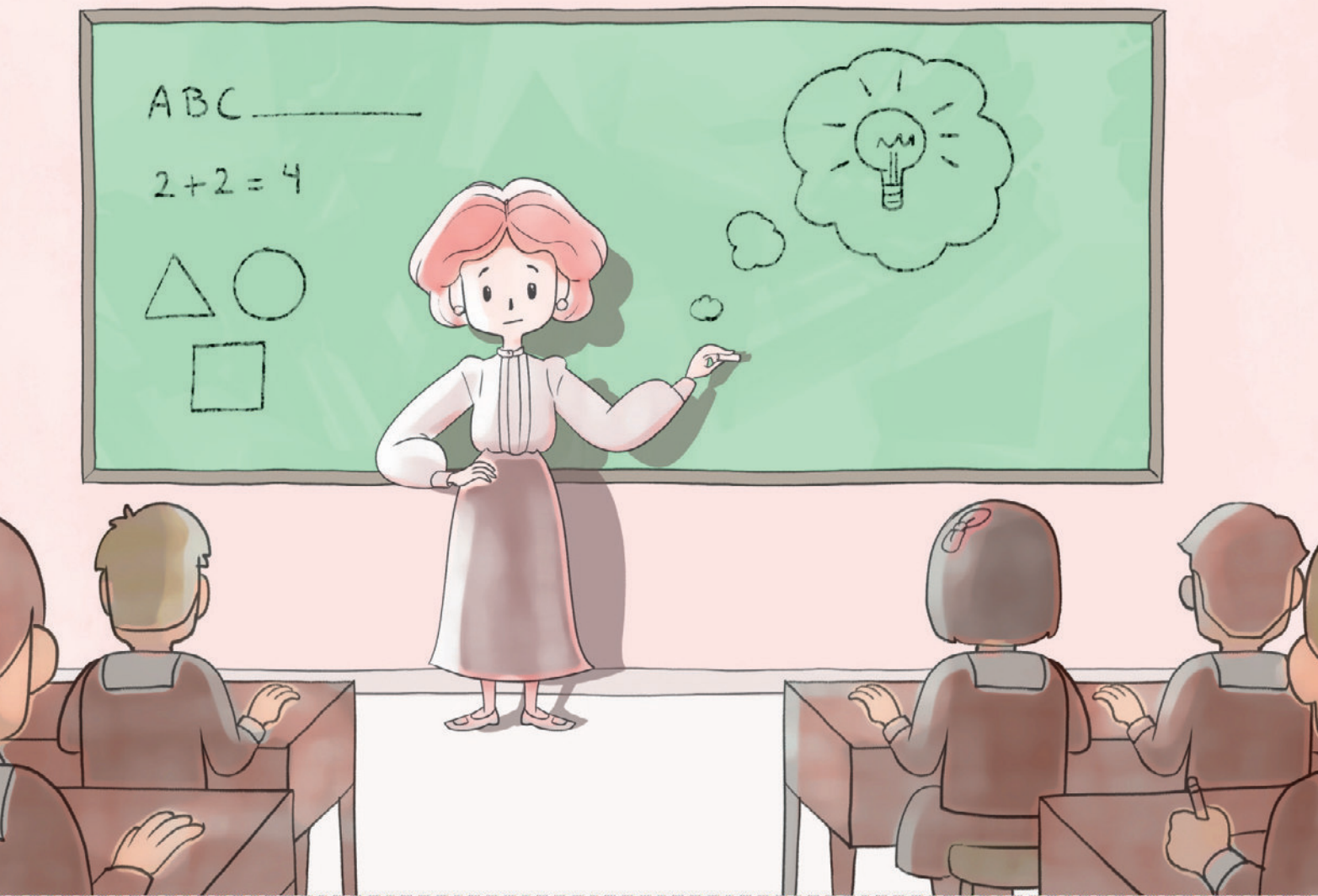
My parents, Arthur and Eglantyne Louisa, were always interested in helping others. My mother started a movement to teach domestic sciences and handicrafts to the local people in the village and my father, a man of law, was always interested in participating in local affairs.



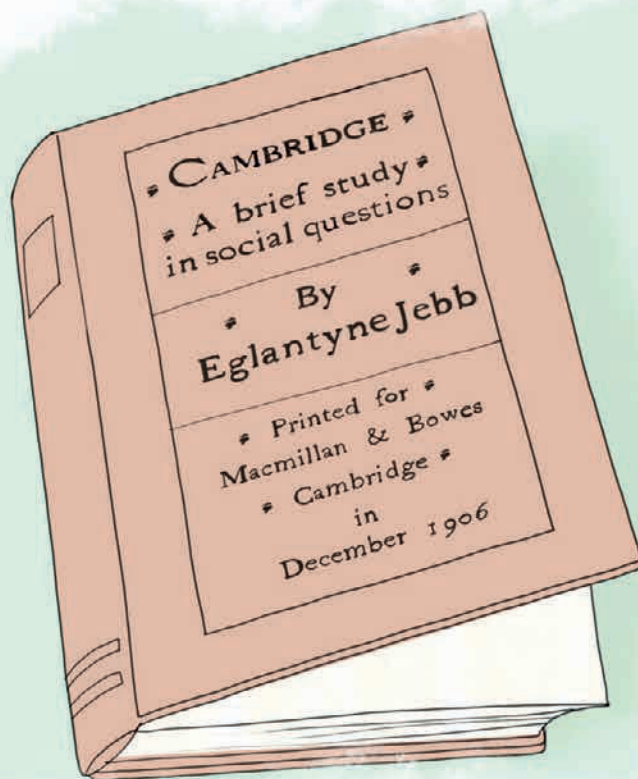
I had five siblings. I loved horse-riding, swimming, boating and reading. Undoubtedly, my childhood was very happy and privileged.



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 frustrating. I tried hard, but it wasn't enough to 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 difference in the lives of the most disadvantaged?



I decided to become a member of a charity organisation in the town of Cambridge. There, I wrote a book about the poverty of the place, in which I concluded, amongst other things, that it was important for children to go to school until they were at least fourteen.





