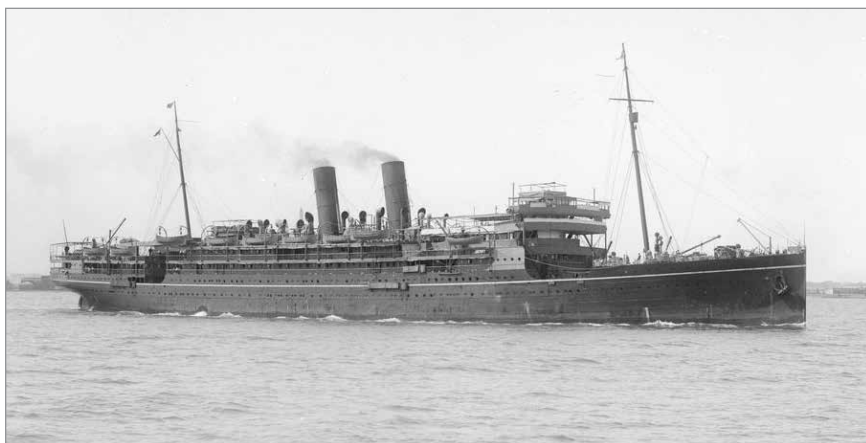


CHAPTER 1

About Eva

On November 3, 1920, Eva May Clements died in Rangoon, the capital of Burma (now Yangon, Myanmar). We know little of Eva's life; we do not even have a photograph. She was born in 1897, near Bundaberg on the eastern coast of Queensland, Australia. We know nothing more about her until September 1914, when, at the age of sixteen, Eva took a position in the headquarters of the Australasian Union Conference, near Sydney. She worked there for more than five years in a stenographic and secretarial role; in January 1920, she was called to serve as a stenographer (administrative assistant) for the president of the Southern Asia Division in Lucknow, India. Today, the church would not call an international service employee to work in a clerical capacity. But in 1920, there were merely a thousand members across the whole of India, and there may not have been a believer in India who had stenographic expertise in English and was familiar with the language of denominational administration—and so the division called for a missionary stenographer.¹



SS Mantua. Photo credit: Alan C. Green, State Library of Victoria (Australia).

The fact that the call went to Eva suggests something about her character and that she was good at her job. So does the fact that when people spoke of Eva, they described her as “devoted to her work” and to the Adventist message.²

Eva accepted the call, and so, on March 3, 1920, she departed Sydney on the P&O Steam Navigation Company’s SS *Mantua*, sailing for Bombay via Melbourne and Colombo. Having landed in Bombay (the former name of Mumbai), she traveled by train on the 880-mile journey to Lucknow, where she arrived safely on March 29. It had been only eighty-four days since the General Conference executive committee had voted to approve John E. Fulton’s suggestion that Australia “supply a stenographer to India.”³ Fulton had only arrived in India the previous year but had been president of the Australasian Union Conference from 1909 to 1916 and knew Eva. It is likely that he proposed she, in particular, be sent as the stenographer. If so, it suggests that she may have been interested in mission service earlier.⁴



John E. Fulton.

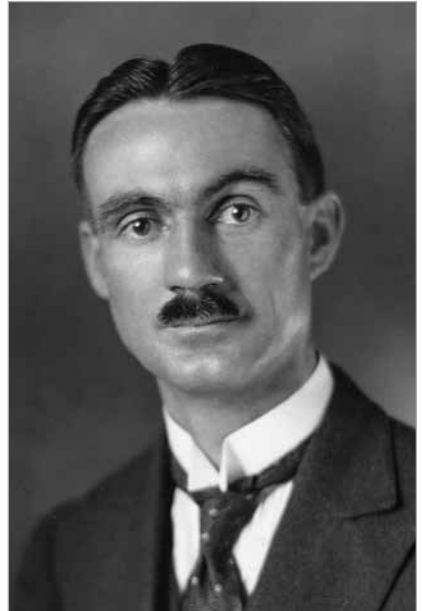
Eva seems to have settled well in Lucknow. According to her obituary, “She entered heartily into her work at the Lucknow office, and much enjoyed life,” and was popular among her new colleagues, thanks to a “bright disposition, [and] spirit of helpfulness.” A former colleague in Sydney recalled that, in her letters, she had “no complaints to make concerning the climate or environment [culture] in India.” In one such letter, Eva wrote, “I want to tell you that I am glad I came to India.”⁵

