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A WARRIOR OF THE MAGWANGWARA

# A HERO MAN

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF  
WILLIAM PERCIVAL JOHNSON  
ARCHDEACON OF NYASA

BY

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UNIVERSITIES' MISSION TO CENTRAL AFRICA  
Central Africa House, Wood Street, Westminster, S.W.1

*First Edition, 1931*  
*Second Edition, 1933*

**Made and Printed in Great Britain by  
The Garden City Press Limited,  
Letchworth, Herts.**

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## PROLOGUE<sup>1</sup>

A DARK night in Africa, in the month of January, 1862.

No moon, no stars. When it is dark in Africa it is very dark.

A clearing in the jungle and all around long grass and bush and trees.

Underneath one large tree with overhanging branches an open grave. Squatting on the ground or standing are many dark forms half-hidden by the foliage, open-eyed, gazing awestruck. A vested priest stands by the grave. He holds no prayer-book in his hand and his trembling lips almost refuse to speak the words he is trying to remember as the corpse is lowered into the grave, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. . . ."

A long pause, and the night wind stirring among the trees might be the angels singing to welcome a redeemed soul. Then in a clear and ringing voice the priest continues: "in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life."

The grave is filled in. Stones and earth are piled high above it and a rough wooden cross is erected over the mound.

"It is finished," murmured the Africans.

But no, it is begun. For God plans a whole and man sees but half.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter II, p. 12.

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# A HERO MAN

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

WHEN a certain boy, named William Percival Johnson, came to Bedford Grammar School, his comrades very soon found he had ideas and a will of his own. A strong will is a fine thing if it is rightly controlled. Johnson kept his in order all right. From the beginning he was a leader. He had not been in the school long before he was head of all the games in his school house. Whatever he did, whether work or play, he did it with all his might. Among his school-fellows he made friends, but expected them to come up to his idea of friendship and in those early days he was inclined to be hard on those who did not reach his standard.

He was a brilliant mathematician, keen and eager when other boys were dull or stupid. He did not waste his school-days, but got as much good out of them as he possibly could.

When his schooldays were over, he went to University College, Oxford, and there he soon made his mark, not only in the College, where he worked as before with all his might, but on the river, where he stroked his college boat to victory at the head of the river. Some of you have probably watched this race and know the great excitement and enthusiasm which thrills the onlooker.

"Johnson was determined to win; you could see that by the earnest look on his face as day by day he practised on the river." So testified the master of his college. And that determination and pertinacity were among the most distinguished characteristics of his many-sided character.

It was at Oxford that he formed a life-long friendship with



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another member of his college, Chauncy Maples, whose whole character was the direct opposite of his own in all but one thing, devotion to their one Lord. Maples is thus described by another college friend: "One of those delightful boys who take a whole school by storm. Playful, sweet-tempered and with an endless capacity for amusement, he was popular both with boys and masters."

At Oxford, "no happier, brighter, or—it must be added—more careless undergraduate could be found." It was probably this bright joyousness which appealed to the more serious character of Johnson, and it is certain that Maples understood him better than anyone else ever seems to have done.

It was at the back of Johnson's mind to go to India and for that purpose he was studying for the Civil Service. He took a second class in mathematical moderations (not classical), though he was a good classical scholar.

He also passed the Indian Civil Service examination, which in that day was considered one of the stiffest of all examinations, opening prospects of a large income out in India, and a pension.

But though India may have been at the back of his mind, other longings and desires were evidently working there. He himself speaks of "the opening I was waiting for."

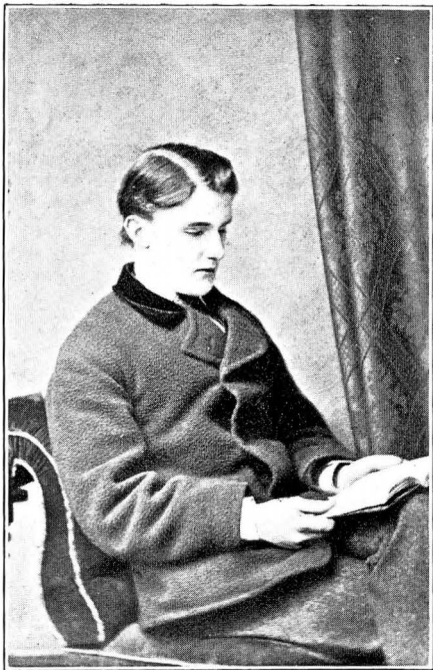
It was not to be India, but Africa. It was not to be a life of comparative ease and luxury with a comfortable old age, but one of toil and hardship, loneliness and privation, at last laid down on a barren soil at the foot of the Cross.

And this is how it came about.

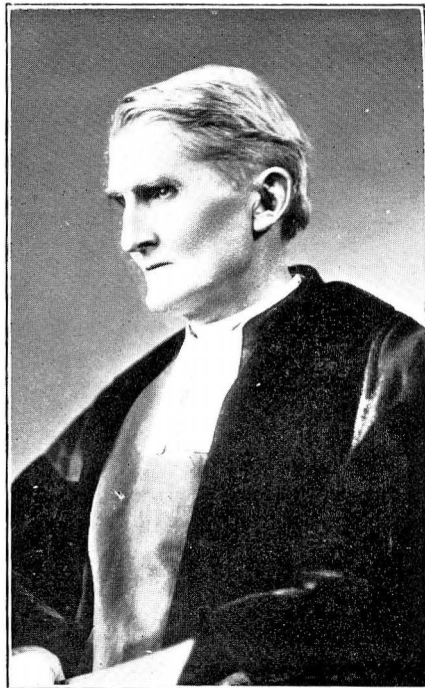
### CHAPTER II

#### AFRICA CALLS

IT was in the Michaelmas Term of 1874 that the famous missionary, Bishop Steere, came to Oxford, where he addressed a crowded meeting. It seems that neither Maples nor Johnson was at the meeting, but it evidently aroused a great deal of attention and talk among the undergraduates.



WILLIAM PERCIVAL JOHNSON WHEN AT  
BEDFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL



ARCHDEACON JOHNSON WEARING HIS D.D.  
ROBES, 1911

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## *Africa Calls*

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When they saw an appeal for men written by Bishop Steere, and stuck up on the notice-board at the Union, it at once attracted the serious attention of Maples and Johnson, and they both determined to offer themselves for work in Africa.

But this move on the young men's part was not to meet with any great encouragement. In those days the call to mission work was not recognised as the decided vocation which it so generally is now. Johnson went for advice to the master of his college, Dr. Bradley, who told him that he thought he would have more scope in India, and other friends told him that he was mad.

He went to Dean Burgon, who was then the Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, and who helped so many of the young men of his day with his kind sympathy and strong advice. In him Johnson found a really sympathetic adviser, who told him that he did not think he would ever repent his determination. It was also a great help to him that his friend Chauncy Maples had come to the same decision.

Maples was already preparing for ordination, but both young men were too young at that time to be ordained, and it was not till two years later that Johnson went out to Africa.

At that time those who were thinking of taking up missionary work used to hold intercessory meetings. It was rather an uphill business and the meetings were very scantily attended; at one time there were only three present: one of them was deaf, and the one who played the accompaniment to the hymn was not much of a musician, and it all went rather lamely. At that time also one of them got hold of a short letter from Bishop Steere, which was passed round among them, "and everyone was kindled."

Maples was the first to go out, having done everything in his power to fit himself for his future work, learning carpentering, and other useful things. He took his degree in June 1875, after obtaining, owing to ill-health, only a third class in the Honours School of Theology. For some months he worked as a layman under the Rev. John Eyre in Liverpool, and in the following Michaelmas was ordained deacon at Cuddesdon and began work as a curate in St. Mary Magdalene's Parish in Oxford. In

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the following spring, on March 18th, 1876, he sailed for Africa and in the summer of the same year, Johnson followed him.

To understand the work to which Johnson and Maples felt themselves called, we must look back a few years. The great explorer and missionary, Dr. Livingstone, on his last visit to England in 1857, had appealed to the universities in a never-to-be-forgotten speech for missionaries to go out to East Africa and do what only the Gospel message could do—stop the horrors of the slave trade, which he described in graphic language, and the terrors of tribal war.

In answer to this appeal, in 1861, the universities sent out Dr. Mackenzie with a small staff of followers. Misfortune and disaster attended their steps. The whole country was torn by slavery, ravaged by war and starved with famine.

After a year of strenuous effort the Bishop and most of his followers died. It is no wonder that the Africans standing by his grave said, "It is finished!"<sup>1</sup> Bishop Tozer, who succeeded him, found it impossible to carry on work in that particular part, and in spite of the discouragement and desertion of his friends, who disapproved of the move, he left Nyasaland and began work in the Island of Zanzibar, which at that time was the undisputed capital of East Africa, hoping from there to work his way to Lake Nyasa.

Ill-health caused Bishop Tozer to retire in 1873, and he was succeeded by his friend Bishop Steere, at a time when the cause of the mission seemed almost hopeless, from repeated disasters and the scarcity of workers. In 1874, the Bishop came to England to ask for workers and funds, and his strong personality and inspiring force roused sympathy and support which have never since failed the Mission.

It was Bishop Steere's great aim and indeed has always been the aim of the Universities' Mission to train Africans as priests and teachers to their own people, for no foreigners could ever adequately deal with the manners, customs and beliefs of Africans. At that time the old slave market in Zanzibar, one of the largest in the whole world, had been closed and a church, which is now the Cathedral, was already partly built on the site.

A large boys' school had been opened at a place a mile and a half from the town called Kiungani, and another for girls at

<sup>1</sup> See Prologue.

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## *Africa Calls*

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Mbweni, and here the Mission received the slave children released from slave dhows by British men-of-war. And in Mbweni village, the adult slaves were taken in and given their own houses, gardens and means of self-support.

But this was only on the edge of the work. Bishop Mackenzie's grave where the work had first started was three hundred miles inland, and Bishop Steere only touched the coast regions. Beyond lay nation after nation, still untouched by Christianity, and the Bishop's wish and longing was to send native teachers to these tribes.

To accomplish this he proposed to send out first a small party of men of good judgment to make acquaintance with the chiefs and look through the country, to find the healthiest, most acceptable and most central spot on which to make the chief settlement. It was for this purpose that the Bishop appealed to England for helpers.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

JOHNSON left England in August 1876, in a British India steamer, small and dirty, very different from the comparatively luxurious vessels in which we now travel. At Port Said and Suez the East began to unfold itself to him, but we have no record of the voyage till he reached Aden, where he changed ships. There a colonel with whom he had travelled took a fatherly farewell of him and told him that he could not possibly live in the Central African climate, as already he had been suffering from heavy night-sweats, but that was how most people talked of Zanzibar in those days.

At Aden, Johnson had to wait in an hotel. When he looked out of the hotel window in the early morning he saw hundreds of long bags lying in the open square, and while he was still looking at them the sunlight began to come up over the hills and he saw one bag after another get up and a man come out of it. They were Somalis who had come across to work with the camels.

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## A Hero Man

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Some of his acquaintances met him with the cheerful news that *the Mission* in Zanzibar had been closed down and the house left in the hands of natives. (This was really the Church Missionary Society, which had made Mombasa its new headquarters.) But this only amused him; he knew better.

Of course, when Johnson arrived in Zanzibar, everything was new to him and he, a white man, was nearly as new to the people as they were to him. He speaks of the town, with its loopholed houses, the narrow streets and the funny little shops, as localising the *Arabian Nights*—for, of course, the town was not nearly so civilised then as it is now. On the Mnazi Moja, a great stretch of sand which connects the town with the rest of the island, dead camels and even dead slaves were cast out and packs of pariah dogs roamed there. It was not safe to return from the town to the outside country, as for instance to the school at Kiungani, alone at night or without firearms.

It was the custom of Bishop Steere to go on board and meet all his new workers. Johnson, who soon became known in the Mission as W. P. J., writes: "My first sight of Bishop Steere was the reverse of disappointing, and the more I saw of him the more my reverence grew. He was now a middle-aged man with sparse black hair and whiskers. He was not handsome, but his face grew upon one: it showed determination, and his penetrating eyes were very often lit up by a humorous twinkle. He was of middle height, wirily built, and looked, as he was, strong. Someone on board a man-of-war, which picked him up later on when he was on a native dhow and very ill, said that he seemed 'the sort of man who could live for a month on the smell of a sardine tin!' He was often feeling ill on a journey I went with him, but I only remember his being carried once."

Johnson had been too young to take deacon's orders before he left England, and though the Archbishop of Canterbury had offered him a special licence he thought it would be a privilege to be ordained in Zanzibar by Bishop Steere. And so on September 29th, 1876, in the little chapel of St. Andrew, at Kiungani, he was ordained deacon by Bishop Steere, and Maples was ordained priest. The latter wrote, "a holy and a happy day for both of us."

