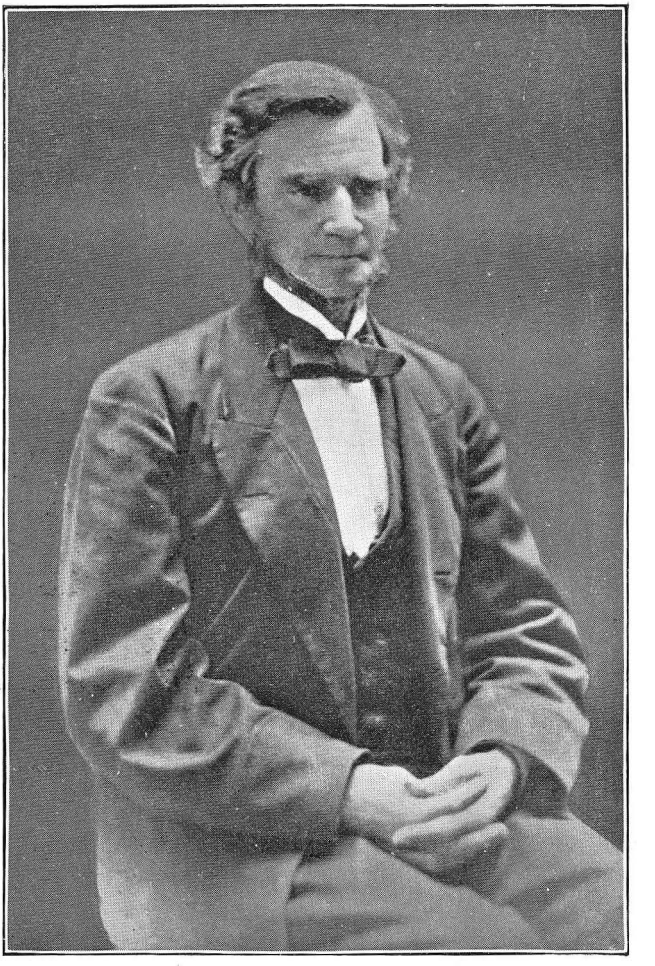
ALFRED SAKER

PAUL'S love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
Were copied close in him, and well transcribed.
He followed Paul: his zeal a kindred flame,
His apostolic charity the same.
Like him, cross'd cheerfully tempestuous seas,
Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease:
Like him he laboured, and, like him, content
To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went.

COWPER



ALFRED SAKER.

ALFRED SAKER

Pioneer of the Cameroons

BY HIS DAUGHTER

E. M. SAKER

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CONTENTS

FERNANDO PO AND THE CAMEROONS, SHOWING THE STATIONS OF THE NATIVE CHURCH IN 1922.

PREFACE

THE first missionary to the West Coast of Africa was a chaplain sent out to Cape Coast Castle in 1752, by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In 1768 the Moravians sent missionaries to the Guinea Coast, but they all speedily succumbed to the West Coast fevers. Later, Scottish Societies sent out six men, of whom one was martyred, three died, and two returned home. In 1795, three years after its foundation, the Baptist Missionary Society sent two men, Messrs. Grigg and Rodway, to Sierra Leone, but that attempt also ended in withdrawal. Later the C.M.S., with other Societies, occupied that field, and are still carrying on in Sierra Leone Colony and beyond in British Mandated Territory.

The work of the Baptist Society in Cameroons was an outcome of the freeing of the slaves in Jamaica. Many thousands of these freed slaves were members of Baptist Churches in that island, and the first-fruits of their new found liberty was the desire to help their own people in Africa, the land of their origin. They urged the Home Committee to this great venture, and two messengers were sent out to seek a place suitable for a missionary beginning. These messengers chose the island of Fernando Po, in the Bight of Biafra, and work was begun among the aborigines

of the island and the rescued slaves landed there by British warships.

Fernando Po, however, was claimed by Spain, and in 1858 it became impossible to carry on Protestant work in the island. The missionaries therefore turned to the mainland of Cameroons, to seek on unoccupied territory a home-land for the more than two hundred Christian families, where they might worship God according to the teaching of our Lord and His Holy Word. As my story shows, this home was found in Ambas Bay, under the shelter of the Cameroons mountain range, and there the forest lands were cleared, and houses erected. This settlement was named Victoria, and to-day Christian Churches have been opened up for 300 miles inland.