In 1913, I went to join the war effort,
to directly help the thousands of sick and injured refugees
lining up in long queues to receive a bowl of soup.

The sight of the sad faces of the little ones
who no longer played, nor smiled, but just cried as
they thought about their homes lying in ruins,
made a strong impression on me.

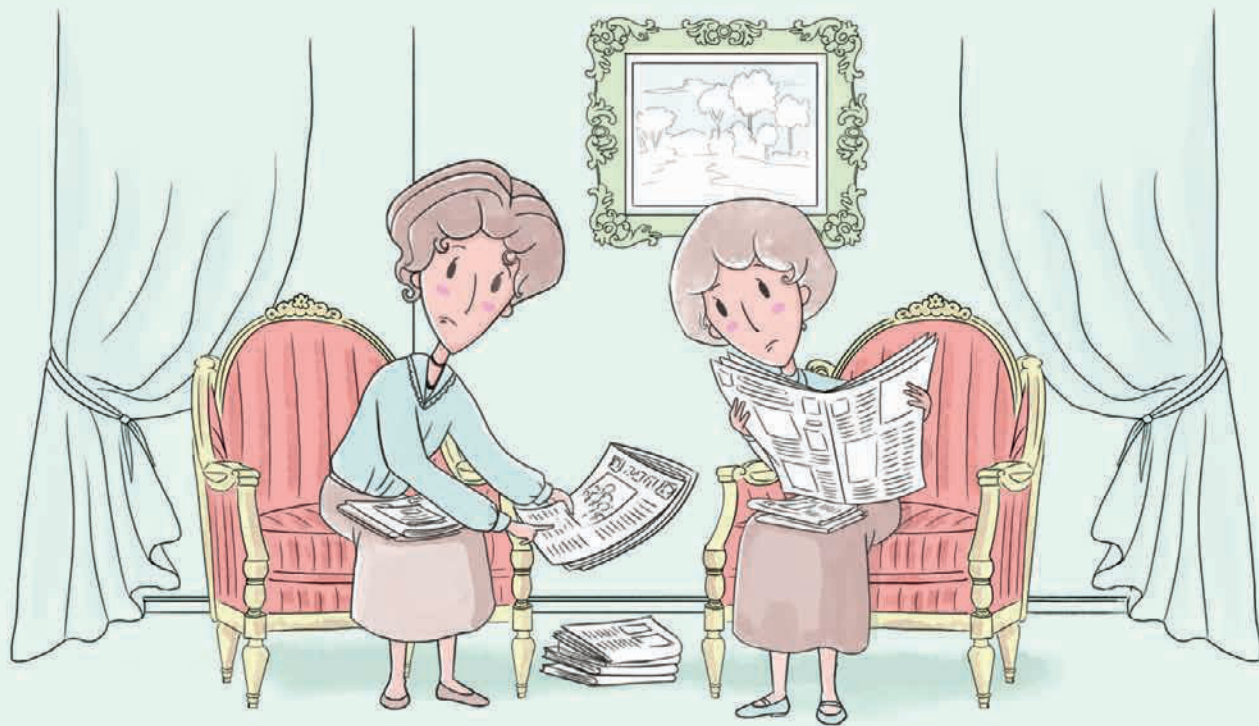
With those little faces imprinted on my mind,
I returned to the peace of my home in London but
I did not sit there twiddling my thumbs.



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 First World War
broke out. The future looked very bleak.
How could one person achieve anything in
the face of such a terrible tragedy?





My sister Dorothy was convinced that the first step in bringing about change was to make sure people were well-informed, and that they did not know only what was written in the nation's 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.