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## Towards the Goal

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### CHAPTER IV

#### TOWARDS THE GOAL

THE friends did not long remain together in Zanzibar. Maples stayed for a time at Kiungani and W. P. J.—as in future we shall call him—accompanied Bishop Steere on a proposed journey to Nyasaland, taking with them a party of released slaves, with the intention of returning them to their homes in that country.

The first part of the journey they made on the *Flying Fish*, a British man-of-war which took them as far as Lindi, a coast town about three hundred miles south of Zanzibar. When they reached the harbour the *Flying Fish* burnt blue lights to give notice of their arrival. The people of Lindi were very much frightened and said: "That is the English ship: they have taken a dhow with slaves in it and now they are roasting them and going to eat them!" This was the common story of the Arabs, which they told their slaves to prevent their trying to escape to the English ships.

After leaving Lindi they found that there was great scarcity of food in the country through which they had to pass, the people of the villages having scarcely enough to feed themselves, and the addition of nearly 200 travellers was a very serious strain on their scanty resources. Everybody told the Bishop's party that they would find plenty of food at Masasi, and after fourteen days' weary travelling they found that this was true.

Then it was that some of the men came to the Bishop and said: "We shall never find another place half so good as this, here is plenty of water, everything grows well and war is all but unknown. We are among our own people. Let us stay here." And the Bishop listened to their appeal, for he was always very tender to other people's wishes. But he did not decide too rashly. He made every inquiry about the road in front of him, and found that it would be next to impossible to go to Nyasaland with so large a party.

So at Masasi they stayed and after conference with the native chiefs, they chose a fertile place where no one had ever lived with a good supply of water and there they settled.

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## *A Hero Man*

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They had to build their houses of bamboo and mud, lay out roads, plant trees and build a church. All this took about a month to accomplish and then Bishop Steere had to return to Zanzibar, leaving W. P. J. in charge.

There are some amusing stories told of this time of building. In Africa it is very necessary to have fine weather while you are building your house, or the rain washes away the mud from the walls before they are properly dry, and the people thought that the all-powerful Englishmen were preventing rain from coming, so a party of chiefs came to the Mission headman and asked him to let the rain come as soon as his house was finished!

There are always a good many snakes about in the rainy season and W. P. J. caused great excitement by killing a large green one, eight feet long.

The Mission staff had taken up a donkey with them. This animal had never before been seen in Masasi and gave the natives great entertainment. When they were tired of staring at the missionaries they would rush off to look at the donkey braying. The poor donkey died soon after its arrival.

The people from the hills had brought some goats to sell to the Mission party and they were very fortunate in obtaining one which supplied them with milk. It was evidently a very superior animal, the bargaining for it beginning at eleven in the morning and going on till five in the evening, when it was immediately milked for tea!

Just before the Bishop left, there was a great scare in the night. A leopard had invaded the camp. The party was new to leopards in those days and was not clever at setting traps for them, so the beast got off scot free the first night, but on the second night a layman of the party set a gun trap which went off in the middle of the night.

Going after a wounded leopard is always dangerous, a fact which no one remembered, so there was a rush to see what had happened. The first two men ran back in alarm and were received with laughter. Then a large party armed with lamps went cautiously to the trap, and the Bishop, who was standing at the door of his hut, heard a great hullabaloo going on.

"Where is he?" "He's gone!" "No, he's there!" "That's not him!" "Here he is!" "Here he is!" "He's



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## *Towards the Goal*

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dead!" "Shoot him!" "Don't spoil the skin!" "Shoot him!" "Come a little nearer!" Suddenly all the lights disappeared.

Two men had poked the leopard to see if it was really dead and at that the men with lights bolted. One or two of the men had been raising their guns for a volley and they went off in the dark. The leopard was not dead and in the morning made a rush, but was soon killed. The skin, a very handsome one, 5 feet 10 inches long, was sent home to England.

### CHAPTER V

#### LIFE AT MASASI

THE Bishop stayed a month at Masasi and before he left the village was nearly built, with a row of houses and a wide road. Each house had its allotment of land, and the church, nearly complete, a wide and spacious building, stood at the end of the road.

After the Bishop had left, W. P. J. seems to have had a difficult time, made more difficult by his not knowing the language, or rather dialects, for there are several spoken in that district and not one of them was then written down. W. P. J., in common with the others, suffered a good deal from the poor food on the journey and bad ulcers on his arms and legs were the result.

Nevertheless his life was a very strenuous one. At that time none of the people was baptised and he had all the teaching and church services on his hands.

Nothing could have been pleasanter than the Sundays at Masasi. The people in the village had been taught that no unnecessary work was to be done, no buying or selling. They all came to the church, dressed in the best clothes they had, for a short service in Swahili. While the Bishop was there, he had always preached to them one of his short instructive sermons. In the afternoon W. P. J. used to go among the people and teach them, through an interpreter. Later they sang the Litany, in which they would all join, and in the even-

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## *A Hero Man*

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ing the English workers and those Africans that understood English said Evensong together.

In those days the English Prayer Book was not translated and the catechumens were taught to say all the service by heart, so that no prayer books were needed and the people joined in very heartily. Later on, the Psalms, Collects, Epistles and Gospels were translated, but it was not till many years afterwards that the whole Swahili Prayer Book was translated.

During that first time at Masasi nothing very exciting happened, but once a lion visited the neighbourhood and all the people turned out to hunt and kill him. There is a belief in Africa that the spirit of a dead chief takes up its residence in a lion, so the people burnt his skin, bones, claws, and everything connected with him, that the spirit might have nowhere to go.

On another occasion, the villagers declared that one of the leading men was a wizard. They tied him up and brought him to W. P. J. It was in the evening and W. P. J. did not know how long it was since the man had had anything to eat or drink, but when he proposed to give him some water to drink, his accusers were wild with excitement and said did not the Padre know that if a wizard drank water he could get out of any place you put him into? He managed to quiet them down by promising to keep him quite safe and it was not till they had all gone away that he ventured to give him a cup of cold water.

Later on the man was sent down to the coast under a guard, to keep him safe from the angry people, who all wanted to make away with a wizard.

The beautiful butterflies in the country round Masasi were a great delight to W. P. J., who sent a number of them down to the coast. But he never heard anything more of them, so did not know whether they arrived or not. Probably they did not as there are insects which can bore into a box and eat anything they find there.

In August 1877, W. P. J. had the great delight of welcoming his friend Maples. Wherever he went, Maples was always very welcome. He brought so much joy and life with him. And it must have been a greater joy than ever to W. P. J. in

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## *Life at Masasi*

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his rather isolated life. It has always been a difficulty in the up-country stations to get food suitable for the missionaries. Such things as bread, butter and meat were quite unknown and the missionaries suffered a good deal from the want of them. Mr. Maples considered himself quite a good cook and he was certainly ingenious in some of his methods.

He made an oven built up of stones and mud, in which he put the fire, drew it out when the oven was hot enough and put the loaves in to bake. This was the first they had known at Masasi of any English flour, except for some dry toast put up in bags, which had got very stale and mouldy.

There is a delightful story told of a certain rice pudding which he attempted to make out of plaster of Paris, which was in a tin and which he mistook for ground rice. The pudding came to table and nobody could make any impression upon it with knife, fork or spoon. Frightfully disappointed, Mr. Maples examined the tin from which he supposed he had taken the rice and found that it was plaster of Paris!

All this hard work and poor living so aggravated the ulcers from which W. P. J. was suffering, that he was obliged to go to Zanzibar to consult a doctor. He was carried down to the coast on a native bedstead, which he says was not specially uncomfortable, "except in a few perpendicular places," where the heads of the front carriers became invisible and he had to hold on tight.

At Lindi he embarked on a dhow and had a terrible voyage to Zanzibar. The skipper, who was an Indian, told him that the voyage would only take four or five days, instead of which it was eighteen before they reached Zanzibar, and they had only taken stores to last them for the five days! A dhow is a sailing vessel with one sail, and entirely dependent upon the changes of the wind, when there is any.

W. P. J. says they went a short distance morning and evening with the help of the off-shore or on-shore breeze, and at other times lay idle all day. The coral reefs which line the shore are always very lovely, but he was not much inclined to admire them, for they made sailing extra dangerous and the crew of the dhow were all raw hands.

But W. P. J. was full of resource and whiled away his time by

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making a collection of water insects and beetles on the dhow : he got about twenty-seven specimens.

He spent Christmas Day on board, and it must have been terrible for him, ill as he was, with no friends, no church services, half-starved and with nothing to assuage his burning thirst, but thick, muddy, tepid water. And when at last they anchored in Zanzibar, he said that the Mission quarters seemed like Heaven to him.

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE VILLAGE OF RELEASED SLAVES

AFTER being nursed through an attack of fever in Zanzibar, and when his ulcers were better and he was able once more to walk, W. P. J. was sent to take charge at Mbweni, a piece of land bought by Bishop Tozer, about three miles from the town of Zanzibar.

It was a lovely spot of about thirty acres, with one stone house on it, which was used as a girls' school. A number of released slaves were living on the plantation with their wives and families, where they had their own little mud houses, each with a patch of ground and a coconut tree upon it.

His strenuous labours here attracted great wonder and the Africans, who are very clever at nicknames, called him "the man who never sits down." He planned roads, helped to build houses, and above all planted avenues of bamboos and coconut trees, many of which remain to this day.

He became a great favourite with the boys, children of the released slaves, though in his dealings with them he sometimes lacked discretion, such as giving away his own clothes. When he was being nursed in Zanzibar, his nurse, finding that he was utterly destitute of underclothing, wrote and told his mother, whom she knew. Mrs. Johnson promptly sent him out half a dozen flannel shirts made by her own hands. W. P. J. distributed them among the boys who were always about him and who no more needed flannel shirts than they did fur coats.

Amidst all his activity and manual work, W. P. J. never

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## *The Village of Released Slaves*

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forgot the spiritual side of his work and that he was a missionary. He was instructing some of the people and wrote of the glory of baptising them, though later on he wondered if he had been right in doing it so soon, when he understood very little of the misery and experience of their past lives, though they responded wonderfully to his teaching.

He was rather inclined to idealise everything and was often disappointed. For instance it seemed at first that everything was rose colour and happiness in the girls' school, where an English lady, Miss Thackeray, was doing her utmost to make the girls forget their old life of slavery, so that it was a great shock to find one day that a certain amount of thieving was going on and a number of rupees was missing.

At last the theft was traced to two girls. One of them said she would show W. P. J. where the money was, but she bolted before they got there. She was caught and brought back to the house and the two naughty girls were shut up together by themselves in a room which had been used as a washhouse. There were small holes, less than a foot in diameter, all round the room just below the roof, in the walls which were two feet thick. These holes were for light and air instead of windows. The Java sparrows used sometimes to build in them.

In the night screams were heard coming from the room and when W. P. J. went to the door to find out what was the matter, thinking they were frightened to be alone in the dark, the elder girl called out in a terrified way that the other girl had been carried off.

She said she had been pulled through a hole by someone from outside, and when they went to look for her, they found her, very frightened and sobbing, not very far from the house! It seemed impossible that she could have got through such a tiny hole, but the same sort of thing has happened at times in other places.

It was a great pleasure to them all at Mbweni when Bishop Steere paid his weekly visit. There always seemed about him something of the father and the prophet and he brought a sort of sunshine with him. The Bishop was very sympathetic with all the details of life at Mbweni: the rents, the model huts, the village shop, the number on the houses, the first ploughing on the Island.

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There was a man named Tom Peter Sudi, which means Peter of the South Wind, who helped W. P. J. to ring the oxen : they did not need much breaking in. Sometimes the ploughshare would meet the hidden stump of an old coconut tree and then there was a cataclysm. They planted cloves, which were very successful, and when the English Consul, Sir John Kirk, came to visit them, he delighted them by saying that the cloves on their side of the road were twice as high as those he had planted at the same time on the other side without ploughing.

While he was at Mbweni, the Bishop sent W. P. J. on a visit to the mainland station at Magila, where a padre named Farler was doing a great work, and this was a very useful experience to him, as it was his first coming into contact with work among free men in contrast with that among released slaves.

Towards the end of his time at Mbweni, Bishop Steere ordained him priest, after which he went again to Masasi to take charge while Mr. Maples was in England. One of the things he took up to Masasi with him was a cow with her calf. W. P. J. thought it would be an easy business to convey these two to their destination, but it turned out to be a very difficult matter. He sent his men on to see about food and then found that the cow hurried on ahead, taking no notice of her child. W. P. J. tied them both together, but the mother charged headlong, dragging the calf and nearly killing it! In the end W. P. J. had to carry the little beast himself, about five miles, till they got to the camp.

