

Lillian Hunt Thrasher

THE NILE MOTHER

She was called the greatest woman in Egypt and was recognized by national leaders for her humanitarian work. About 6 feet in height, Lillian Thrasher stood tall in both body and spirit. Throughout her 51 years of ministry she fed, clothed and sheltered thousands of orphans, widows and blind women.

She was born in Florida in 1887 and was converted in her teenage years. At the age of 18, Lillian sensed the call of God on her life and briefly attended Bible school. She left school to work in an orphanage in North Carolina. Later she left the orphanage to pastor a church and then traveled on the evangelistic circuit.

During one of her evangelistic tours, Lillian became engaged to Tom Jordan, a man who did not share her call to the mission fields of Africa. She was forced to make a difficult choice between breaking off the engagement or following God's plan for her life.

Ten days before the wedding in 1910 she suddenly broke off the engagement and later that same year set sail with her sister for Africa.

After their arrival in Assiout, Egypt, in 1911, Lillian took a tiny baby, whose mother had just died, into her home. All her training and experience at the orphanage now came into play as she cared for this orphan baby. Lillian took the incident to heart as a divine mandate from God to start a home for Egyptian orphans.

In the beginning Lillian was told again and again that it would be impossible for her to establish an orphanage in

Egypt. Lillian would often say, "An American girl can do anything, if she tries hard enough."

The early years were marked by intense persecution, but Lillian stood strong and persevered. She not only took in thousands of orphans but also helped deliver hundreds of babies. Many of the mothers named their baby girls "Lillian" in her honor.

At first the Egyptians thought that Lillian was taking in the orphans to be used as slaves for America. When they realized what she was actually doing, they gave her official approval and support for her ministry. If enough support for the orphanage did not come in from America or local sources, Lillian would personally make long trips to collect food, chickens, money and other items.

Throughout the years the orphanage grew and reached out to anyone who was destitute and hurting, providing them a safe haven. When Lillian died in 1961 they buried her at the orphanage. Although she never married, tens of thousands of children knew her as "Mama Lillian—The Nile Mother."