This work, both in Clarence, Fernando Po, and in the Cameroons River, lying to the East of Victoria, was opened up by the Baptist Missionary Society in 1843, and was carried on by them till in 1885 Cameroons was annexed by Germany. Since that period the native Baptist communities have flourished and extended their influence under their native pastors. Missionaries of the German Basel Mission also for some time worked there, and some American Baptists also did good and helpful work. The British Government influence to-day extends over the greater part of the 191,000 square miles known as Cameroons, though some part is included in French Equatorial Territory.

MY father went out as a missionary to Cameroons in 1843, and came home finally in 1876, after thirty-two years of unresting labour in a deadly climate. He saw the inauguration of the greater work on the Congo, which was the direct outcome of the Mission in Cameroons, but he did not live to see the events of 1885, when the work in which he had spent his life was surrendered into foreign hands. It is his story that I tell in this book.

The memoir was first published in 1908, and has been out of print for some time. This new edition is issued by the request of the Baptist Missionary Society as one of its publications for the Jubilee Year of its Congo Mission. It was felt that the story of that earlier work might well be retold in this time of rejoicing. It was those brave men and women in the Cameroons Mission who laid the foundations of the greater work, and laid them faithfully and well in patience, devotion and self-sacrifice. Thomas Comber and George Grenfell, the first messengers to the King of Kongo, were Cameroons missionaries, stationed at Victoria, when they received the order to explore the new waterway opened up by Stanley.

The only other biography of my father was written by Dr. E. B. Underhill, a Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, who went out to Africa with my father and mother in 1869 to visit the Cameroons stations. During this visit he suffered the loss of his wife, who died at Bethel and was buried in the little Cemetery

there, near the resting places of Mr. Saker's little ones. After his return, he often found his thoughts turning to that distant scene, and it was only fitting that he should be the first to write the life story of the man whom he admired and loved so well. His little book was a noble tribute as well as a history, and I had it constantly before me while I was writing mine. The account of my father's last hours, in Chapter XII, is from Dr. Underhill's pen.

ON re-reading the story I feel that in writing it I was guilty of an omission which may now be repaired. I wrote fully of my beloved father's labours and achievements, and I do not feel that I have said a word too much. Unbiassed judges, indeed, have said much more of the man who founded Victoria and translated the whole Bible into the Dualla tongue. But I feel that I did not write enough about my mother, the gentle and heroic soul who was his comrade in all his labours, and who gave so much of her life to the welfare of the women and girls of the Dualla people. In addition to her unremitting toil in training women and children to be Christian wives and teachers, she had the burden of loneliness, and of anxiety for her husband, often absent on dangerous journeys, always overborne by the demands of his great work and his greater purposes. Let me say now that hers was a great spirit, and that her love for her chosen work was a great love. When the call first came to her it was a heart-breaking

venture to leave all and follow; but she did not fail then, and she never failed in the years of hardship, peril and pain that came after.

WE all rejoice to-day in the noble achievements of the Baptist Mission on the Congo, so ably described in Dr. Fullerton's *The Christ of the Congo River*: but none can rejoice more deeply than those who have close links with its beginnings, and who know how the Men of the Cameroons dreamed and hoped for the future of Africa. And I do not think I can close this Preface more fitly than by quoting the words spoken by my father at a farewell meeting held in London before the departure of Comber, Crudgington, Hartland and Bentley in 1878. For the words he spoke then are equally true in this day of Jubilee:

"While I congratulate you to-night, and the Committee also, in the establishment, so far, of this Mission, I should like to utter just this word—that the enthusiasm of this hour will not suffice. We are but beginning a work which will test our fidelity, our faith, our zeal, and our hope. Yet we may go forth with confidence, because He that commandeth that we bear the Gospel to the heathen hath Himself promised that He will be with us. It is not prospective: but He is with us. 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world'."

Brighton, 1928. EMILY SAKER.

ALFRED SAKER

Chapter I

EARLY DAYS

Then—upward, onward, homeward tends
The chosen path, God led.
The magnet power of God extends
Its influence—man is fed
By unseen channels. He can scale
The highest peaks—can bear
The fiercest strain of hill or dale,
He breathes in God's pure air.

"GO ye," said our resurrected Lord, "proclaim the good news." "Ye are my Witnesses," and "Lo, I am with you." His wondering, adoring disciples in Galilee heard the command, and obeyed. The subject of this Memoir also heard and obeyed, following on in the great succession of Witnesses.