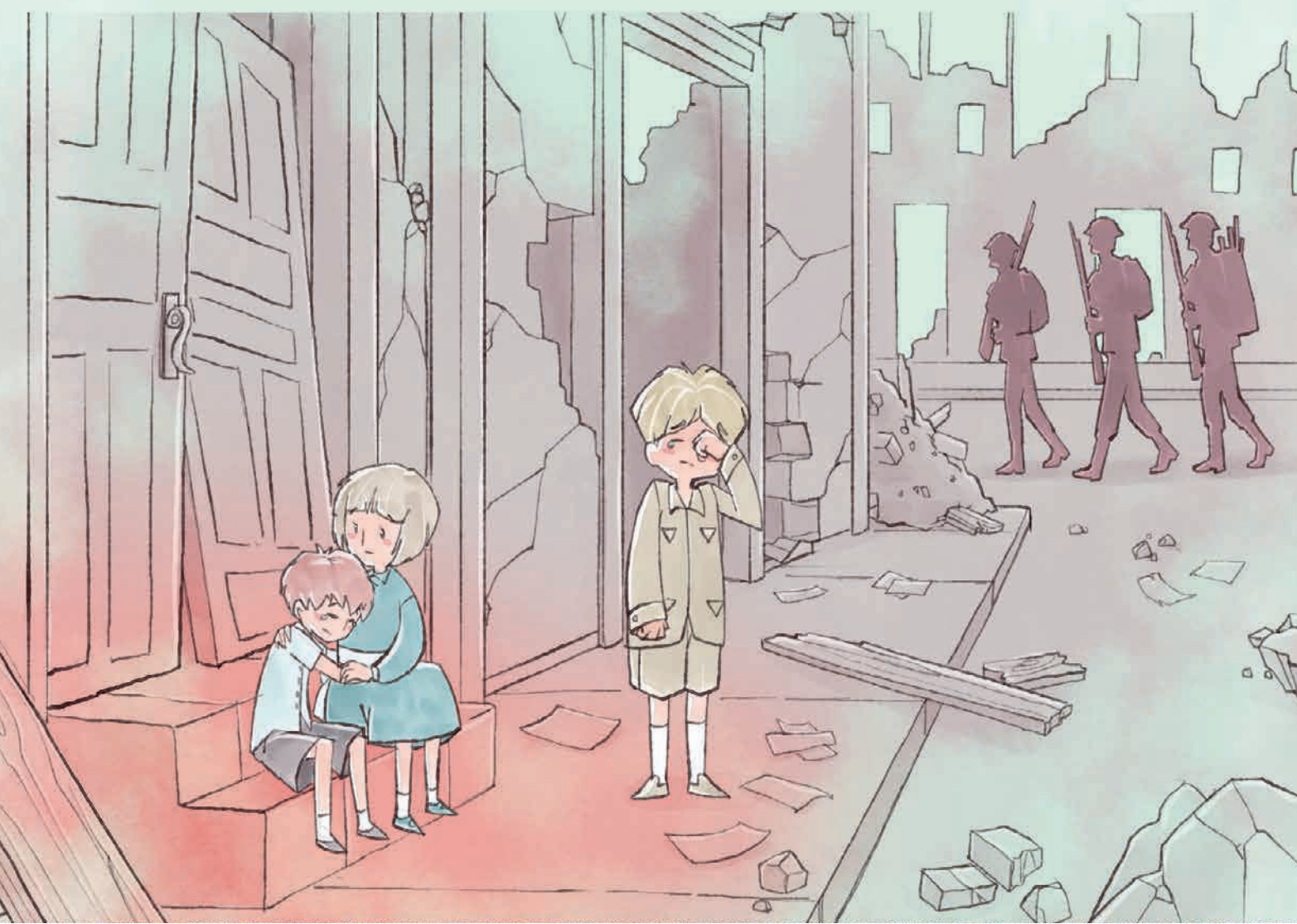






Dorothy started her own newspaper, and also wrote very successfully for 'Cambridge Magazine'.

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 realise how important it was to help them.

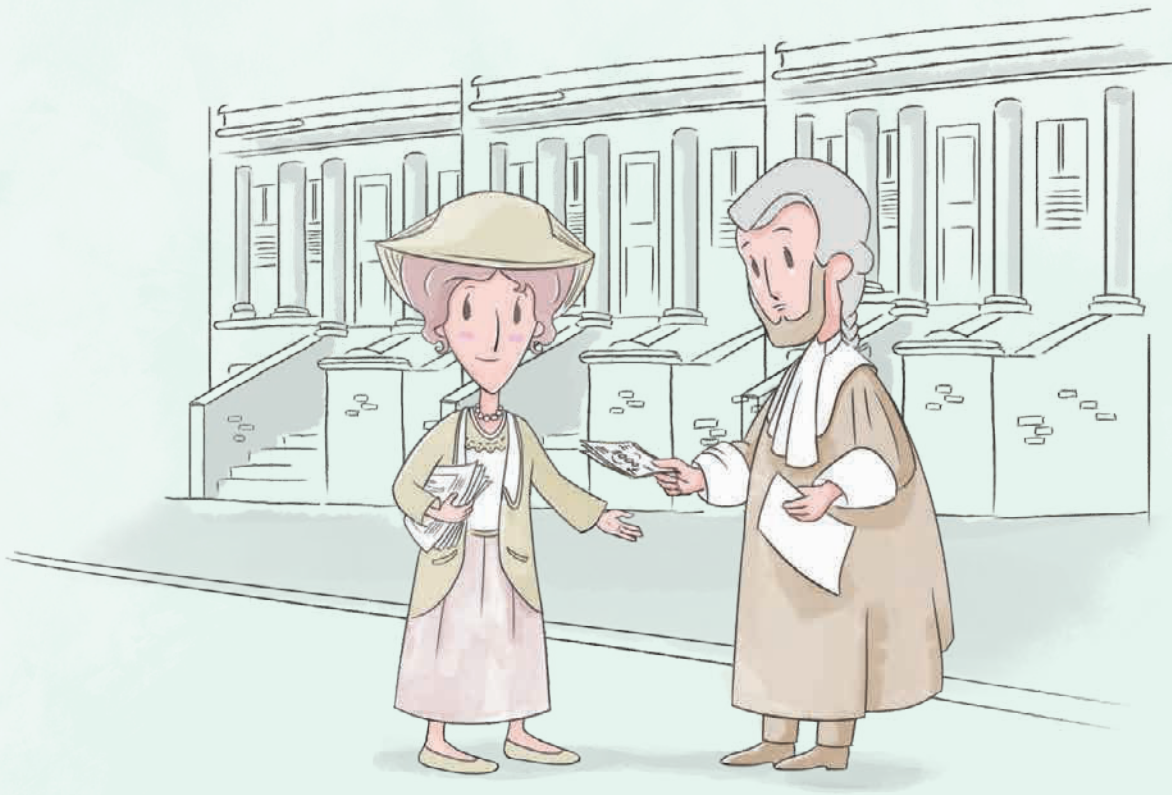


The First World War ended on 11th of November 1918.
It had lasted 4 years, 3 months and 14 days.

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.