She had, however, been there for five months when, around August 31, she left with Fulton’s wife, on a trip to Burma (then part of the Southern Asia Division), intending to meet John Fulton in Rangoon, as he was then in southern India. Susie and Eva traveled first by rail from Lucknow to Calcutta (today’s Kolkata), then by ship to the port town of Moulmein in southeast Burma, and finally, by boat up the great Salween River to

the remote town of Kamamaung. They stayed there for two to three weeks with the Fultons' daughter Agnes and her husband, Eric B. Hare, who later became legendary for his mission stories. Lucknow was a huge city—a center of civilization for centuries and celebrated by the famous author Rudyard Kipling. But in Kamamaung, they were eighty miles from the nearest Europeans. Eva must have thought that she was really getting into the mission field! She and Mrs. Fulton enjoyed their time there, but Eva suffered from a fever. Yet it seemed to pass; in October, they moved to Rangoon, where they met Pastor Fulton, who had a series of meetings, culminating in a ten-day general meeting of the Burma Union Mission at the end of the month.⁶

Although absent from the office, Fulton was still conducting presidential business. In early October, Eva Clements was kept busy with his correspondence; later in the month, as Mrs. Fulton later recalled, Eva spent much time "writing programmes for meetings and copying budgets." Eva kept up this work, Susie Fulton wrote, "almost to the day she went to the Hospital." For unfortunately, Eva had to be admitted to the Rangoon General Hospital for appendicitis. On the penultimate morning of the union session, Sabbath, October 30, her appendix was removed, apparently without complications. Rangoon General Hospital was a modern institution, and she ought to have recovered. But the fever she contracted in Kamamaung in September had greatly weakened Eva, and on visiting her before the operation, the Fultons noted that, though "quite cheerful," she was anxious "that her illness might terminate fatally."⁷

Sadly, her concern was justified. On the night of the October 31, she slipped into a coma. She never regained consciousness. In the early morning of November 3, 1920, she passed away. Without the strain and sickness arising from her missionary service, Eva would almost



Eric B. Hare.

certainly have successfully recuperated from a relatively routine surgery. As Susie Fulton wrote, "Her term of service in India was short indeed." Full of grief, Fulton wrote that "we cannot understand why one so young, so useful, so eager to serve, and so greatly needed in the mission field should be so suddenly taken away."⁸

Eva May Clements was twenty-three years old. She had been in the mission field for seven months. From the time her call was voted by the General Conference executive committee to the time she was buried was just under ten months.



Perhaps some readers, having read this far, may be thinking, *What is the point of this story? What is its significance? What is the catch, the surprise revelation, to justify telling this sad story of a long-forgotten and, on the face of it, unimportant woman? Did she have children who became world-renowned? A cousin who became a division president or a General Conference departmental director? Did a niece, inspired by stories of Aunt Eva, become an immensely successful missionary among an obscure African tribe? Did her staunchness inspire onlookers so much that a local official was converted?*

The answer to each of these questions is No. Eva May Clements had no children and no famous relatives, and her death had an impact on only a small circle of people. She lived in near anonymity, died in obscurity, and rests in a neglected cemetery far from her home, far even from where she had been called to serve and the colleagues who had barely got to know her. Circumstances conspired to consign Eva Clements to oblivion. Her friends and family in Australia grieved when the telegram arrived with the news. But their lives continued. Some three years after her death, a Southern Asia Division committee voted to erect "markers on the graves" of three deceased missionaries; Eva's among them. After that, she was entirely forgotten.⁹

So why do I tell this story? Partly because Eva is not alone in being forgotten. Too often, we only tell the same few stories from Adventist history, the stories of Ellen and James White, Joseph Bates, John Andrews, Uriah Smith, and the first generation of pioneers. To these, we occasionally add the stories of a few famous twentieth-century figures and those considered major church leaders. Yet Adventist history is

deep and wide and full of stories we never tell because we do not remember them: extraordinary stories of dedicated men and women who, quite literally, took their lives in their hands but did so because they had put those lives in the hands of the Holy Spirit. As a result, they were willing to risk danger, deprivation, disease, and death.

In many cases, they truly gave their all so that the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 might be proclaimed, the church might be built up, and Jesus lifted up around the world. These ordinary women and men are the makers of the modern, worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church; yet they are, in many cases, molding in obscurity. This book tells some of these forgotten stories.

Another reason for starting with Eva's fatal story is because, though it disappeared for so long, it is not entirely lost. Some parts of her story can be recovered. We know little of what she thought or felt, but we can piece together a time line for the last year of her life—something that is impossible for many others. And there were many other missionaries who died in the mission field.

