



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JENNIFER DELAMERE



The Heart's Appeal

LONDON BEGINNINGS #2

by Jennifer Delamere

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1. In *The Heart's Appeal*, Julia Bernay comes to London in order to attend medical school. What made you choose this profession for her?

Medicine seemed a natural fit for Julia, due to her love of learning and her desire to help people. In 1881, when this book takes place, England had only recently passed laws allowing women to certify as physicians. Julia is a strong-minded and independent person and a natural groundbreaker, which describes all of the early female doctors. They faced a lot of initial opposition from many people in the established medical profession, and public opinion wasn't always with them, either. But they persevered.

Julia's choice of career also fits with her background of having been raised in George Müller's orphanage in Bristol, England. When girls left Müller's orphanage, most went into service (cooks, maids, etc.). However, some became nurses, as did Julia. It was easy to imagine that Julia would jump at the opportunity to become a physician when that field finally opened up to women. Her Christian upbringing in Müller's orphanage has made her a fervent believer. She wants to become a licensed physician so that she can be a medical missionary to foreign countries. But she soon learns there are many people in London who also need the physical and spiritual help that she can provide.

2. Although the main characters in your books are fictional, you often include real people in your books. Is this the case with *The Heart's Appeal*?

Yes! Julia's mentor at the medical school is Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, who in 1865 became the first woman to qualify as a physician in Britain. In 1874, she cofounded the London School of Medicine for Women and was active in its administration as well as teaching. Her husband, James G.S. Anderson (Jamie), was the joint-owner of a successful shipping line. They were a perfect match for many reasons, not the least of which was because he fervently supported his wife's choice of a career. Jamie Anderson offers advice and help to Michael Stephenson, the book's hero, at a critical time.

Julia also has an inspiring encounter with Dr. Anderson's sister, Millicent Fawcett. Today, Millicent is most remembered for her role in the women's suffrage movement. Both sisters were quite extraordinary, and I enjoyed being able to include them in this book.

3. *The Heart's Appeal* includes scenes on the London Underground. Do you think this will surprise the reader?

I'm sure the image most people have of transportation in Victorian London is that of hansom cabs—two-wheeled carriages with the driver's seat high in the back. Certainly there were countless numbers of those. But the first line of what became known as the London Underground was opened in 1863, so it was well-established by 1881 when Julia gets there. At that time, the trains were powered by big, smoky steam engines. You might say that London's fog above ground was matched by the smoke-filled tunnels below. The trains were not electrified until the early twentieth century.

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Michael and Julia meet as a result of an accident that occurs while they are riding on the Underground. And yet, in reality there were surprisingly few accidents. The Victorians were excellent engineers, and they figured out not only how to dig tunnels through the crowded city in order to build the Underground Railway, but also how to operate the lines safely. It certainly raised my admiration for the ingenuity of the Victorians.

4. *The Heart's Appeal* is the second book in the LONDON BEGINNINGS series. Are there any themes that you have seen emerging in the series as a whole?

One interesting theme that I hadn't originally anticipated has to do with family dynamics—how our parents and/or siblings can be not only a tremendous source of strength and solace in bad times, but also how their expectations can add a lot of pressure to our lives and the decisions we make. The tension between being helpful and troublesome is a family dynamic that has been interesting to explore. Both Julia and Michael are grappling with choices they have made for their lives that run contrary to what their siblings believe is best for them. They must find ways to reconcile that while still remaining true to themselves.

Another theme, which runs through all my books, is that with God there can always be a new beginning. Mistakes or events in the past don't have to prevent us from forging a new future. There are several characters in *The Heart's Appeal* who overcome significant past tragedies and find their way to new and better lives.