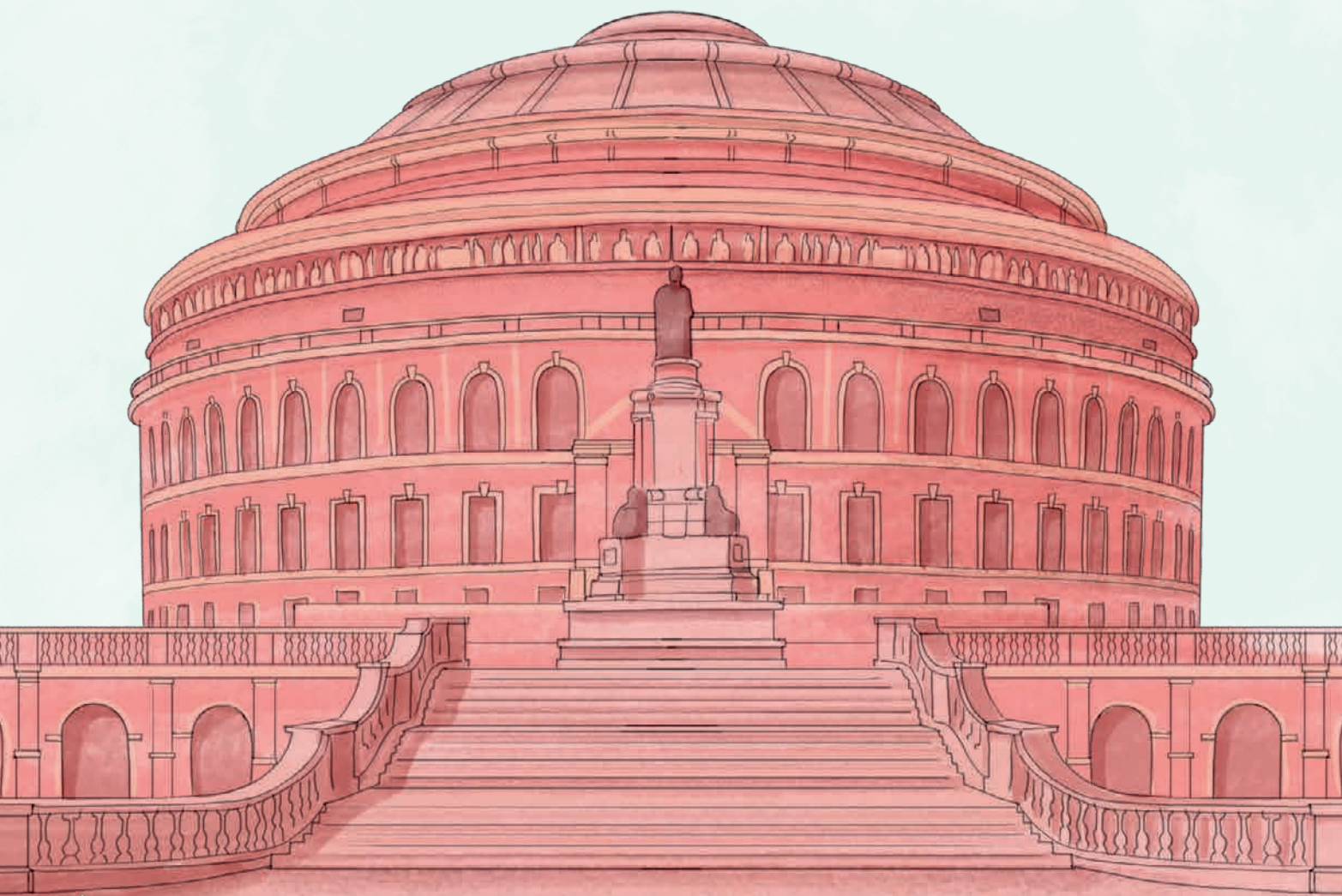
The figures were horrific. We had to fight this tragedy!

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



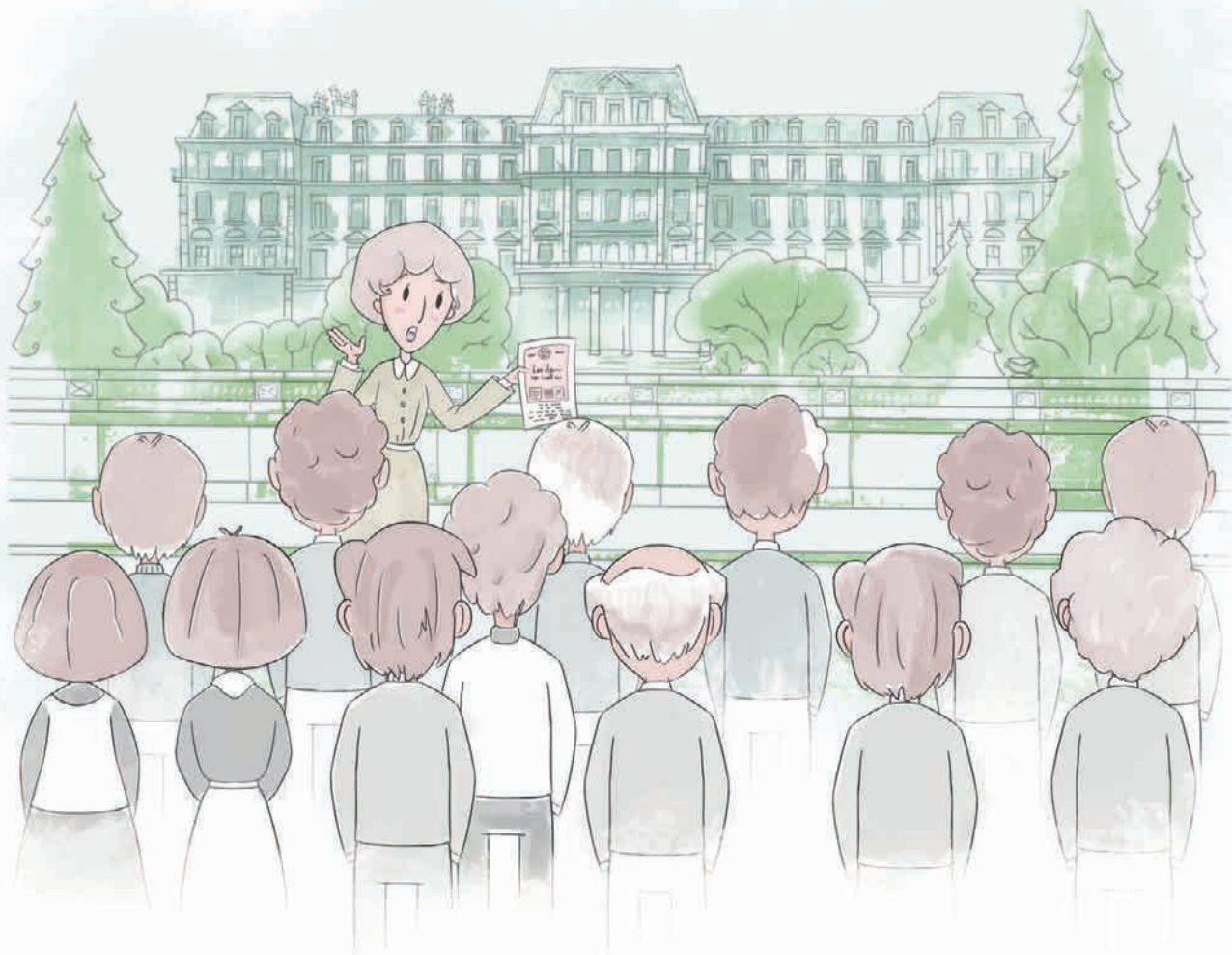
I explained to the judge that the little boys and girls were so weak and sick, they needed our help. I was so convincing that he too donated money to save the children, and let me go free.