When Mr. Maples returned to Masasi, the friends had the great happiness of working together for a time. It seems that leopards were not infrequent visitors to the station, for Mr. Maples told a story of how early one morning the boys came to him in great excitement and said that there was a leopard somewhere about. He went out and saw the fresh trail round the houses, which stopped at the door of W. P. J.'s hut. W. P. J. was in bed and when they asked him if he had seen the leopard, he calmly replied : " I think it's under my bed! "

All through his life he appeared to be absolutely fearless and when travelling slept in the open without even the protection of a fire, and that in a country where lions and leopards are abundant.

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## *The Village of Released Slaves*

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The bamboo houses at Masasi had no windows and each room had only one door, which opened on to a wide verandah. On the verandah side the wall only went half-way up and a leopard could easily have got in. When the houses were built, somebody mentioned they would be rather dark. Bishop Steere said that would not matter, as of course all day the missionaries would be out with their people.

W. P. J. mentions hyenas as well as leopards as being abundant and also that they had many pet animals, among them two porcupines. These creatures are quite harmless when not interfered with, but when they are annoyed they stick their quills bolt upright. And these quills are not things to be trifled with.

Both W. P. J. and Maples tell of a letter which Bishop Steere wrote to them at this time, which was full of sound, practical advice. He told them that they must not keep too much to themselves, but live as much as possible among their people, with open doors, ready to listen to them at all times; that the literary work of compiling and translating the language was second to the religious teaching and must not be allowed to interfere with it; and that they must take sufficient care of their health and in no wise try to starve their bodies. He also impressed upon them that in all cases of wrong doing towards themselves or the village people by outsiders, they were to get the chiefs to recognise it and leave the punishment to them, and not be anxious for personal redress, remembering St. Paul's words: "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong?"—and a good deal more of fatherly counsel and direction.

### CHAPTER VII

#### PRIVATIONS IN AN AFRICAN VILLAGE

FOR one year the friends worked happily together at Masasi. They were joined in 1880 by the Rev. Charles Janson, who was full of the idea of advancing further inland, and it was probably this which inspired W. P. J. with a wish to get to Lake Nyasa, the original aim of the Mission. For it will be

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## *A Hero Man*

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remembered that the title of the first Bishop of the Mission was "To the tribes round Lake Nyasa."

All through his episcopate it was Bishop Steere's great longing to reach Lake Nyasa, and when W. P. J. wrote to him proposing to start on the journey to Mwembe, he heartily encouraged him. So in September 1880, he started on his journey, taking with him five freed men and two boys who had been educated at Kiungani College, Zanzibar, and had worked as readers at Masasi.

The chief of his party was Barnaba Nakaam, a headman of some importance, who was known in the country, and this of course made it much easier for him to trade for food and other necessary things, as he knew the language and terms for bargaining.

The old chief Mataka, whom Bishop Steere had visited, was dead, but the new chief with the same name received W. P. J. in a friendly manner and was willing that he should settle at Mwembe. There was not much room in the village, the houses being very crowded, but he gave him a small hut and a boy to wait upon him, and made no objection to his teaching the people.

W. P. J. tried to start a school, but it was a very difficult business, as there were no books at all and no school-room in which to teach the boys. He also talked and preached freely to the people and used to go up the small hill by his host's houses and pray for the people and himself.

But there was famine in the land and only those who know Africa understand what this means. The Indian corn crop had failed, and there would be nothing coming for weeks and weeks: W. P. J. sent Barnaba back to Masasi to try and get food: he was left with two goats, a small amount of food and a big bag of Kaffir corn.

When Christmas came all the food was gone except the Kaffir corn and they were rationing themselves every day. W. P. J. tells a pathetic story of a little boy who was found sitting close to the biscuit tin which was empty. He picked up the child and some biscuits dropped from his clothing. The poor little chap was only skin and bone and W. P. J. could only sympathise with him, knowing that there were hundreds of other little fellows in the same case.

Later on they went to the Chief and asked him to help; all



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## *Privations in an African Village*

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he could do was to give them some cloth to exchange for food, but no one had any food to exchange. They used to walk out along the Nakawali road to look with eager eyes whether Barnaba were coming, and at last he came. He did not bring much food, but a donkey, a box of clothes and some books and letters, including one from Bishop Steere, encouraging W. P. J. to go further.

This was late in February and the pumpkins were beginning to come in, also the Indian corn, of which there was very little as there had hardly been any to plant. All this time the teaching of the school was going on and he had a certain number of hearers whom he hoped to prepare for baptism. W. P. J. and Barnaba went a little trip to find suitable places for preaching, coming back along the Lujenda river.

After this, Barnaba undertook a very adventurous journey on his own, going 200 miles from Mwembe to the south of Lake Nyasa and up the east coast of the lake to the Headquarters of the Scotch Mission, established by Dr. Laws, who later became a great friend of W. P. J.

On the way back he passed through the territory of several robber chiefs, so his success showed great pluck. He brought several sheep and oxen with him and as no more huts had been built because the people were too ill and weak from famine to build any, W. P. J. had to share his wretched hut with Barnaba and his wife.

W. P. J. slept on one side of the hut, which was made of bamboo, but had not been plastered with mud, so was very open. It was divided in two; he shared his side with the donkey, and the sheep were in the other room with Barnaba and his wife. They could not leave the animals outside because of the wild beasts. One very dark night there was a terrible thunder-storm which woke up W. P. J. on his native bedstead. By the lightning he saw the donkey kicking out furiously, luckily at a safe distance, and thought he was frightened by the storm, but in the morning they found that one of the sheep was missing and saw the track of a hyena, which must have passed out under W. P. J.'s bed to avoid the donkey's heels.

All this time W. P. J. was again suffering terribly from great ulcers on his hands and arms, and a great number of the natives were in like case, the effects of the semi-starvation they had

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## *A Hero Man*

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been going through. They became so bad that he sought relief at the Scotch Mission.

On the way he had great trouble with the donkey which he had taken to be a help and only found a hindrance. Donkeys are not good swimmers and when they came to the first river it was difficult to get him across. He got his hind legs stuck firmly in the mud. They had to get help and when they had got him out of the mud found that the donkey had no strength left. W. P. J. and his boy literally shoved him along, for they could not leave him behind or he would have been eaten by wild beasts. After about half a mile the poor donkey could bear it no longer, and lay down and died!

### CHAPTER VIII

#### A SET-BACK

WHEN W. P. J. arrived at the Scotch Mission, he was warmly welcomed by Dr. Laws and his wife and said that it seemed like Paradise to him after his weary travels. He was so gaunt and thin and hungry that Dr. Laws said he was the first specimen of an African wolf that he had seen!

He stayed about a month at the mission station and on the way back they had to pass a river which was swollen high by the rains, and spent a day and a half looking for the small ferry boat which was used for crossing. When they found it, one of the men, who was very enormous, sank it in mid-stream and they had to spend two days making another larger one!

When W. P. J. got back to Mataka's, according to Eastern custom he gave the chief Mataka the present of a small blanket from his scanty stores—not wishing to appear to be bribing him. Mataka was not pleased with the smallness of the gift, and this was the beginning of a coolness between them. But when W. P. J. began building a church, Mataka backed him up heartily.

W. P. J. now saw his way to making some of his hearers catechumens. This he did on Ascension Day. They were nine in number, and to each of them he gave a small cross, as was

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## *A Set-back*

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the custom in the Mission. These crosses he cut out of a biscuit tin, having nothing better. This event must have been a great joy to him, but it was quickly followed by disappointment.

The slave dealers, who were never far from the neighbourhood, had been doing their best to prejudice Mataka against the missionary. Little by little owing to his tact and unmistakable sincerity, these prejudices seemed to have disappeared. But it happened that one slave caravan which came down from the Nyasa district met on the coast the captain of an English man-of-war, who set free and dispersed some 1,500 slaves belonging to it. The news of this went up to Mataka's and there was an explosion.

"This Englishman," they said, "has been communicating with his friends and this is the result." But again the trouble seemed to have passed over and W. P. J. went on quietly with his work.

He went down the river on a preaching tour and was away about ten days or even a month. He came back to a point near Mataka's village and was going to start off in the morning quite happily, when he was told that three men wanted to speak to him. The river was low and in its bed were quite a number of big, flat stones: he found the people sitting round on them while the three messengers were on a rather higher boulder, where he joined them. There seemed a good deal of excitement in the air, of which he did not know the cause.

When they had all sat down, the first man said to him: "Are not you the white man who had oxen?" W. P. J. said, "Yes." The man said, "Mataka has taken them!" The second said, "Are not you the white man who had sheep?" W. P. J. answered, "Yes." The man said, "Mataka has eaten them!" The third said, "Are not you the white man who had a long black garment?" (W. P. J.'s cassock.) Again he answered, "Yes." The man said, "I saw Mataka walking about in it the day before yesterday!"

It seemed that the people from whom the slaves had been taken had come back, demanding compensation, and had made a rush upon his house till everything belonging to him was either stolen or destroyed.

After this, W. P. J. was kept in his hut for several days and

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## *A Hero Man*

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if he ventured out a drunken slave came and poked the end of his gun against his head. Mataka was evidently wondering what to do with him as he did not quite like to kill an Englishman and W. P. J. found great difficulty in deciding what was the best thing to do. Then he heard that a small caravan was going down to the coast under the care of a man whom he knew and who had listened to his teaching. With this he decided to travel, and Mataka, who seemed to relent a little, gave him some cloth.

This cloth, which is merely white calico, was used instead of money for buying food. He bought a large bag of red beans, which was all he had to eat on the journey. Four people went with him ; two of them were men who had broken down on a previous journey and been unable to continue, one was a small boy who could not walk because of a bad ulcer on his leg and another had leprosy. W. P. J. carried the lame boy a great part of the journey, as the others could scarcely carry themselves.

There was a great deal of talk as to whether the party should be allowed to travel with the caravan ; the men from the coast all voted against their admittance, but the leader over-ruled them, welcomed W. P. J. and took him into his own hut for the night.

The next day, before starting, everyone in the caravan had to undergo a certain ceremony, according to custom. A large bark canoe was filled with water, and everyone had to get into it and kneel down, with water up to the neck, and then pass out at the other end under an elephant's tail, stuffed with elaborately prepared " charms," to bring good luck. W. P. J. got out of this for himself and his party by telling them that he had already been baptised, and they accepted it.

They only went a short way each day, travelling from five in the morning till eleven, then they had to build the encampment and prepare their food. The beans are very hard and took nearly all day to get ready, so they had to start cooking them directly they got into camp and usually took some cooked ones with them for next day's breakfast. When night fell and those who had food had eaten it, the leader of the caravan would get up and make a speech to them all as they sat round the huge fires which were kept blazing. He would tell about the escape of a slave, or whether they would find water next

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## *A Set-back*

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day, or tell the young ones not to wander away from the caravan.

After this a large bundle of thorns would be put up to close the only opening in the circle of booths, and then the charms in the elephant's tail were carried all round the camp and pointed in all directions of the compass with many speeches to ward off evil influences. It took them fifteen days to get to the Ruvuma River.

All through this long journey it was wonderful how the slaves kept up their spirits: they very often had nothing to eat but a handful of Indian corn and their necks were often badly galled with the rope which lashed them together. Yet they never complained or showed any signs of sorrow, as that would only have made their lot harder, for there seemed no one to care for them, living or dead.

When they got to the villages near the Ruvuma River, W. P. J. decided to push on alone to Masasi, as their beans were running short. He walked hard all day by himself and spent the night in a native hut. Next day he had a great surprise: he heard that a white man was coming to meet him and as he was hurrying on he came upon Charles Janson camping by a small stream!

He had been on his way to join W. P. J. at Mataka's village, knowing nothing of what had happened there. Mr. Janson was not at all well and could not travel very fast, so W. P. J. had to push on to Masasi, leaving Mr. Janson to follow him back there.

He says he walked the remaining 60 miles faster than he had ever done before, and at last he reached Masasi where he found Maples and had a great talk before going on to Zanzibar to report to Bishop Steere. The rest of his party reached Masasi safely a few days later.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAKE AT LAST

WHEN Mr. Johnson arrived in Zanzibar he was so altered in appearance that his fellow-workers hardly recognised him. His

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## A Hero Man

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face, which had been as pure and beautiful as an angel's when he first came out to the Mission, was now lined and worn and greatly aged. He had no flesh upon his bones and was bent almost double. As to dress, he looked something like Robinson Crusoe, for his clothing was threadbare and hung loosely about his limbs and his old pith hat had been thatched with coconut leaves to keep off the sun. But he was just the same W. P. J., full of go and vigour, and full of plans of what he was going to do, undaunted by the set-back and longing to start off again. He was a man after Bishop Steere's own heart, and he longed to go back with him.

