

***Chinese Whispers: The Gladys Aylward Story*** by Carol Purves, Day One Publications, Herefordshire, UK, 2004. (7 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

### **1. Too Old to Learn**

In April, the Principal sent for her again. He had received reports on her progress. It stated she had engaged in the ordinary studies and practical work, but simple tests had revealed her limitations.

As Gladys stood in front of the large imposing desk she could see he was looking uncomfortable.

‘Miss Aylward,’ he began diffidently, ‘I’m sorry. But you just have not been able to cope with your studies this term. You haven’t been able to learn all you have needed to learn. Maybe in your late twenties, you are too old to grasp the Chinese language. You started to learn too late. I can’t allow you to waste any more of your time or ours. You will have to leave.’ [page 14]

### **2. God, please use me.**

Eventually she could stand it no longer. In the quietness of her own room she placed her Daily Light and Bible on the bedside table. On top of these she placed all the money she possessed, 2 1/2 pounds. Falling on her knees, she prayed as she had never prayed before:

‘O God, here is my Bible, here is my money, here am I. Please use us, God, please use us.’

Rising from her feet, she made two resolutions, which she tried to keep all her life. Firstly, never again would she ask someone else to do a job God was asking her to do. Secondly, if God would show her the way, she would go to China even if it means being unsponsored. [pages 15-16]

### **3. Going to China without Help.**

Earning money to pay for her fare to China also became a top priority. If a missionary society would not support her to go there, she would go without their help. Her small amount of savings was slowly increasing. [page 17]

### **4. Traveling Overland in War**

China was over five thousand miles away and very few people needed information about it. The clerk’s face took on a grave expression and Gladys could only imagine the thoughts that were going through his head. He’d had many strange requests before, but this would be one of the strangest. She knew he was looking at a slight young lady, whose dress and demeanor indicated that she was in service. Would he think she was asking on behalf of her master or mistress?

‘£90 by sea and £47 overland on the Trans-Siberian Railway,’ he said curtly.

‘Then I’ll have to go overland, but I can’t pay for it all at once.’ Gladys explained. ‘I’ll pay in installments. Here’s the first installment of £3.’ [page 17]

‘But you don’t understand. You can’t travel by train. There’s a civil war raging.’

‘Oh, that doesn’t matter. By the time I’ve paid the complete fare, the war will be over.’

The clerk then uttered words that Gladys was to remember many months later: ‘We do like to deliver our customers alive and not dead.’

### **5. Mrs. Jeannine Lawson, Elderly Missionary.**

The next piece of the jigsaw happened during a missionary meeting where she was helping her mother. The speaker, who had spent some time in China, was talking about a Scottish missionary, a Mrs. Jeannine Lawson.

Mrs. Lawson had just returned to China after a period in England. She had travelled out to work in the Shensi district. From her studies of China, Gladys now knew exactly where that was. It was a remote area far up in the mountains. Few westerners had ever travelled there, the only visitors being mule trains, which travelled along the rugged tracks from city to city.

Jeannine has served in other parts of China for many years as a missionary with her husband. When he died she returned to England, but her love for China and the lost Chinese souls was so great that at the age of seventy-three she returned. She knew she wanted to die in China, but before she returned there, she put out a request for a person to carry on the work when she died. She needed a younger person to help her. [page 18-19]

### **6. All for China.**

Jeannine Lawson had now returned to China, but Gladys wrote to her. She was so excited when she received the reply. Yes, Jeannine would love to receive her out in China. All Gladys had to do was to pay her own fare and Jeannine would arrange to meet her. It was imperative now for Gladys to finish paying for the ticket as soon as possible.

It was no easy task. She did everything she could. She took on extra work during her days off and cut down on fares and food whenever she could. Most young girls her age collected for a bottom drawer, items that could be used when they got married and set up their own home. Gladys sold the few items she had accumulated. The call to China was greater.

She did anything that would give her money. She worked day and night, washed up in hotels, served at dinner parties, scrubbed floors and even worked as a kitchen maid.

Some of her measures were more extreme. Woolworth's in Oxford Street has a large bin of items all for three or six pence. Rummaging through the items, Gladys found two left shoes of her size. After she had bought them, and put them on, she went to the Portabello Road and sold her expensive leather ones, saying, 'It's all for China.'

She told nobody until later that she travelled all the way to China in shoes that were both for left feet. She never regretted the purchase of the shoes, but her feet later paid the price. [p.19]

### **7. God Will Take Care of Us.**

They stayed there [Hwang Ho River] for two days, waiting for something to happen. Gladys did not know what to do next. There was no boat to take them across, and nobody to give them food. She was worried and frightened by her responsibilities and felt like giving up; God had let her down. In the midst of her misery, Sualan spoke to her;

'You know the story you told us about Moses taking the people of Israel across the Red Sea?'

'Yes,' Gladys replied cautiously, anticipating the conversation.

'If God did that for Moses, couldn't he get us across?'

Gladys was tired, hungry, and ill and could sometimes be very sharp tongued when she was cross.

'Yes God did, but we are not living in those days and I'm not Moses.'

The reply came back quietly and full of trust.

'No, but God is still God.'

Gladys sat quite still. Her own faith had been almost non-existent, but now one of her girls had shamed her. Of course, God had protected them in the past. He wouldn't let them down now. He had not brought them here to die. [page 81]