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 19th of May 1919, Dorothy and I went to the Albert Hall to explain to a large audience that it was 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. All in a very tense atmosphere including some members of the audience who had rotten apples at the ready, waiting for the right moment to throw them at me.



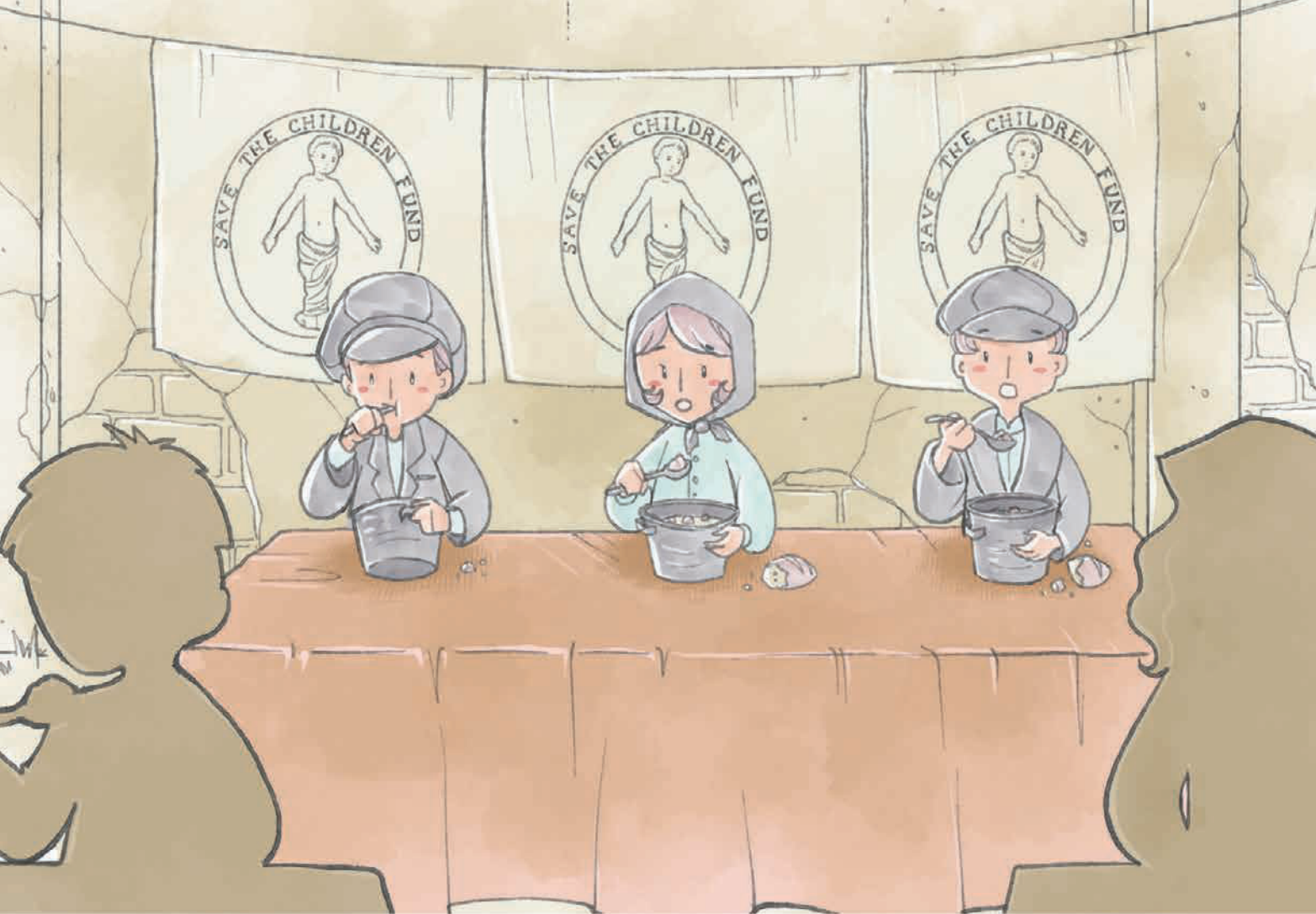
But my words ended up convincing them that: “All wars are wars against children.”

That day we succeeded in raising 10 thousand pounds! 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 and the money reached its destination; **Save the Children** was a name that people were starting to recognise, but I felt we needed to make more effort to make our movement global.

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

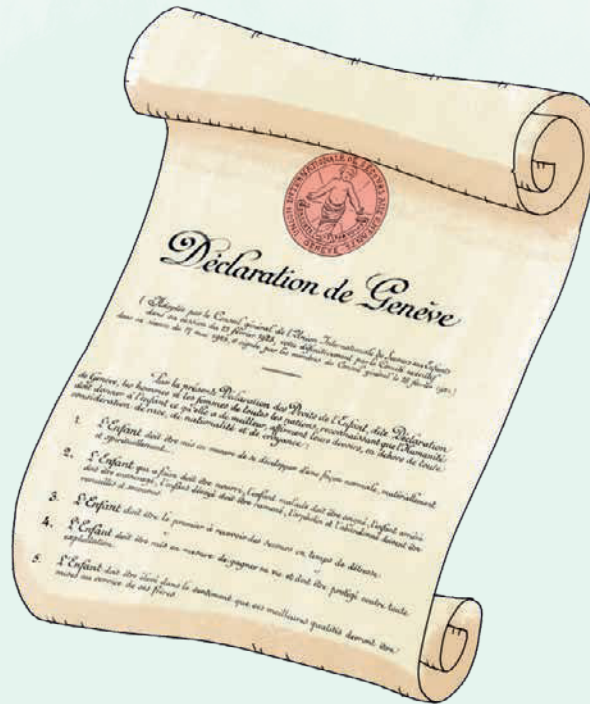




In 1921 humanity suffered another tragedy: a great famine in the Volga region, in Russia. We helped, we saved thousands of lives, but I insisted that our efforts were not enough.