He spent St. Andrew's Day in Zanzibar, taking part in one of the Bishop's first ordinations in the half-finished slave-market church, now the Cathedral, W. D. Lowndes being made deacon that day before going up to Magila.

It was not long before W. P. J. with fresh supplies returned to Masasi, where he spent a very happy Christmas, all the Masasi staff being present. Then, on December 29th, he, joined by Mr. Charles Janson, again started for Lake Nyasa by another way.

They reached the Ruvuma in about a week. They had with them three donkeys, "who were anything but comforts." In the first place, they were bitten by the tsetse flies, which seemed to take a great fancy to them, and in the second place, as they were crossing one of the impossible native bridges, composed of a few bamboos flung across from side to side, the boy and the donkey he was dragging disappeared and were rapidly carried down-stream towards the Indian Ocean. W. P. J. jumped in after the boy and rescued him: the poor donkey was never seen again.

There were many other difficulties on the way, but the worst of all was the illness of Mr. Janson. He was very plucky and would not consent to be carried in a *machila*,<sup>1</sup> though he could not always keep up with his party, and several times had to stay behind and come on slowly. When, however, they caught their first sight of Lake Nyasa, they were both so overjoyed that they rushed down to the shore like schoolboys; the long-looked-for goal had at last been reached.

Mr. Janson insisted on bathing in its waters, which was

<sup>1</sup> A *machila* is a kind of hammock.

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## *The Lake at Last*

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about the worst thing he could do, as he was very weak and ill with fever. He was getting more and more ill, and with the heavy rain the marsh flooded right into the Chief's house where they were sleeping, and in the middle of the night the water rose right up to Janson's bed. At each of the villages by the lakeside they were told it was an earthly paradise and that there was no food anywhere else. But there was no accommodation for a man who was deadly sick and they decided to try and get on to Chiteji.

They only got as far as a small village called Pachia, because the river just before that was flooded, and Janson's bearers lost their footing and he got soaked through. The huts were tiny and W. P. J. felt very helpless, knowing nothing about nursing.

He did the best he could for his friend without any medicines and with hardly any food, and Janson was very patient, but in extreme pain. One of the Africans was strong and gentle in lifting the dying man and was a great help. At last, on Shrove Tuesday, February 21st, 1882, the end came, and Charles Janson passed to his rest, another life laid down in the service of Christ and for the good of Africa.

W. P. J. was very grateful to the old chief of the village, who helped him to dig a grave in the loose sand, as they had no spades or any implements to help them. And so, having buried his loved companion in whose company he had set out with so much joy and hope, W. P. J. continued on his way in loneliness, but with undiminished faith and zeal.

### CHAPTER X

#### THE LONELY TRAIL

AFTER the death of Charles Janson, W. P. J. was, it has been recorded, lost to public view; he was wandering from place to place trying to make plans for the future, and naturally had no means of posting letters. But since then he has written his reminiscences and from them we learn something of his tremendous adventures during that time.

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## *A Hero Man*

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He gives a delightful description of a chief in whose village he stayed for some time who, he says, was so hospitable that everything he had was in a very real sense at the disposal of anyone who happened to visit him—house, food and even the clothes off his back. He had been known to take off a garment and lend it to a nephew for a dance! In return for all this service, he expected a share in his people's things, but he gave more than he got.

At the time when W. P. J. arrived at the village, the chief was living in daily fear of being raided by the Magwangwara. These people were part of a fierce Zulu tribe that had fled from South Africa and taken refuge in Nyasaland. They were the terror of all the country round, as they lived by raiding the other tribes, taking possession of their cattle and making slaves of all the people whom they did not kill, and then selling them to the Arabs from the coast. As the chief did not know when these people might come upon him unexpectedly, he had built a stockade, inside which he lived, with his household and all his goods, and the villagers also slept within its shelter.

It was not many days before there was an alarm in the early morning and a cry of danger. They could see the smoke from burning villages all along the bay, and fugitives began to hurry in. The Magwangwara had come.

Chiteji, the chief, decided to go and parley with them and W. P. J. went with him. On the way they passed the dead bodies of several people whom the raiders had killed. When the Magwangwara saw W. P. J., who had a little book in his hand, which he had been reading in the canoe, they came dancing out to meet him, in a semi-circle. There were not many of them, less than a hundred.

Something about his appearance must have struck them, for they suddenly stopped dancing and then all sat down together and had quite a friendly talk, as well as they could, without understanding one another's language. W. P. J. made out that they did not want to quarrel with the white men and that they had enemies of their own, called the Nyaka-nyaka, who were always raiding them, so they were obliged to come South for their own raids. W. P. J. managed to make them understand that he would pay them a visit and promised to try to get the Nyaka-nyaka to make peace with them, and they parted on quite friendly terms.



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## *The Lonely Trail*

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It was not until July 1882, that this visit to the Magwangwara came off. Meantime he was preaching and visiting in all the villages round Chiteji's. He made a few catechumens and gathered a great deal of very valuable geographical information about the neighbourhood, which at that time was quite unexplored, for which he later received the thanks of the Royal Geographical Society.

It was a matter of some difficulty getting porters to go with him to the Magwangwara, as all the people were terrified at the idea of visiting this dreaded tribe in their own homes. After several days' march of more or less difficulty, they crossed the Ruvuma by a wonderful bamboo bridge, where an overhanging tree on either bank gave a purchase: eight or nine bamboos tied together formed the footpath and on either side was a framework of bamboos and rope which helped to sustain the path and acted as a handrail. They climbed the hill on the further side and came to a village where the people seemed to be in abject terror of the Magwangwara and very suspicious of W. P. J. and his party.

They absolutely refused to show him the way, saying that they could not conduct "a spirit" to the chief. So W. P. J. and his men went on by themselves. After travelling for several days more, they came to the chief town of the Magwangwara. At first they could not find out who or where the chief was, but, after much questioning, a man went off to tell the chief who soon afterwards came, a finely-made man of middle height wearing one large piece of cloth gracefully, with skins of animals about his loins.

W. P. J. explained to him his reason for coming; this he did with great difficulty, as he knew nothing of the language. He said that he had come as a teacher of God's Word and had found the country made impassable by the Magwangwara raids, and begged them to live peaceably and hear his news of God. He showed them the Bible pictures he had brought with him, which they looked at eagerly, but were afraid to touch. The chief made a speech in which he promised that there should be no more raids in Chiteji's country.

There was one thing which struck W. P. J. very much. They asked him how they should return thanks for a gift: no other natives had ever done this. After meeting with so much ignor-

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## A Hero Man

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ance, it was very refreshing to find people so intelligent. He was four or five days in the Magwangwara village. They called him *Makoka*, which means a spirit, and they were rather inclined to laugh at him and say how *could* he be a man with no hair on his face?

On the homeward journey, W. P. J. was ill and had to be carried in a *machila*. He was very glad to reach the shores of the Lake again after this trying and dangerous journey.

It was after his return that he heard the sad news of Bishop Steere's death in Zanzibar, on August 27th, 1882. The Bishop had only just returned from England, where he had gone to try and restore his broken-down health, but while there he took no rest, working day and night for the Mission. His death was a great personal loss to all his workers, as well as the whole Mission, both African and English, and perhaps especially so to W. P. J., whom he so thoroughly understood, and in whose hopes and fears he so entirely sympathised.

Mr. Johnson writes: "I know not to whom to write and pour out all my news, good, bad and indifferent, which the Bishop always encouraged me to do."

### CHAPTER XI

#### "IN JOURNEYINGS OFTEN"

NOT long after this the steamer *Ilala*, belonging to the African Lakes Corporation, offered to take W. P. J. up North in search of the Nyaka-nyaka, the tribe of which the Magwangwara had told him they stood in such dread. They had a very stormy journey up the Lake, but the *Ilala* held her own and they arrived safely in the country of the Wakonde. Some six to seven hundred natives came out to meet them and bowed very politely. The captain of the steamer entered into the spirit of it and bowed back, whereupon the natives bowed lower still, and so the bowing went on fast and furiously. It must have made an amusing scene, with the white man and the Africans trying to outbow each other while a group of crested cranes in

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## *“ In Journeyings Often ”*

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the distance looked on in astonishment at such unusual vagaries.

The Wakonde wore no clothes excepting many coils of finely-worked brass wire round their waists, and their villages were marvels of neatness. The cattle, of which there were a great number, slept in the huts, which were divided into compartments and well ventilated. They were swept out carefully every day and were very neat.

The land outside the huts was kept tidy, the dead leaves which had fallen being swept up every evening and burnt in little heaps near or under the oxen to dry them before they were driven in for the night. The people lived almost entirely on flour made from bananas and on milk and curdled cream. The cattle had bells round their necks and the young men wore smaller bells on their ankles which jingled in time as they danced or leapt about with their spears.

W. P. J. had come to look for a tribe popularly known as the Nyaka-nyaka, but this turned out to be a sort of nickname ; the real name of the tribe was the Wabena and he had to go up into the mountains to look for them.

As they travelled, they came across herds of zebra and the flowers on the high ground were plentiful : white and black long-haired monkeys were swinging from tree to tree in the forests on the lower slopes, but higher up there were hardly any trees. They had to cross large rivers by means of a bark rope : one of the porters would swim across and fasten the rope to a tree, then the others would swing across at the other end of the rope by means of the current.

Then they came to the villages of the Wabena, composed of huts with roofs of beaten mud, built round a quadrangle, and were fairly well received by the people, in their costume of beads, but the travellers could not obtain any information about the chief. They exhausted nearly all their supply of trade goods in vain and were left with only a private's uniform, which they hoped might do for the chief when found.

As the porters had bored ears like the captives of the Mangwangwara, the inhabitants took them for spies, and were very suspicious of them. They also mistook W. P. J. for a French traveller who had lately passed through their country, he being white and covered with cloth and wearing boots. Their suspicions were only allayed when they discovered, after

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## *A Hero Man*

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cautiously turning up his trousers, that his boots were of a different kind and make!

Still the Wabena said the party must go back the way they had come and not through the Magwangwara country as they wished, and after staying a fortnight in one of the largest villages, still without any sign of a chief, they reluctantly complied.

W. P. J. had another bad ulcer on his leg and had to be carried part of the way. His men wanted to go to the north end of the Lake and wait for the steamer, but W. P. J. had no idea of how long they might have to wait and decided to travel down the east coast, keeping close to the Lake shore. At this all the porters took to their heels, but repented after leaving him alone for one day and came back again.

Going through the Livingstonia Mountains, they passed numbers of tribes with strange names and queer customs, such as filing their front teeth: on the highest part of the hills there were many tiny villages where no raiders had ever been. The country was very beautiful and through gaps in the clouds they could see the Lake far down below. There was no way down but a ladder-like path mostly on roots of trees, and as they came scrambling down this, the villagers below fled in terror from them, till they saw they had neither shields nor spears.

All along the shores of the Lake were villages built on piles, well hidden among the reeds. As the water was very deep here, the villages could only be built at the mouths of the rivers, on the mud which they had brought down. Some of the platforms on which the people lived were several hundred feet long and the people were all half-starving, as they had very little fish and no grain: they were too much in dread of their enemies to venture on shore to grow any Indian corn or cassava.

Sometimes W. P. J. managed to borrow a canoe from one village to another and as they went they kept asking if anyone knew where Chiteji's village was. And so, partly walking and partly wading, they got back home, passing on their way several herds of elephants and hippopotami.

After his return, W. P. J. was very ill indeed and had to be taken to Bandawe to be nursed by the members of the Scotch Mission, to whose care and kindness he believed he owed his very life. As soon as he was well enough, they lent him a boat for the return journey to Chiteji's and on the way he saw a

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## “ In Journeyings Often ”

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wonderful comet in the sky, which seemed to be right over his house.

After this journey, W. P. J. could think of nothing but the best means of bringing the Gospel to Nyasaland, and after a great deal of consideration, he decided that the dangers and difficulties of travelling by land were so great that a steamer to run on the Lake, from village to village, would be the best means of doing this.

Full of these plans, he determined to accept an invitation to England to lay them before the Committee of the Mission. He arrived in Zanzibar in December and in the short time that he was there he made an appeal to the teachers of St. Andrew's College, Kiungani, inviting volunteers to go back to Nyasaland with him on his return from England. In this appeal he had the hearty concurrence of the Principal, the Rev. P. L. Jones-Bateman, who was on fire with missionary zeal.

At that time none of the boys was ready to accept the invitation, but later on his appeal bore fruit.

### CHAPTER XII

#### STRICKEN WITH BLINDNESS

ARRIVED in England, the friends of the Mission found it impossible to resist W. P. J.'s forcible appeal for the steamer that he wanted. Funds were quickly forthcoming and in October 1884, a small steamer, to be called the *Charles Janson*, was sent out in 380 packages, via the Cape and thence up the Zambesi on a hired tug, and at last put together on the shores of the Lake itself.