Eva stands for them—and in particular for the many who died, as she did, soon after arriving overseas. We often know little about them other than their sacrifices and their suffering. Eva's experiences can in some sense, represent theirs and remind us that every missionary has a story. No matter how anonymous their deaths, they were wives and daughters, sons and husbands, who were beloved in life and lamented in death.

I also tell this story partly because the tragedy it represents was not uncommon. It is not just Eva's poignant, premature death but its apparent pointlessness that makes it seem so tragic. Eva May Clements never accomplished great deeds for Jesus; she never had the chance. She did her work diligently and cheerfully, but before she could achieve anything noteworthy, she died—willing to give her mortal life in order that others might have eternal life. And in that willingness to serve, to risk literal life and limb, her life was surely not pointless: not in the eyes of her heavenly Father. But also, I hope, not in the eyes of today's Seventh-day Adventist Christians, once we are reminded of these missionaries' stories and their sacrifices.

The stories of Eva and of many others who gave their lives for Adventist mission remind us of the true foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When established in 1863, it had 3,500 members,

found only in the northern states of the United States, plus a handful in Canada. In 2019, Seventh-day Adventist Church members are in almost every country of the world. But today, we can too easily take that outcome for granted because we know how things turned out. It would not have been achieved without God's blessing, but also not without commitment and sacrifice to degrees that are rare today. Past generations of Adventists willingly undertook what the apostle Paul calls Christians' proper service to God—presenting their bodies as living sacrifices.

This short book tells the stories of men and women who are mostly unknown; missionaries who are forgotten, at least by their spiritual (and sometimes literal) descendants—though surely not by our Lord and Savior. Most were very young. Many were women. Many were committed laypeople, and several were self-supporting rather than on the church's payroll.

Simply put, if the Seventh-day Adventist Church had been obliged to rely only on ministers or even just on men, we would not have today's worldwide church. But it didn't. From secretaries to nurses to teachers to builders, church members volunteered, in spite of the risks—as, of course, many young pastors and their families did. But it took the efforts of all, and for many, even the ultimate price was demanded.

In this book, I will stress the sacrifices and commitment of missionaries. I will also highlight the fact that, in our first hundred years, there was rarely a shortage of recruits willing to pay the ultimate price. There is still a worldwide need for service—still areas where the Adventist presence is minimal and tenuous, where missionaries have a vital role to play—and not just in large institutions or organizational administrative headquarters but in “coming close to . . . people by personal effort” as Ellen White memorably puts it.

We still need missionaries. The stories of Eva Clements and other forgotten heroes of the church—the ones who did not become division and General Conference officers and departmental directors but who gave their lives both literally and figuratively—retain, I believe, the power to move us today. I hope that they will encourage old and young to recommit to the prophetic mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and inspire members of a new generation to be willing to offer themselves as living sacrifices.

-
1. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record* 18, no. 41 (October 12, 1914): 18. General Conference Executive Committee, "general Conference Committee Proceedings," General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, MD (hereafter GCA), Record Group 1, vol. XI, pt. ii, 505; news note, *Australasian Record* 24, no. 5 (March 9, 1920): 8.
 2. Death notice, *Australasian Record* 24, no. 23 (November 15, 1920): 8; Mrs. J. E. Susan Fulton, "Obituary," *Eastern Tidings* 15, no. 23 (December 1, 1920): 8; Mrs. J. E. Fulton, "Clements," Obituaries, *Australasian Record* 24, no. 26 (December 27, 1920): 7.
 3. News note, *Australasian Record*, March 9, 1920, 8; news note, *Eastern Tidings* 15, no. 7 (April 1, 1920): 6; General Conference Executive Committee, meeting of Jan. 5, 1920, p. 505.
 4. For John E. Fulton's career, see *The Seventh-day Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., ed. Don F. Neufeld (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald*, 1996), vol. I, p. 577. Eva was always under appointment to serve Fulton, rather than just being called in general to the Southern Asia Division.
 5. Fulton, "Clements," 7; Death notice (cited n. 2); 8; extracts from Eva Clement's letters, published as "A Touching Appeal," *Australasian Record*, November 15, 1920, 8.
 6. News note, *Eastern Tidings* 15, no. 18 (September 15, 1920): 12; Susan Fulton, letter, September 14, 1920, quoted in *Australasian Record*, November 15, 1920, 7; cf. W. W. Fletcher, "Death of Sister Eva Clements," *Eastern Tidings* 15, no. 22 (November 15, 1920): 8.
 7. Fulton, "Obituary," 8.
 8. Ibid.
 9. "News Notes," *Eastern Tidings* 19, no. 4 (February 15, 1924): 4.
 10. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press*, 1937), 143.