One afternoon in 1922 I climbed Mount Salève overlooking Geneva;
feeling very inspired, I drafted a document which
in 1923 I announced with the name
'Declaration of the Rights of the Child'.

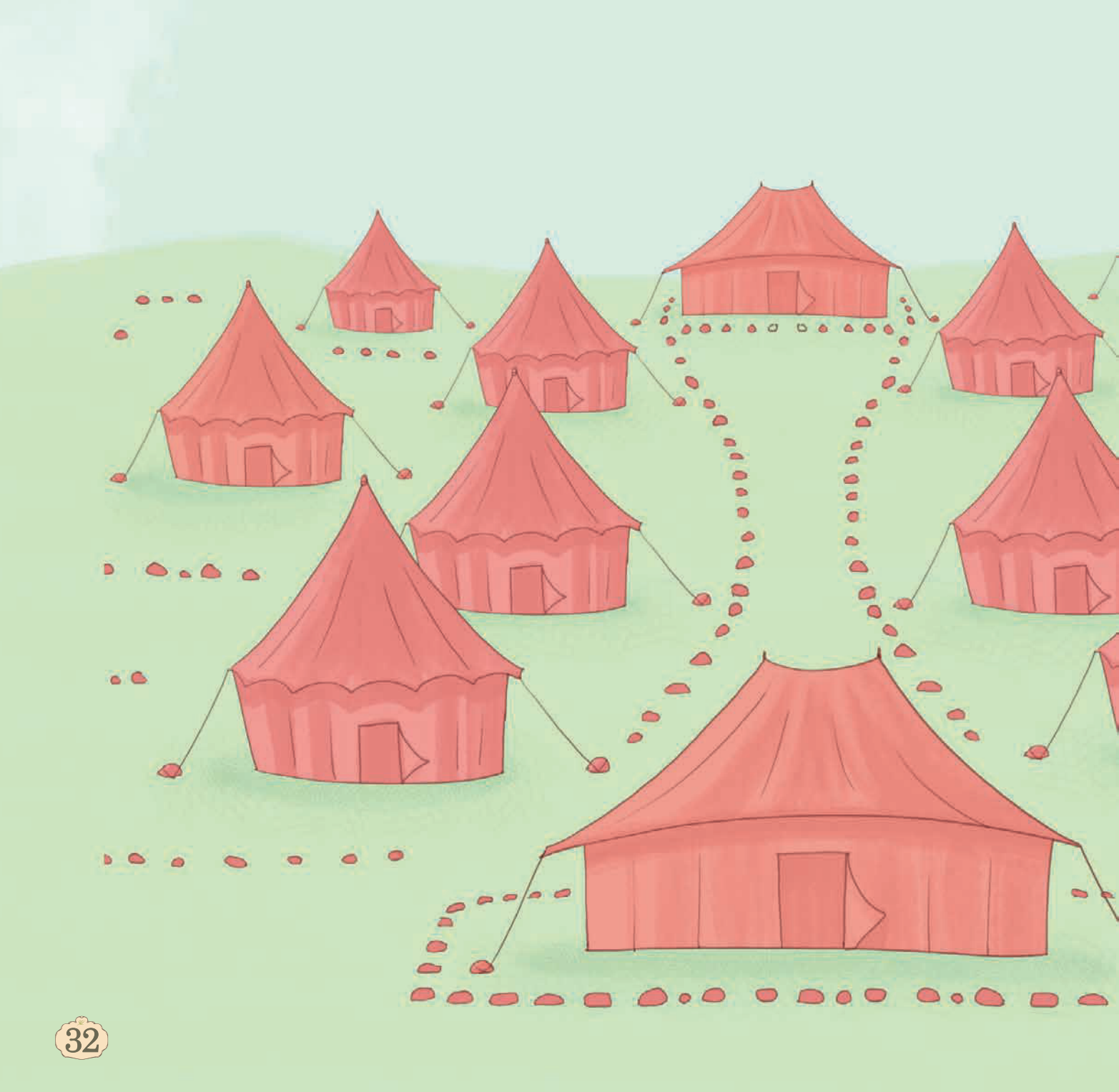


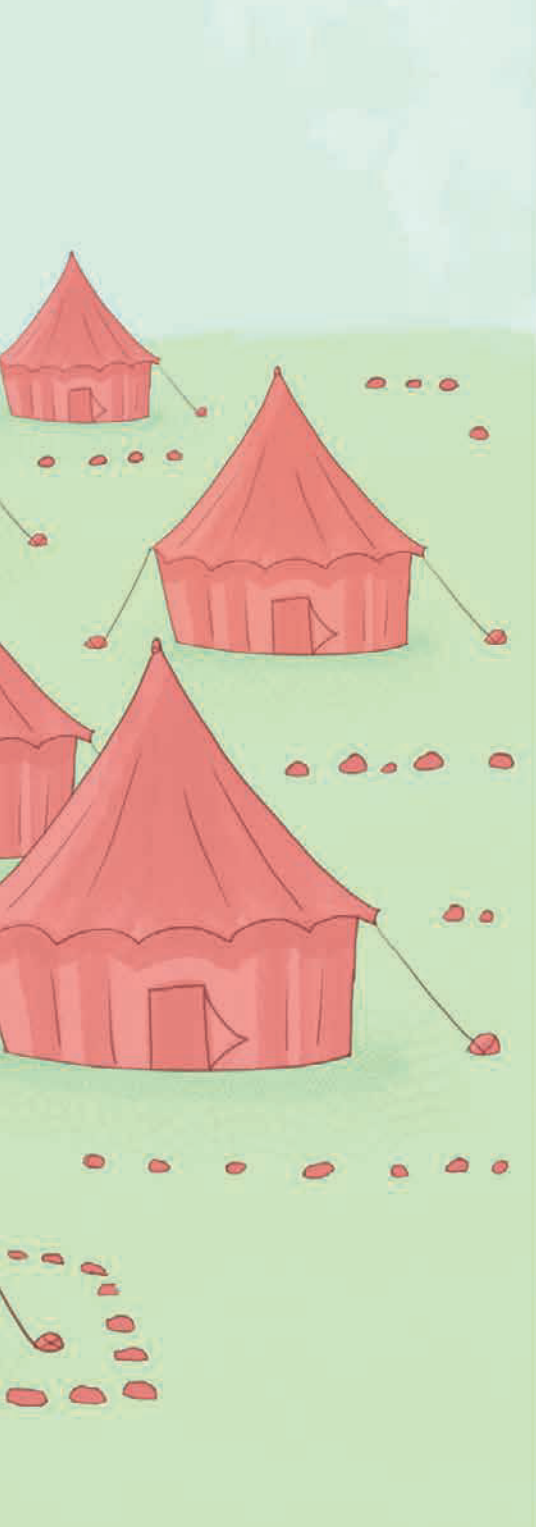
A year later, that Declaration was endorsed
by the Fifth General Assembly of
the League of Nations – a very important event.