Meanwhile W. P. J. himself visited Zanzibar, taking with him the three native boys who had gone to England with him to be trained for work on the steamer, and also a fresh party of five Mission workers who were to accompany him to Nyasaland. His visit to Kiungani College is thus described by Canon Augustine Ambali, one of the teachers who followed him :

“ Mr. Johnson he came to visit us and to ask us again if we were willing to come with him to Nyasaland ; and he arrived

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## *A Hero Man*

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to Zanzibar and he came to Kiungani to St. Andrew's College to call us and he said I am ready now to go to Nyasaland ; are you ready to follow me ? And if you like to come with me I will be very glad indeed to have you because I am alone there and I desire very much indeed to have some teachers to help me do the work. And he asked us are you willing to come with me to help your brothers and sisters ? And then we answered him, we are ready, Sir, to go with you if you please ; and we are six teachers, we who want to go with you. . . ."

They were some of the best teachers at Kiungani, and though it meant a great loss to the work of the college, the Principal was both proud and delighted to spare them, for he always tried to inspire his boys with a real missionary spirit.

But the return to Nyasaland and the launching of the steamer was not to be as easy as W. P. J. had hoped. Leaving Zanzibar on December 31st, they reached Quilimane, where some of the party, with the packages containing the steamer, had already arrived and gone on up the river. Here there were numbers of very venomous mosquitoes and as it was the rainy season, the banks of the river were so muddy that the natives sank in up to their waists whenever they had to land.

W. P. J. begged the Portuguese officials to give him shelter for his men for the night, but they refused, saying he could come himself if he wished. He would not leave his party, and that night his eyes were attacked with ophthalmia, a very serious disease which destroys the sight, and in twenty-four hours he was totally blind. After some days the tug returned, having landed the pieces of the steamer on the banks of the Zambesi and W. P. J.—the one originator of the whole scheme, the only one of the party who had been in the country before or could speak the Nyasa language—had to be taken back in her hold to the Portuguese hospital at Mozambique, leaving the expedition to go on without him.

There were no nurses in the hospital and there was no eye-specialist : the doctor seemed to be able to do nothing better than order rose-water for his eyes. Great must have been W. P. J.'s relief when Miss Townshend, who was a good nurse, came hurrying from Zanzibar to take care of him and take him back to the hospital there.

It was very pathetic to see him when he arrived. He had

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## *Stricken with Blindness*

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left Zanzibar so full of faith, hope and vigour and he returned worn and weary, with bandaged eyes, but with determination as strong as ever and undaunted courage. Anyone who has had ophthalmia will know the terrible pain that he suffered, for which there seemed no relief. Miss Townshend took him to England, where he had two operations which partly saved the sight of one eye and the doctor said he would be able to read with his head close to a light. And this prophecy was fulfilled.

After this great set-back, most men would have thought it was time to give up their work: not so our hero man. With his old, strong determination hard upon him he set out again. Eyes or no eyes he had to do it, and as far as he could help it nothing should hinder the doing of it; so off he went again, in April, 1886, and with him went George Sherriff, a Brixham trawler, a brave and true Christian and a man after W. P. J.'s own heart, who for five years was captain of the *Charles Janson* and died at his post in August, 1891.

They travelled by Aden to Zanzibar and there met the new Bishop, Charles Alan Smythies, who had succeeded Bishop Steere and had only been out two years. W. P. J. only stayed in Zanzibar a few days and then started with the Bishop and rather a large party for Masasi.

They went in one of the coast steamers to Lindi, the port for Masasi. Arrived at Lindi, they had a walk of some ninety miles to Masasi. Bishop Smythies was a tremendous walker and a strong, powerful man. It never struck him that his fellow-travellers might not be able to go quite as hard and fast as he did. On this journey he completely wore them all out.

The youngest of the party was the first to fall ill and in his diary there is a note, telling how, after they arrived at the first halt, "W. P. J. was found, tired and weary as he was, among the porters, crucifix in hand, talking to them in the dark." He also speaks of W. P. J.'s kindness after the long and tiring march next day, when he cut down the long grass to make a bed for the sick man before resting himself. The diarist adds: "the memory of Johnson, his entire devotion, practical sympathy and withal much of the eccentricity of genius, has never left me."

He mentions that it was quite a common occurrence for W. P. J., walking rapidly along the path, to fall flat on his face

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## A Hero Man

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when his foot caught any obstruction, owing to his blindness, but he would never allow anyone to give him a hand or help him in any way.

But there was another delay for W. P. J. before he could reach his goal: he was taken seriously ill with fever and a most painful abscess under his arm, and he had to be carried in a *machila* 150 miles to the coast and he said he could never forget the agony of the journey. He was taken to a hospital at the Cape and speaks of the great kindness he received there, during a stay of a few weeks. Then once more he set out for Nyasaland, arriving there in October, 1886.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE CHARLES JANSON LAUNCHED

THE steamer, meantime, had been successfully launched on Lake Nyasa, but not without vicissitudes. When Bishop Smythies had heard the news of W. P. J.'s blindness, he had left Zanzibar as soon as possible to take charge of the expedition, taking with him Mr. Swinny and a large party. He arrived at Matope, where the last touches were being put to the building of the steamer and then there came a great disaster.

As the last rivets were being fixed into the boiler under a thatched roof, the sun being very hot, a red-hot rivet flew up into the thatch and set it alight. No one noticed the accident before the thatch was well alight and in a few minutes a huge fire was blazing, increased by a light wind. A man and a boy who were working in the boiler were mercifully got out in time, though with great difficulty as the manhole was at the top; the poor boy was nearly mad with terror. But the damage was tremendous.

The members of the staff lost their entire possessions, their beds, huts, clothes and washing utensils and had nothing left but the clothes they stood up in. The storehouses with their contents were utterly destroyed and all around was a scene of desolation.

All hands were commandeered, as well as every pick, axe and shovel, for the dock had to be cleared for the dedication



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## The "Charles Janson" Launched

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of the steamer by the Bishop within a week, as the river was getting so low that soon there would not be water enough to float it. On September 6th, 1885, the dedication took place and it was a grand and impressive sight to see the white-robed procession of teachers and clergy, headed by the Bishop, wind its way to the river.

A short service followed, partly in English and partly in Swahili. The hymn tunes were played on a baby organ and heartily sung by the whole congregation. So the Mission was established on Lake Nyasa and the floating church began her work. It was nearly twenty-four years since the burial of the first Bishop, January 31st, 1862, on the banks of the Shiré.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of this visit to Nyasaland, Bishop Smythies obtained leave from the native chiefs to settle on Likoma, a small rocky island in the Lake, which would give good harbourage to the steamer on its visits. Here Mr. and Mrs. Swinny and their little daughter settled and were later joined by Mr. Maples from Masasi. In October, 1886, W. P. J. with renewed health returned from the Cape. About two months after his arrival, his life was again in danger.

The *Charles Janson* was running up the Lake and no one was on deck at the time, when W. P. J. tried to draw water for a wash. You have to throw the bucket, with a rope attached, rather skilfully and warily when the steamer is running. The water drew in W. P. J. and no one knew. Presently the engineer came up from below, wishing to see W. P. J., and he could not be found. After some excitement, a deck hand perceived him in the water far astern and the steamer had to turn and go back for him—only just in time to save him, as he was nearly exhausted and was sinking.

Any observant reader must notice how the powers of evil worked against the life of W. P. J., but his faith and determination rose superior to them all and bore the Christian faith triumphantly to Lake Nyasa.

The work of the *Charles Janson* at this time is described by Captain Sherriff, who for five years was in command of the steamer, as follows: "The steamer is a great help to our Mission work, for our headquarters are on an island about 130 miles up the Lake, called Likoma. There are a great many

<sup>1</sup> See Prologue, page 7.

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## *A Hero Man*

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people living in it and it is only eight miles from the mainland. There is a little bay on Likoma Island where we anchor the steamer on Sundays. We begin the day with a service in the chapel. Then we cross the Lake to the mainland and Mr. Johnson goes ashore and speaks to the people at two villages. We then steam down the Lake to the next village and there we stop for the night.

“Service at six, start again to the next and so to all the villages down the east side of the Lake: then we get back to Likoma on Friday and land what food we have been able to buy on our journey while Mr. Johnson is at the villages. This food is for the boys at our school, of whom we have thirty, and for ourselves. It consists principally of rice flour, corn, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, beans and fowls: sometimes a goat. The men of the crew are paid in cloth and buy their own provisions. Saturdays, start to two other villages in another route, back again at night: Sundays, lay at anchor and go ashore to food and service. We have morning and evening service every day on board, and Holy Communion three times a week.

“I thought to find the Lake very smooth, but I find we get many severe storms, sometimes we cannot steam against them and the thunder and lightning is very severe, and the rain comes down in torrents at this time of the year (December); when the sun is out it is very hot. Mr. Johnson had 150 adults to his meeting at Monkey Bay this morning and many children. We are down here one Sunday out of every four: this is near to where we get our letters left by the African Lakes Corporation.

“There are a lot of leopards and deer and monkeys and snakes, but not so many lions and elephants as there are further up the Lake. The people often tell us how the elephants eat all their crops at some of the villages where we call. . . . We have very few mosquitoes, but many other flies and some that bite very hard: one is glad to put his light out at night to get rid of them. We get scorpions on board, they come in the wood we buy for the steamer and snakes we find at times in the cabin, and I have found scorpions in my bed at night.”

W. P. J. never let rough weather or bad anchorage stand in the way of his visiting a village when he had started work, much to the horror of the captain responsible for the safety of

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## *The "Charles Janson" Launched*

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the ship. It seemed to the outsider that if there were two villages in which work might be started, he preferred the impossible place to the safer.

The seas are very dangerous on Lake Nyasa to so small a steamer and so tiny a dinghy. Often and often he had to wade ashore as the dinghy was flooded in the surf at the landing-place.

There are some amusing stories told of these early days on the steamer. Once when they stopped at a village the captain of one of the native dhows came on board to pay them a visit and was much interested in all he saw. The vessel was anchored at the time, but when the engine was started to go on, the man was frightened out of his wits. He leapt at once into his canoe and paddled round and round the steamer looking at it with great curiosity. It was pointed out to him that the outside was made of iron but he would not believe it and tried to stick his knife into it. While he was intent on doing this, the canoe capsized and the great "captain" was in the water!

At another village where the steamer stopped, the whistle so frightened the people that they fled to their canoes and would not come near. On another occasion, Mrs. Swinny, who was on board, attracted great attention: they had never seen a white woman before and crowds came to look at her.

### CHAPTER XIV

#### " IN PERILS FROM THE HEATHEN "

ABOUT this time news was received that the Magwangwara were on the warpath, and when W. P. J.'s party landed at one of the villages, they found on the shore the dead body of a man with an arrow sticking in it. They also heard that Mr. Swinny had already been there. W. P. J. took possession of the arrow and went on.

There was neither sight nor sound of anyone about in the deserted village: some of the huts had been burnt and some dead bodies were lying near. Some half-roasted corn by a fire showed where the war-party had been before they were disturbed by the steamer's whistle. W. P. J. went on towards their

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## *A Hero Man*

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camp, while the others went back to the steamer. Presently a little frightened boy of about ten years old peeped out of the reeds and ran away along the shore. Men were sent to catch him and bring him back to the steamer, where he told his story.

He said that the Magwangwara had come upon the village at cock-crow, while it was still dark and had set fire to some of the huts. He had rushed out and after being twice caught he escaped and hid himself in the reeds till he heard the whistle of the steamer, very much frightened all the time by the shouts of the enemy and the cries of his friends who were being taken prisoners.

Arrived at the camp of the Magwangwara, W. P. J. had an interview with the chief and rescued several of the people who had been taken for slaves and took them on board the steamer. It was this sort of life which occupied W. P. J. for the next ten years. He loved life on the steamer and was never so happy as when on board. When visiting the villages he never slept on shore, going off in the early morning and coming back at night. He spent the day in teaching and preaching to the people.

One of the Mission workers says that the first time he met W. P. J. he was sitting under a tree on the banks of the Upper Shiré, teaching a class of small boys to do simple addition sums. But that was only by the way. W. P. J.'s great work was to preach the Gospel. Like St. John the Baptist, he was "a voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." For he knew that the only way to bring happiness to Africa was to make the paths straight by doing away with war and slavery and witchcraft. And night and day he gave his whole life to accomplish this end.

He never thought at all of his own comfort. He gave away his clothes, ate whatever was offered him; if he felt ill fought against it with all his might: he was, in fact, as the natives said of him in the early days: "a man who never sat down."

