

*Real Life Stories*  
*Amy Carmichael's First Act of Kidnapping*

Amy Carmichael was a kidnapper. Many times over, in fact! On this day, March 6, 1901, she sheltered her first temple runaway, a young girl dedicated to the Hindu gods and forced into prostitution to earn money for the priests. Technically that made her a kidnapper. Over the years, Amy rescued many other children, often at the cost of extreme exhaustion and personal danger. When she rescued five-year-old Kohila, the child's guardians wanted her back. Amy refused to return the little girl to certain abuse. Instead, she arranged for her to "disappear" to a safe place. The plot was discovered. Prosecutors brought charges against Amy. She faced a seven year prison term.



Irish-born Amy was a most unlikely heroine. She suffered neuralgia, a disease of the nerves that made her whole body weak and achy and put her in bed for weeks at a time. Friends thought she was foolish when she announced she was going to be a missionary. They predicted that she would soon be back in England for keeps. But Amy was sure that God was calling her to go overseas. All of her life, she had been learning to listen to his voice.

One of the first incidents occurred when she was a child. Mother had said that if Amy prayed, the Lord would answer. Amy had brown eyes. She prayed for blue. In the morning she jumped out of bed and ran to the mirror. Mrs. Carmichael heard her wail in disappointment. It took Mrs. Carmichael several minutes of careful explanation before Amy understood that "no" was an answer too. God meant Amy to have brown eyes for a reason, explained Mrs. Carmichael. Amy wasn't so sure. Smiling Irish blue would always be her favorite color, even if God said "No."

As a youth Amy thought she was a Christian, but an evangelist showed her that she needed a personal commitment to Christ. She made it. Service to Him became the center and passion of her life. The year that Mr. Carmichael died unexpectedly, Amy started classes and prayer groups for Belfast ragamuffins. She also began a Sunday work with the "shawlies." These were factory girls so poor that they could not afford hats to wear to church and wore shawls instead. Respectable people didn't want anything to do with them. Amy saw that they needed Christ just the same as their supposed "betters." So many shawlies attended Amy's classes that she had to find a building large enough to hold three hundred and more.

The Carmichaels lost all their money through financial reverses and a change became necessary. Mrs. Carmichael decided to move to England and work for Uncle Jacob. Amy and another sister joined her. Uncle Jacob asked Amy to teach his mill workers about Jesus. Amy threw herself into the work, living near the mill in an apartment infested with cockroaches and bed bugs. However, she was constantly sick with neuralgia and had to lie in bed for days at a time. It was clear she must give up the work. Faith and circumstances eventually led Amy to India where she began her rescue work with temple children. Dressed in a sari, her skin stained brown, she could pass as a Hindu. Now she understood why God had given her brown eyes. Blue eyes would have been a dead giveaway!

Amy did not go to prison. A telegram arrived on February 7, 1914, saying, "Criminal case dismissed." No explanation was ever forthcoming, but those who worship Amy's Lord have no doubt that He had a hand in the decision.

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