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







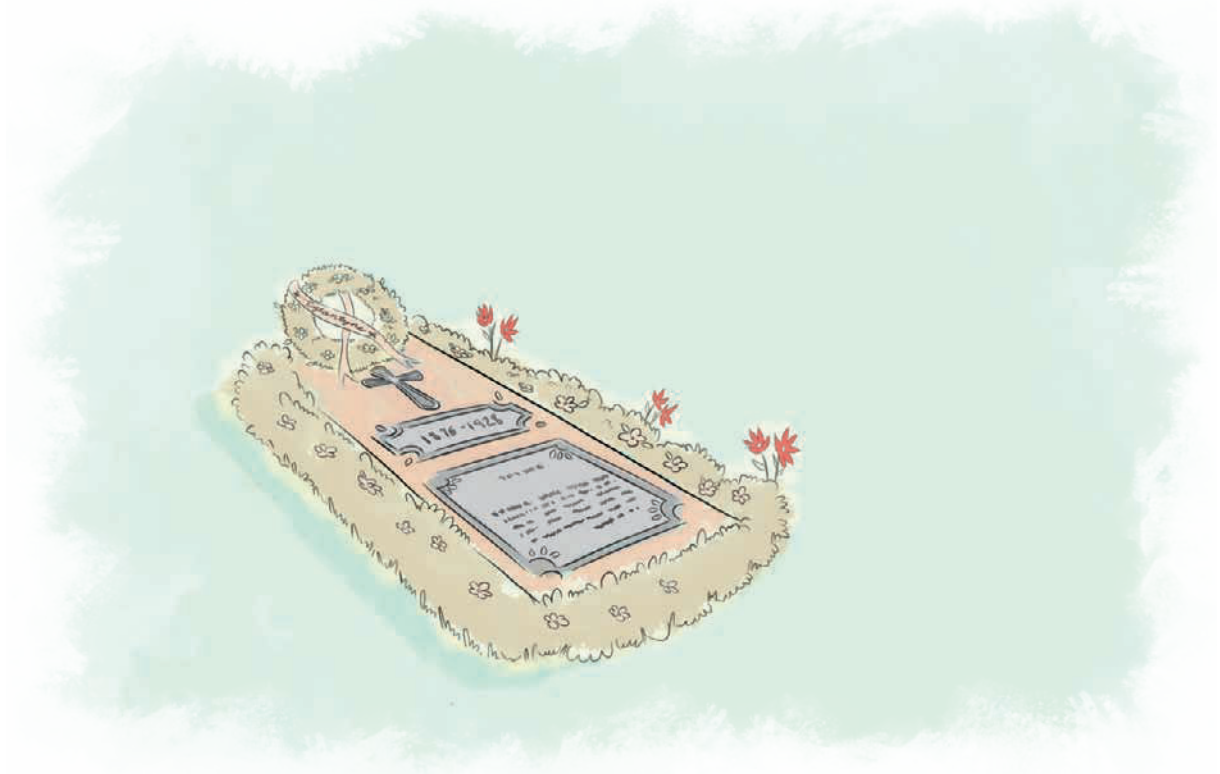
At **Save the Children** we worked very hard. It was 1925, and we created villages for refugees in Bulgaria and Albania.

In Hungary, we offered professional training to young people, and what started as a small flame was transformed into an intense light of hope ... a light that did not illuminate other continents.

The children of Africa and Asia were more disadvantaged than those of Europe, I thought, and started to develop a plan to reach them.