Often when he visited the villages he was ill-treated. The people beat him with sticks and threw dust at him. He was not to be daunted. If he was beaten in one village he would come back again though people continued to throw dust at him. At one village, where he went with three of his boys, he was very badly received. One of the boys was killed: they had another on the ground, and a Yao had his foot on the boy's

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## “ In Perils from the Heathen ”

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head and was holding his spear at his throat when W. P. J. ran up and beat him off with his fists. The men were so enraged that they surrounded W. P. J. and stripped off his cassock, while one of the men held a long Arab knife to his throat. W. P. J. calmly suggested that they should sit down. This they did, in their surprise, and sat there for many hours, W. P. J. in the midst of them, while the steamer slowly cruised about in the distance, none of the crew being able to come to W. P. J.'s assistance, as it would only have enraged the natives and they would have killed him at once.

At length the villagers got tired of this game and W. P. J. slowly got up and walked quietly away and got into a canoe that was lying by the shore. There was no paddle, but using his hands and balancing very carefully, he managed to get to the steamer. The boy meantime had escaped and got back on board: he never forgot that W. P. J. had saved his life and would have done anything for him.

Another day, when W. P. J. had been feeling ill and was resting in one of the huts, he was roused to find that his senior teacher, Augustine, had been wounded in the hand by a spear, the people having been angered by something he had said. The sight of the blood excited them and about ten of them had begun to dance wildly about round the teacher and W. P. J. who had come out of the hut. The angry Africans were poisoning their spears and coming close up in a threatening way, when luckily the headman of the village, who was friendly, arrived in the nick of time. He leapt about, giving a good kick at the middle of each shield and knocked several of the men over, while the rest quickly dispersed.

Perhaps the most critical of all his adventures at this time was at a village where the chief was a man named Makanjila, noted as a slave-dealer. W. P. J. visited this village, going in the *Charles Janson* and taking with him Mr. Buchanan, the Vice-Consul, who wanted to have a political interview with the chief on the intentions of the English Government. When they arrived at the village they landed, Mr. Buchanan taking with him a party of soldiers carrying the English flag. W. P. J. had a bad sore on his leg and was carried in a *machila*. They landed at a place where the chief and several hundred natives were waiting for them.

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## A Hero Man

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At first all went well, the people still thinking that W. P. J. had come to establish a station there and, seeing the flag, the chief hoped to get a large present from Mr. Buchanan.

Mr. Buchanan, who could only speak their language imperfectly, made them a long oration and evidently something he said made them very angry, for they all rose up and a general stampede followed. They knocked W. P. J. to the ground and proceeded to strip him. They got off his coat and cassock, but as he wisely offered no resistance, they did not proceed further, but ordered him to "come along," and he went.

On his way, he saw Mr. Buchanan on the ground with a number of natives on his back. He was trying to get out his revolver, but happily did not succeed for had he done so it would have meant certain death to both of them. They treated Mr. Buchanan very badly, probably because he was so indignant at their ill-treatment of an *Englishman*.

They put W. P. J. in a small hut, and he saw Mr. Buchanan being marched round the dead body of one of his soldiers, meaning to let those on the steamer see that the Europeans were in their power. The man who was guarding W. P. J. in the hut proceeded to cut off his shirt-buttons (at that time these little pearl buttons were very much valued by the Africans and could be easily sold). W. P. J. began to wonder what he would lose next and was very much relieved when the rest of the party returned.

The excitement now began to abate and the two Englishmen were put into a small hut for the night. They understood that they were not going to be killed, and were given a bunch of unripe bananas for their supper. Among the crowd there were a few who were friendly and helped Mr. Buchanan with clothes.

The next morning a great number of notes passed between the steamer and the men on shore, and finally the captives were released by those on board paying a ransom of paint which the chief wanted.

Talking once of these adventures, W. P. J. said, "I was often terribly afraid, but I never remember wanting to turn back."

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## *Building up the Church*

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### CHAPTER XV

#### BUILDING UP THE CHURCH

WORK was now going on in other parts of Nyasaland. Besides the island of Likoma, where there was a church and a number of Christians and schools for boys and girls, work had been started in the island of Chizumulu which is opposite Likoma. A priest went across the Lake from Likoma as regularly as possible to teach the people and hold services. Mr. Maples had been made Archdeacon of Likoma and it was a great joy to W. P. J. to be able to visit his friend from time to time, talk over things and make plans with him.

They consulted on the best way of dividing the work and arranged that all the Lake-side villages should be under W. P. J.'s care while Likoma, Chizumulu and the other stations should be superintended by Mr. Maples.

Sometimes as the Likoma staff sat at dinner, the steamer's whistle would be heard, and the Archdeacon's face would light up and a place would be hastily cleared for W. P. J. He and his old college friend would sit on the Archdeacon's verandah after dinner talking until past midnight and settling questions relating to the Mission. Neither of them ever undertook any important work without discussing it first with the other. It must be understood that the work had greatly increased during this period and within a few more years many other central stations were opened in different parts of the district, at Unangu, Kota Kota, Mponda's, and Malindi.

Bishop Smythies had paid five visits to Nyasa, but the last one was too much for even his enormous strength and he decided that Nyasaland must now have its own Bishop. He went to England and made forcible appeals all over the country. Money was subscribed and the Rev. Wilfred Bird Hornby was consecrated Bishop and went out to Africa with Bishop Smythies in 1892.

He was only able to stay in Africa for about eighteen months and when he retired, with broken health, Archdeacon Maples was chosen to be Bishop. This was a great joy to W. P. J. They had been friends for so long and worked together so happily and understood each other so well that he looked

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## *A Hero Man*

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forward to a time of great happiness with his old friend as his Bishop.

It was at one of his meetings with Archdeacon Maples that W. P. J. expressed a wish to visit the Wakinga, a tribe living on the north shore of the Lake, in order to learn something of their language and get leave to send a teacher there. They started on their journey, W. P. J. paying numerous calls on the way up, and after he had achieved his object and got permission from the chief for a teacher to visit them, he told those on board the steamer that as they were so near he would like to revisit the Wakonde, whom he had not seen for a long time.

You must understand that about this time, all this part of the country had been very much disturbed by the efforts of the English to suppress the slave trade, which was still carried on by underhand methods, and there was a great deal of hostile suspicion against all white people, so when W. P. J. insisted on landing, the captain and crew felt very anxious about him. But as there was no denying him, they put him ashore about 3 p.m. and he said he would be back before sundown—6 o'clock. As he was generally much later than his word, they gave him till 8 o'clock and prepared for him as a treat a stuffed duck for his supper.

Nine o'clock came—ten o'clock—twelve o'clock—and there was no W. P. J. : the supper was quite spoilt. So at last they decided to go ashore and look for him. After passing through several villages, crossing rivulets and being soaked through with a tremendous thunderstorm, in great trouble they decided to go back to the steamer and wait for daylight. But no sooner had daybreak come than they heard, to their great delight, from the shore the familiar cry of "Boatie!"—and there was W. P. J., quite calm and happy.

He said he had passed the night comfortably in a native hut : so they told him of all their anxiety and tried to make his mouth water by describing what a good supper he had lost, but W. P. J. cared very little about his eating and drinking.

It was often after a long day ashore like this that instead of going to bed he would set to work at his translations in the little cabin of the steamer, focussing that remaining little slit of sight through his fingers, by the aid of a candle—which on



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## *Building up the Church*

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many occasions set fire to his hair—reading either Greek or Hebrew, thinking in English and writing in one or other of the Lakeside dialects—and woe betide anyone who wanted to disturb him to clean the cabin! In this way he translated the Scriptures and compiled vocabularies and grammars in many dialects—work for which the whole Mission in Nyasaland is indebted to him—for how can you teach a people unless you know their language?

At one of the villages which was in W. P. J.'s care, called Msumba, one of the teachers whom he had brought up from Zanzibar, at this time a deacon, was in charge, and he tells us how W. P. J. helped him to build his church: "First of all Mr. Johnson told me to call the people in the village to pick up the stones for building the church, and I call them the women and boys and girls and they pick up the stones for nothing without payment except their posho one yard a week and the heathen women they were paid one fathom a week. . . . And we picked up stones and got mud and cut bamboos and ropes and timber and beams and then we were ready to build. And the walls are strong walls and have sat still till now.

"And Mr. Johnson he was our superintendent for building to build the church and to make the arches but we were none of us architects. And we start to build on July 8, 1892, and we finish the building on October 31st and we made the roof and thatch it altogether and on Christmas Eve we enter into our church." By this you will see that our hero man was good at many trades, priest and teacher, builder and sailor, translator and linguist, geographical discoverer, peacemaker—but not above fighting with his fists when occasion required.

W. P. J. often enjoyed a joke at his own expense. Once, when there was a terrible fire at Likoma, which entirely destroyed all the Mission buildings, W. P. J., who was there at the time, was very energetic in his efforts to help and distinguished himself by picking up a tin of paraffin oil, which in his blindness he mistook for water, and pouring it on the flames! Of course he did not know what he had done till it flared up. "It *did* go f-zzz!" he said.

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## *A Hero Man*

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### CHAPTER XVI

#### THE CARE OF THE VILLAGES

THE troubles round the Lake in connection with the slave trade were getting more and more serious and at the time when Archdeacon Maples was in England for his consecration as Bishop, one of the missionaries, the Rev. George Atlay, son of the Bishop of Hereford, was in charge of Likoma and had a very anxious time, missing the Archdeacon at every turn. He went for a short holiday to the mainland where he was hoping to get some shooting, and there he was murdered by the natives, who mistook him for a Government official. Mr. Atlay, being a missionary, would not use in self-defence a loaded rifle which he was carrying.

As soon as the news reached him, W. P. J., who was daily expecting the return of the Bishop, then on the way up to Nyasa, hastened to the village to rescue the body of his fellow-worker, and took it to Likoma for burial. And immediately afterwards there happened what was perhaps the greatest sorrow of his life. Bishop Maples, hurrying up the Lake in a boat, was overtaken by one of the violent storms which are not infrequent on Lake Nyasa. The waves began to break into the boat and finally it broached to—came sideways on to the wind, was swamped and went under. One of the Bishop's fellow-workers, Mr. Joseph Williams, who was with him, was drowned at once. The Bishop, who was a good swimmer, tried to gain the shore, but was hampered by his cassock and he also was drowned.

For a long time it seemed impossible to believe that this news was true, that one who was so strong and full of life, on whom they all depended, with all his plans for the future, could be lying cold and still at the bottom of Lake Nyasa. It was not only the Europeans who found it hard to realise—the Africans, who had known and felt his love for them, were stunned with the greatness of the disaster. They sat sorrowfully on the mud floors of the huts, trying in their simple way to show their sympathy, speaking no word, but with the tears running slowly down their dark cheeks. They had lost more than a father.

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## *The Care of the Villages*

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At one of the stations where the news was received there were three Europeans present at the time, and they began to discuss how the accident could have happened. But an African deacon who was there, went quietly into the church to pray.

Bishop Maples was succeeded by Dr. Hine, who had worked both in the dioceses of Zanzibar and Nyasaland and was priest-in-charge of a station called Unangu. One of his first acts as Bishop was to make W. P. J. Archdeacon of Nyasa.

The next two years were spent by Archdeacon Johnson sailing and tramping round the Lake, strengthening old stations and opening new ones. The *Charles Janson* was his home and he was never happy when away from her. He never slept on shore when he could avoid it, but always went back to the steamer and expected all his steamer workers to do so also.<sup>9</sup>

Every morning he was up before the sun, which there rises about six o'clock all the year round, and his day was spent pretty much as follows—going ashore with the smallest possible amount of personal luggage, consisting of a bed (in case he had to sleep ashore), pots and pans, books, etc., carried on the head of a willing porter—for none of these things was supplied in the huts in which he slept.

His road led him through narrow, overgrown tracks with bushes and tall grass as high as his head, wet wet with heavy dew. Arrived at a village he lost no time in setting to work, holding classes of catechumens or hearers, settling disputes or perhaps busying himself in the work he was so interested in, translating the Scriptures with the help of the native teachers living in the village. At the close of the day a boy went through the village with a horn or bell to summon the people to prayer in the little church built of mud and poles, with a thatched roof.

There was nothing the least beautiful in these little village churches—everything was of the roughest and simplest description, the altar covered with plain calico and a cross and candlesticks of native workmanship. But the heartiness of the worshippers made up for the simplicity of the building. There were no seats and no books, but all the people joined with their whole hearts in the responses and singing.

There were very few lights in the church, only just enough to make the darkness visible and close to the brightest of them the Archdeacon would stand up and speak a few words to the

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## A Hero Man

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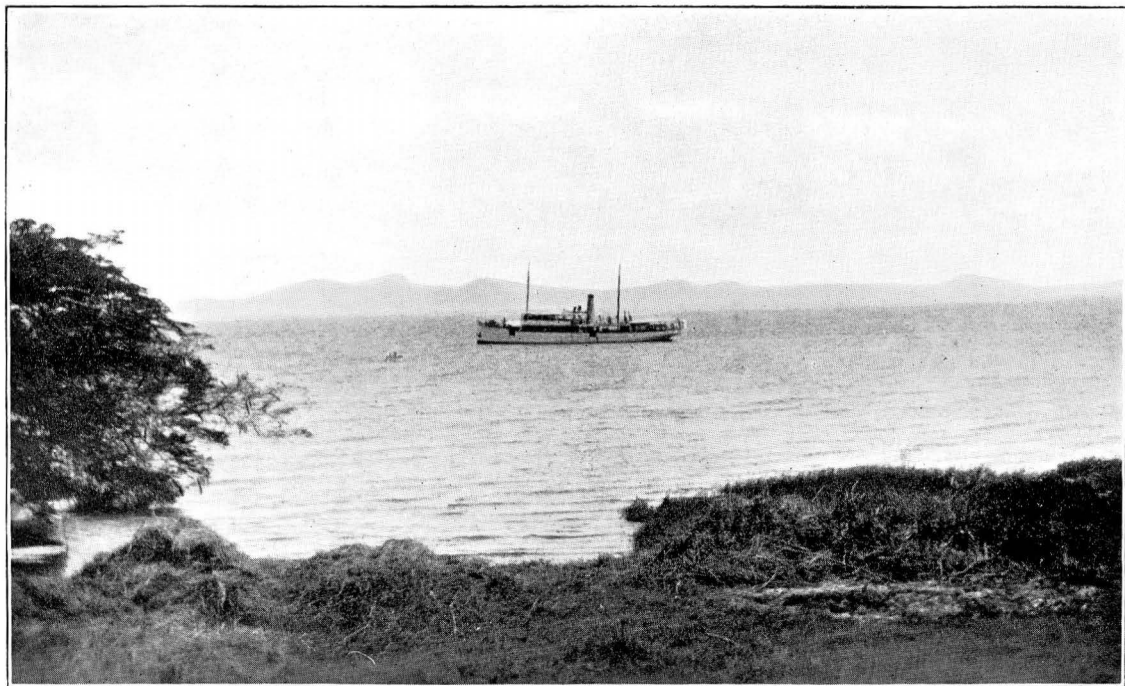
people, of exhortation, rebuke and pleading, his earnest face making a beautiful picture in the darkness above the upturned faces of his hearers.

Over twenty Lake-side villages were regularly visited by the *Charles Janson* in this way: there were schools and teachers at all of them and hearers' classes at many other villages. But it was soon found that the *Charles Janson* was too small for the great work that she had to do and a much larger steamer was necessary. For this another appeal was made in England, and the people of England were so impressed with all that the *Charles Janson* had accomplished in the way of missionary work, that the necessary money was again subscribed. It was over four years before the steamer had been sent out and launched, for it was a much more expensive business than was imagined by those who with a light heart had made the appeal for the money. It was called, after the late Bishop, the *Chauncy Maples*, and was the best boat on the Lake.

In 1896, Archdeacon Johnson was joined by the Rev. C. B. Eyre, who before his ordination was captain of a sailing vessel and so was of course the greatest help on board the steamer. Two years later the Archdeacon felt that he could safely leave the *Charles Janson* and her work in the care of Mr. Eyre and come home for a much needed furlough. It was eleven years since he had been in England. It is generally supposed that those living in Central Africa must come to England every three years.

The Archdeacon greatly enjoyed his visit to England, though perhaps it did not afford him much rest, for all the people were eager to hear about his work and what he was doing on the, till then, almost unknown Lake. He returned to Nyasaland in November 1898, and went on with his work on the steamer as before, of which we may gain some idea from the fact that in that year, 1899, the Bishop confirmed 344 people in the Lakeside villages.

One of the English workers tells the following story of him at this time: "Archdeacon Johnson arrived one evening at Mbweka, and as the heat was very oppressive had his bedstead put out on the verandah of his hut. Something brushed against it in the night and awoke him. A few moments later he heard loud cries in the village. A lioness had seized a man



THE "CHAUNCY MAPLES" ON LAKE NYASA

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## The Care of the Villages

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who had gone outside for a moment : his brother rushed to his rescue, and the lioness, dropping the first man, seized the second. W. P. J. ran to the spot and pulling a large handful of straw from the thatch of one of the houses thrust it into a fire and held the lighted end against the lioness's mouth, while some men held on to her tail and others killed her with the heavy poles the women use for pounding corn.

### CHAPTER XVII

#### THE STEAMER, *CHAUNCY MAPLES*

THE new steamer which was named the *Chauncy Maples*, after the late Bishop, was sent out in 1899 and was being put together near the Lake, though she was not ready to be launched for another two years.

But the work was beginning to tell upon W. P. J.'s health and he was laid low with an attack of fever in its severest form. He was so ill that the Bishop said it would be necessary for him to leave his work altogether, and it was settled that he should go to visit his brother in New Zealand, whom he had not seen for many years. He required an entire change, for when he was in England he got no rest at all, preaching and talking about the Mission the whole time.

On his way down to the coast he was too ill to walk and had to be carried in a sort of hammock, though he very much disliked this form of conveyance. It was the rainy season and the paths were in a bad condition. Walking was very difficult and the carriers slipped and slid about and were finally brought to a standstill by finding that a stream, which could ordinarily be easily forded, had swollen to the size of a river and was quite impassable.

The Archdeacon was wet to the skin and shivering with cold, so the party returned to the rest house from which they had set out. The return journey took three hours and when they arrived the Archdeacon was nearly dead with exhaustion and cold. Hot blankets and hot drinks were speedily provided, but it was not until he saw the nurse, who had also had all her

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## A Hero Man

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clothes soaked through, dressed up in a sweater and trousers many sizes too large for her belonging to the stout owner of the bungalow, that he began to revive and laugh so heartily that he soon got warm again.

The doctor, who went with him as far as Aden, left him there to go on alone to New Zealand. He arrived in New Zealand in the wet season and thought it a perfect miracle to have recovered his health where it rained every day and where there was no church and no clergyman.

While he was in New Zealand, he had the pleasure of baptising two of the Maori natives and did a good deal to help the Diocesan Missionary. Even in his weakness and convalescence he could not be idle.

In 1902, the Archdeacon returned to Nyasaland. During his absence the *Chauncy Maples* had been launched and dedicated by Bishop Trower, who had succeeded Bishop Hine, when the latter was translated to the Zanzibar diocese, and Archdeacon Johnson took charge of her with great delight. She seemed to him a fairy palace after the close quarters of the *Charles Janson*, though his cabin was only eight feet square.

It was splendid to see how the African crew of the steamer would respond to the word of command; he taught them when manning the boat, to "toss" their oars and "ship" them with precision, quite in naval style. His word was law on board the *Chauncy Maples*. Delighted to be back in a steamer again, he was very soon buried in work. He made full use of her and never allowed her to lie idle at anchor. After six o'clock in the morning no one had a chance of getting a wink of sleep (in Africa the sun always rises between 5.30 and 6). They began the day with service in the chapel, either Mattins, or Mass on Sundays and festivals.

For the first years he always had African boys on board, whom he was training to be teachers in the villages. For Archdeacon Johnson's first idea of the *Chauncy Maples* was that it was to be a training college for future teachers and those who were hoping to be ordained. These students were taught to take part in the Church services, two reading the lessons, while another two took the prayers, and a priest presided to correct mistakes if necessary.

After breakfast in the saloon, the altar in the chapel was

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## *The Steamer "Chauncy Maples"*

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screened off by a curtain and the boys faced the other way to begin school. Though the students had no teaching or preaching to do, they did not much enjoy their time on the steamer, for reading and writing were not very easy to do with the steamer rolling and pitching about on the Lake. And besides this, they were often disturbed by the noise of the wood being brought in for the fires of the steamer, for there is no coal in Africa and the fires of the steamer were entirely kept up by wood, which had to be bought at the different stations where they anchored.

This also caused more disturbance, for the buying and bargaining for the wood had to be done and these things are not conducted very quietly in Central Africa. School work went on steadily till 12, then they had lunch and after that school again till 4. Then came tea and the evening service, followed by a short time of reading, then they would sing their evening hymn and go to bed, and after that the rule would be silence throughout the ship.

The Archdeacon also wanted very much to have women teachers on board to educate the women and girls in the villages, but this never came off. For though he himself was always happy on board the steamer, she was by no means a comfortable residence for everybody, the Lake being very rough and the rolling powers of the steamer considerable. Some of the Bishops dreaded a voyage on her when they had to go on their confirmation tours.

Besides training the students on board, he was looking after the sixty Lake-side villages, celebrating in each of them whenever possible. Besides Likoma, there were several large Mission stations in full working order under other European priests.

The foundation stone of Likoma Cathedral was laid in June 1903, and the Cathedral was finished and dedicated on September 29th, 1905. This is a magnificent building and the great glory of it is that it was built entirely by African Christians and catechumens under the superintendence of a young architect, Mr. Frank George, who is now Archdeacon of Nyasa.

On the River Shiré, where work was first started by Bishop Mackenzie, and where it had had to be abandoned, several stations were now in full working order, under the care of



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## *A Hero Man*

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African teachers. And we must not forget that all this work now going on in Nyasaland was mainly due to the pioneer efforts of Archdeacon Johnson. But this river work as well as the Lake-side villages was too much for one priest, and in 1906 the river work was taken over by the Rev. A. M. Jenkin.

### CHAPTER XVIII

#### HOW THE AFRICAN LIVES

IT is difficult for people in England to understand the constant fear in which Africans live. There is always the fear of the unknown—anything may happen in a day—they may be visited by wild beasts, lions and leopards, to catch them in a moment as they move from one hut to another. A herd of elephants may come and tread down their fields and gardens, destroying all their crops and leaving them without any food for months to come. Monkeys, too, if not so dangerous to their bodies, are equally so to their crops and may come upon them in a crowd at any moment. The Lake and the river are full of crocodiles and there are few weeks in which there is not some terrible tragedy in connection with them. And there is always the terror of witchcraft, the beginning and end—as they think—of every evil thing that comes to pass. Also in those days there was always the fear of being raided by a hostile tribe, their houses burnt to the ground and they and their children carried off into slavery.

Archdeacon Johnson well understood all this and was full of sympathy for the people: he speaks of the great comfort the Mission hospitals were to the people: while he was at Likoma, every week some poor person was brought across, mauled by leopard or crocodile, sometimes very badly injured indeed.

He tells a story how, at one of the villages, a teacher saw his mother seized by a crocodile as she was drawing water from the lake. The teacher raised a hue and cry and got a canoe: he was joined by others who heard the cry and a fight in the water began. Some of them seized the crocodile by the tail which was very long and strong, and after a long fight they

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## *How the African Lives*

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managed to kill the beast, but the poor woman was already dead and the teacher wept bitterly for his mother.

Another time the Archdeacon was told how wild pigs had rooted out with their tusks a precious crop of cassava and had left the fields looking as though they had been ploughed.

At certain times in the year the people have to sleep out in booths to scare off the pigs and other animals and in one village where they were doing this, the Archdeacon relates that a lion came in the night and as the fires were almost out and there were no electric lamps to be turned on, the people ran to call for help and one woman in her fright left her tiny baby behind.

When the people returned, they found that the lion had torn the woman's blanket to pieces and was "speaking angrily" to the tiny mite, who was unhurt.

"Can you imagine the picture," wrote the Archdeacon, "the tall Indian corn, the low booths, the dying fire and the great cat 'speaking angrily' to this 'little friend of all the world.' Fancy the joy and the hugging in spite of the torn blanket and the solemn resolves to sleep at home—till next time." It was because the Archdeacon thoroughly understood and sympathised with his African children in all these trials and difficulties that they loved and revered him.

In 1907 the Archdeacon had the great joy of presenting to the Bishop some of the students whom he had been preparing for ordination, Eustace Malisawa and Augustine Ambali for the priesthood and Leonard Kamungu for the diaconate. The last eventually went as a missionary to Northern Rhodesia.

Augustine Ambali, as we have seen, had followed the Archdeacon from Kiungani College, Zanzibar, and had been with him from the first in Nyasaland. He died in 1931, while still actively at work in his parish of Ngoo. There was also an African priest working at Unangu who had been with Archdeacon Johnson at Masasi. He was ordained deacon in Zanzibar and priest by Bishop Hine at Likoma. So Nyasaland now had priests as well as teachers of her own people.

Another great step forward due to Archdeacon Johnson's labours was the translation into Chinyanja of the Bible and Prayer Book, which were printed about this time in a printing press at Likoma, worked by Africans.