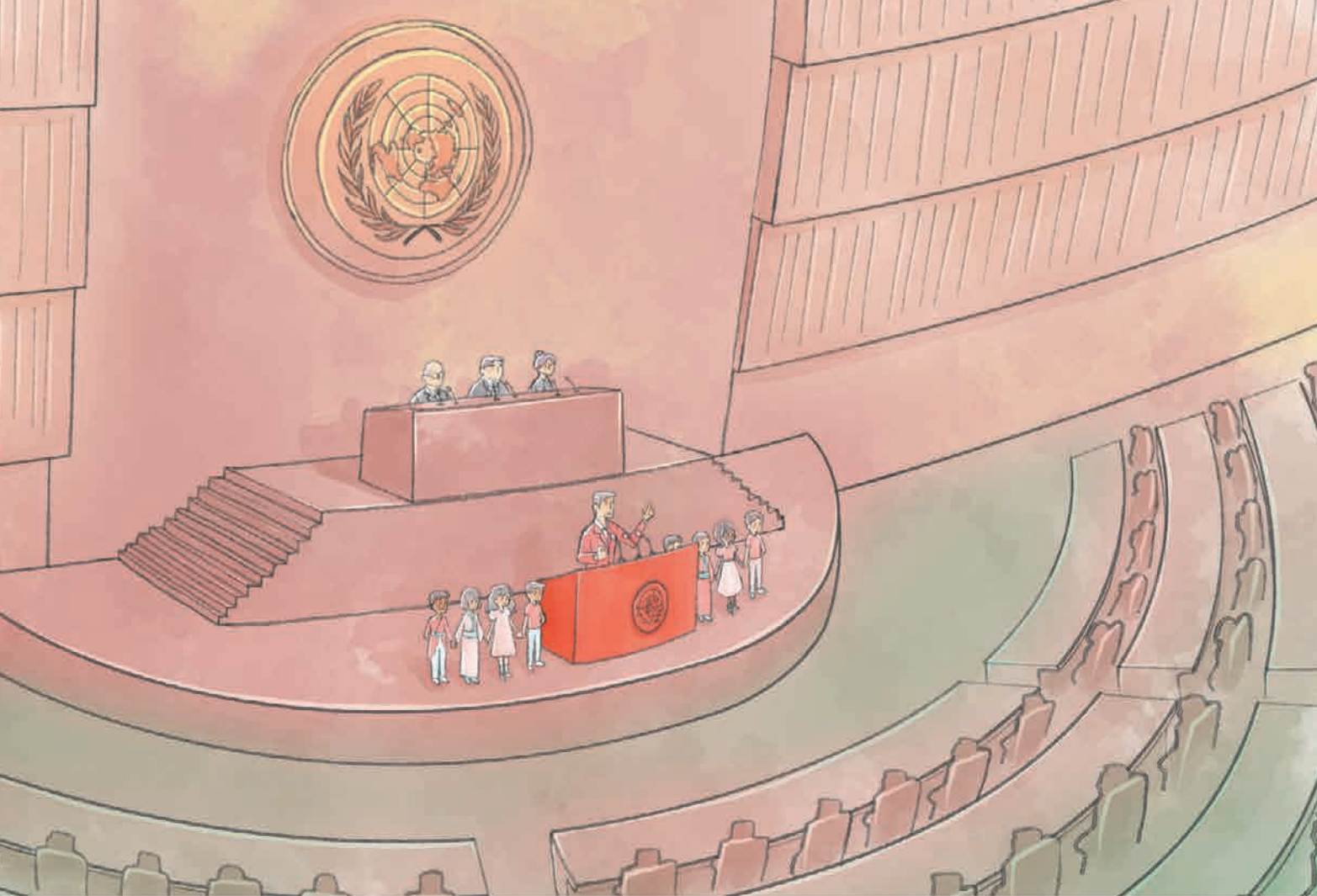
“As there are undoubtedly more children suffering in Asia and in Africa than in Europe, we should demonstrate the sincerity of our claim to universality by working in those continents as soon as we can raise sufficient funds for that purpose.”



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



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



However, in 1959, my legacy was recognised by the UN
as the inspiration for the Declaration of the Rights of the Child,
which resulted in the **Convention on the Rights
of the Child** on 20th of November, 1989,
an agreement still in force now.



Currently, Save the Children is present
in 120 countries on five continents,
where it has helped millions of children.



They say we are insignificant in the darkness that surrounds humanity. But, in reality we are light, and although tiny if we unite, our brightness can become more and more intense.



Now, look at the candle again, and promise to take care of it, so it doesn't go out ... for it will be the 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 20th of November, 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.

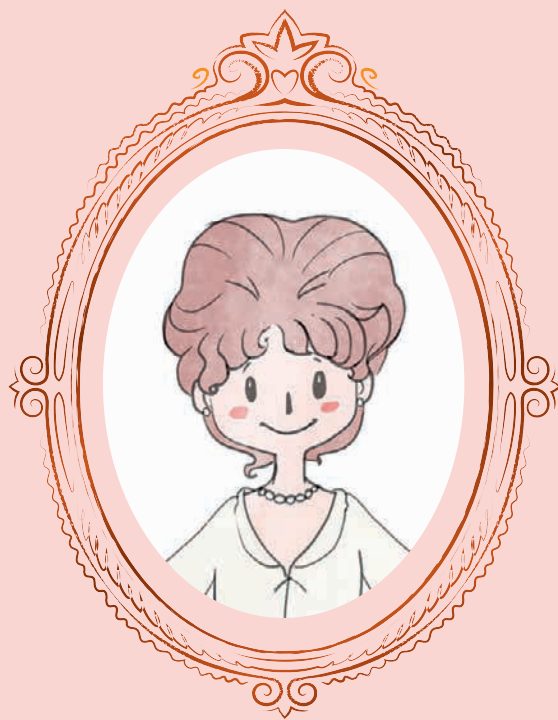
Declaration of the Rights of the Child: Document approved by the United Nations Organization in 1959, with the objective of protecting the rights of children.

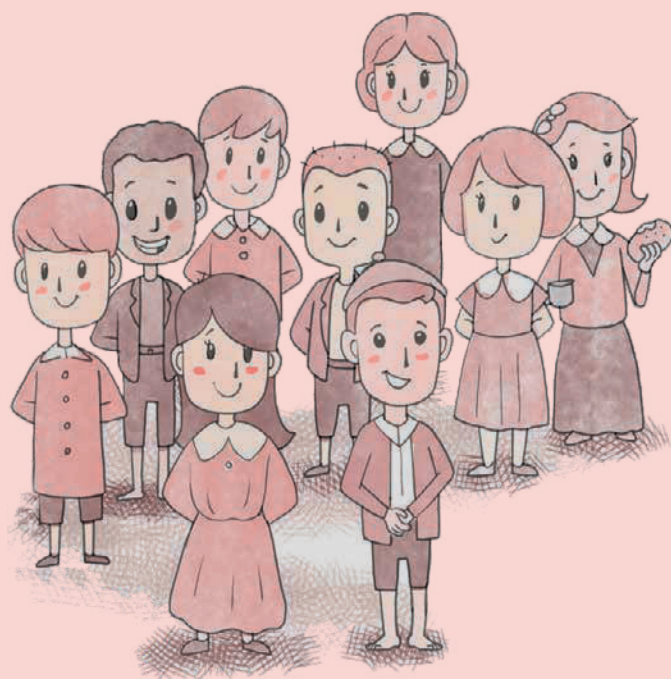
War: Armed conflict between two or more nations or sides.

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 20th of 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 24th of October 1945.







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