What would you think if you went into church one morning

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## A Hero Man

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and found a large banana tree growing by the altar step? But this is what the Archdeacon found in one of the churches which he visited. He was not quite certain which was there first, the banana tree or the church! The roof of this church, like several others, was so low that he had to stoop to get to the altar.

“*Hurrah! Hiplay!*” So the Africans cry when a steamer is sighted—and something happened now which very decidedly broke up the daily routine. The *Chauncy Maples*, in a nautical language, went ashore. The accident is thus described by one of the African boys who had been trained as a dispensary assistant and was on board at the time :

“I went up north in the *Chauncy Maples* to look after patients. One day 8 p.m. came suddenly a great storm of north-west and carried the steamer to the rocks. All us was in steamer we was trembling with that storm. The steamer knocked on the rocks and broke on the bottom and soon began to leak. All went on shore to lighten the steamer only we left the deck men and stocks. Afterwards the steamer came off from the rocks and we was glad to see it come off. In the morning we went to church to thank our God for His great mercy that we have escaped in that great danger. The steamer is going to be mended on the broken place.”

This mishap to the steamer meant that Archdeacon Johnson had a much harder time in visiting villages, having to tramp from village to village instead of going by water and it also stopped the conveyance of stores from one Mission station to another, and of patients being sent to hospital, and of course put an end to the school work which was being done on board. What made matters worse was that the *Charles Janson* was also laid up for repairs at the same time.

Sometimes Archdeacon Johnson was taken ill in one of the villages and one of his boys would send an urgent note to the nurse at Likoma to come to him. On one of these occasions the nurse gives the following particulars :

“I found W. P. J. in a large airy hut furnished with a camp bed, chair and table: for the rest, the tin travelling-boxes partly unpacked, lay here and there. W. P. J. received me very graciously as he lay upon his comfortless-looking bed and called for tea. During the meal I gently suggested that he might like to return with me to Likoma for the week-end.

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## *How the African Lives*

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On hearing that the *Ousel* was taking me back, he agreed to accompany me. The *Ousel* is a very uncomfortable tub of a boat and it took us quite two hours' rowing and *rolling* before the welcome island was reached. W. P. J. preferred to lie at the bottom of the boat on sacks of flour and beans, etc., while I was perched on a narrow plank and tried to make the best of a very bad crossing. The funny side of the whole situation was greatly enjoyed by W. P. J.

"He was not a docile patient and if he was to be nursed at all it had to be done very tactfully and then he responded with all the charming courtesy so characteristic of him. After a week, or at the most a fortnight, he would go back to his labours, just when he felt he wished to and often without letting any of us know, not even the nurse. No matter if all the Likoma fleet was away—a canoe was equally available and preferable for the return to the mainland."

### CHAPTER XIX

#### THE HERO HONOURED

IN 1909, Bishop Trower resigned the Bishopric to go to Western Australia and left Archdeacon Johnson in charge of the diocese. But shortly afterwards he was summoned to England to consult with the new Bishop, Dr. Cathrew Fisher, and arrived there in December 1910. It was during this visit that his old university conferred upon him the great honour of the Degree of a Doctor of Divinity.

This was a great day in Archdeacon Johnson's life, and an honour that gave him real pleasure. The ceremony took place on March 2nd at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, and among the hundreds of people gathered to do him honour were the Bishop of Zanzibar, Dr. Weston, and several members of the Mission.

The Warden of Keble College, in a magnificent speech in Latin, said, among other things, that the Archdeacon was a man who deserved, if anyone ever deserved, to be honoured alike by the Church and by the University, a man gifted with

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## *A Hero Man*

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the ability and the courage of a hero. And he went on to tell how, as an undergraduate, he achieved distinction in the schools and very great distinction on the river; how he was planning to enter the Civil Service in India, when all of a sudden he abandoned his plan, and with it the hope of a glorious career of office, because he had heard the voice of someone appealing to him from afar, "Come over into Africa and help us"; how he heard, he went over and for five and thirty years he had given his help.

This he had done in more than one way. First and foremost he had made it his object to preach the Gospel to those rough and uncivilised tribes and to "gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad." But while he preached the Gospel, how much else had he achieved!

He told how he had ended feuds, reconciled enemies at war, improved the condition of women, founded schools, educated boys, planted trees, laid out gardens, seen to the building of a steamboat and steered the boat when built. He told of his difficulties and dangers—how he had had to traverse districts hitherto untrodden by man, swampy morasses, virgin forests, with beasts of prey howling around and enemies on every side threatening his life. How sickness had come upon him and how though he was "pure in life, unscathed by guilt," he had not brought his body back unscathed, for one eye was sightless. How whatever he had undertaken he had made up his mind to perform: wherever he had had to go, he had insisted on going, vigorous, active, undismayed, "inspired with a courage surely given him by heaven."

And then he went on to tell how he had been honoured by the Royal Geographical Society for his splendid explorations and maps, and how he had found out the Chinyanja language and put it together into a grammar and vocabulary so that other people would be able to learn and understand it and had translated the whole of the Bible into this language to help the Africans. He described how the Archdeacon was determined to go back again and felt that he had done really nothing because there was still so much to do.

Then he said how very glad all the wise men of the University were to give him the greatest honour they could to show how proud they were of all the splendid things he had

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## The Hero Honoured

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done. And he concluded his speech with saying: "I beg leave to introduce the Venerable William Percival Johnson of University College, that he may be admitted to the Degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*." And then there was a tremendous burst of cheering which almost lifted the roof. And as the procession left the hall the Archdeacon wore the magnificent scarlet hood of a Doctor of Divinity.

The same day there was a great meeting in the evening in the Oxford Town Hall in support of the Mission, at which the Archdeacon spoke and received an enthusiastic reception from the hundreds of undergraduates present. Another visit during this furlough was to his old school at Bedford, where of course the boys were delighted to hear of all his wonderful doings, especially as they felt they had helped him by giving him the *Ousel*.

Archdeacon Johnson returned to Nyasaland almost as suddenly as he had arrived. He got leave from the doctors to go and was off before anyone had time to look round, with renewed health and with a spirit as enthusiastic and undaunted as ever.

### CHAPTER XX

#### THE END OF THE ADVENTURE

THE Archdeacon left England in June 1911, and returned to Nyasaland, where everyone was very glad to have him back. He took up his old work with great vigour, visiting, teaching and preaching in the 60 villages on the Lake shore, sleeping always on the *Chauncy Maples*. But after the war broke out in 1914, both the Mission steamers were commandeered by the Government to be used as transports. The African crews were retained on board and missed no opportunity of attending church services whenever they happened to be near enough to one of the churches.

Archdeacon Johnson's teachers who were in German territory had to be moved after a time and he placed them in various other villages where teachers were wanted. Visiting the villages

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## *A Hero Man*

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was tiring and dangerous work when there were no steamers to take him from one to another. At last, in 1917, this district was captured by the British and the missionaries got back to their full work again. The teachers had kept the registers in all the villages churches during the absence of their padres till they themselves were taken prisoners, in 1916.

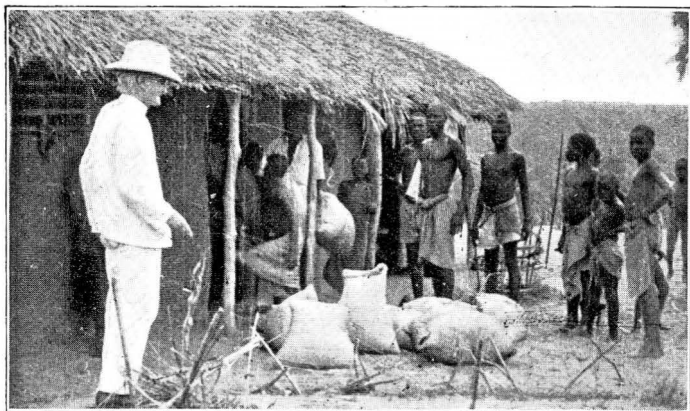
The next year the Bishop and Archdeacon Johnson went for a confirmation tour in all the Lake-side villages and the Bishop confirmed 299 candidates altogether. Dr. Johnson was more or less ill during the whole fortnight's tour with fever and bronchitis, but would not give in. Later he tells how difficult it was to get anyone to work for the Mission after the high wages given by the Government during the war. He managed to get six men to paddle his canoe 160 miles up north to visit the deserted German station. He said he would have been grateful if "they lodged in invisible shanties and had but imaginary tummies," for he could get neither food nor shelter for them anywhere.

The Archdeacon continued to have attacks of fever and in October 1920 came to England again. He stayed with his brother and soon made a wonderful recovery. He was there for about a year, returning to Nyasaland for the last time in 1921. And so we come to the last years of his life.

On his return he took over the stations which had been worked by the German Lutheran Mission, which since the war had fallen under the English Government. This was a large district to the north of Lake Nyasa.

Archdeacon Johnson was now an old man, 70 years of age, "a tiny figure, wrinkled all over, withered almost to nothing, with a few scattered white hairs, blind in one eye, yet reading every book he could lay his hands on with the fraction of the other which still remained and with it all still alert in mind and very forceful in his old age—yet so humble." In one of his last letters home he wrote: "I must be very grateful that there is still a little I am allowed to do." And we must remember that the man who wrote that was the one who by sheer faith, courage and devotion helped the Mission to reach the goal of its first venture, so causing Nyasaland to become what it is to-day.

One of his African teachers wrote of him at this time :



ARCHDEACON JOHNSON BUYING NATIVE FOOD OUTSIDE HIS HUT  
AT MANDA



ARCHDEACON JOHNSON BOARDING THE "CHAUNCY MAPLES"



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## *The End of the Adventure*

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“ Our father the Archdeacon he is not weak in the work ”—meaning that he was a great worker. No, he was not weak in the work. Let us think what it entailed—perhaps the stiffest undertaken by any priest in the Mission.

It took him three months to go round the district in which he was working ; he had 5,000 people to teach, and this over a very scattered area, they were at least of four tribes and each tribe spoke a different language. Two of these dialects were quite new to him and he had to set to work to learn them.

Some of these people lived over the Livingstonia Mountains, more than 9,000 feet high, and it must have been terribly hard walking for an old man. He lived all alone in a little rude hut without any of what we should consider comforts, but he himself was very pleased with it, especially with his own arrangement of “ roll-top desk, consisting of a canvas sack with pockets, stuffed with papers and hung on the mud wall.”

In October 1926 he celebrated his Jubilee of 50 years' work in the Mission—50 years “ in journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils on land ”—and yet the old man was still working on with the same courage, vigour and determination that had carried him through all the hardships of his life.

Think of the miles he must have travelled! The shoes he must have worn out! The pain and misery of being misunderstood—those who follow our Blessed Lord very closely are so often misunderstood. The many hours, amounting to months, even years, that he must have spent in translations! The weariness of it all!

His schools were far apart and between some of them there was a rushing river, which could only be crossed in a small canoe. He was full of pity for the children who had to come this way, but did not waste any upon himself, though he speaks of not being a good walker like Bishop Smythies and admitted that he found those long and weary tramps very hard in the last years of his life. It was not till a few months before his death that he confessed he had consented to be carried in a *machila*, of which he was evidently very much ashamed.

Was it any wonder that all this hard work was more than

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## *A Hero Man*

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even his energy could support? There were rumours in the Mission that he was ill: he had not been home for seven years and they were hoping to persuade him to take a furlough. But it was not to be.

The time had come for our "hero man" to lay down his shield and sword. The Mission doctor, hearing he was ill, went to see him and found him lying in his hut, very weak. But it was not without reluctance that he allowed himself to be taken to the nearest Mission station, Liuli, where he was ill for three weeks. His boy, Hilary, went with him and attended on him devotedly. Many times the doctor and nurse thought he was dying, but he always rallied, till October 11th, 1928, in the early morning, when the tired body fell asleep. He was buried in the new church at Liuli, in the Lady Chapel at the north side of the altar, and at his Requiem Mass nearly a hundred Africans made their Communion.

The African priest, who as a boy had followed him from Kiungani, and perhaps knew him better than any other, wrote of him after his death:

"What shall I say? How shall I write? I cannot give details of all the news of my father, Dr. Johnson, but I recommence. He was a patient man, a brave man, a hero man. He was not a coward man at all in any way and his disposition it was different from others.

"He was an energy man to preach the Gospel in those early days. In 1886-1889, there was much disturbance for the heathen they make disturbance then very much. But he was composure man always; sometimes he eat native food and sometimes his bed was grass and his bedstead the ground. He slept there without cover or blankets.

"His condition were very wonderful, yes, wondrous; his condition was watch and pray all his life, he was always praying, day and night. All the native Christians call him a second St. Paul of Africa and so do I. I dare to say I can call him 'Saint'."