The 21st of July, 1820, found a small boy lying under the shade of a tree in a meadow outside the hamlet of Borough Green, Kent. He was a tiny child, light haired, blue eyed, delicate looking, with nothing of the robust country child about him. Yet Alfred Saker had been born and brought up in the country. His brothers John and Martin were

strong and sturdy enough to hold their own with the village lads on the green; but not so Alfred. He loved the solitude of the fields, to feel the cool breezes blow upon him, to watch the fleecy clouds of summer pile themselves up into fantastic shapes, to listen to the notes of the birds, and to think his own thoughts.

Alfred had a busy brain and a strong will for such a frail little person, and on that July day, though it was his birthday, he was far from happy. He could not see how to accomplish a design on which he had set his small heart. He wanted to go to school with his brothers. Not to the Dame school in the village—he was past that, and had learnt all that he could learn there; no, to the National school, three-quarters of a mile distant, to which his brothers trudged daily.

Mrs. Saker held that the child could not walk so far, and that even if he could go on the fine summer days, soon the autumn would arrive with its chill winds, and winter would follow swiftly, and then the lanes would be heavy with mud.

How was the child to win his mother over? Alfred, lying alone in the meadow, found no answer. And so, weary and dispirited, the little fellow turned homewards.

The old family nurse had once been heard to say that little Alfred was 'not worth rearing.' That was not his mother's view. To the mother-heart the little delicate one was as dear as any of her sturdy elder children; and very early in his life it became apparent that Alfred's frailty induced in the bigger boys more gentleness and consideration for him than they generally accorded the one to the other. Especially was this the case with his seven-year-older brother John. John became in a very special sense his 'brother's keeper.' In all their rough games with other village lads, or among themselves, 'little Alfred,' as he was called, found a stalwart champion and protector in sturdy John.

John could not bear that Alfred should now be disappointed in his ambition to become a scholar.

'Let him go, mother,' said John, on hearing of the trouble; 'I will take care of him. When he is tired I will carry him. I am strong enough, and he is very light.'

And so, much to Alfred's satisfaction, it was finally arranged. On the mother's part there were many misgivings, but morning by morning, triumphantly borne upon John's shoulders, the small boy started for the distant school. John little realised at the time the value of the service

he often rendered to his smaller and weaker brother. He lived, however, to recognise, at least to some extent, how great in God's sight these small self-denials were, and how, unconsciously to himself, even he had aided in the accomplishment of God's purposes for some oppressed children of Ethiopia.

At the age of ten years, Alfred himself decided that he had learnt all that the then master of the National school could teach him. He must accordingly be content to study at home. His father was a millwright and engineer, and by this time his elder brothers were engaged in their father's workshop. The young student—eager and athirst for knowledge—felt keenly the lack of books. There were no students in the Saker family, and the library in the home was a very limited one. Again and again John came to the rescue. He had no love for books himself, but he was earning money, and it was a pure delight to both brothers when on more than one occasion on returning from the market-town, John produced some books which he had heard his brother express a wish to obtain.

Among the studies which Alfred now took up, Geology, Astronomy, Mensuration, Geometry, and Drawing were the favourites. The study of astronomy led him on to that of navigation,

the use of the sextant and other instruments. Before he had reached the age of fifteen he had purchased for himself a large pair of globes. These in after years he presented to the Baptist Missionary Society, and they are still to be seen in the committee room of that Society.

Meanwhile the question of Alfred's future had been much under discussion, and his desire to become a doctor had been favourably entertained by the family. 'He is not strong enough to be an engineer,' said all concerned. But God otherwise disposed. Arrangements were made for Alfred to enter a chemist's shop, preliminary to his course of study of medicine. Monetary losses, however, led to his recall a few days after he had taken up his abode in the chemist's family. This was a severe blow to the lad, and he had perforce to enter his father's office.

Days of hard work followed. Mr. Saker employed a number of assistants, and undertook repairs in many mills and factories throughout Kent. Repairs had to be executed promptly, and very little time was allowed for sleeping when factories were at a standstill for machinery repairs. John again at this time frequently exhibited his true-hearted brotherliness by allowing Alfred to sleep during his turn for rest, he himself working on for twelve or even sixteen hours at a time.

But the disappointment regarding his future career in no way daunted Alfred Saker. He threw himself with his accustomed energy into the work designed for him. But during this period he did not neglect other studies. He gave lectures in the villages around Borough Green on astronomy and geology, preparing for these lectures with great care, and making most careful coloured designs for illustration. A telescope, which John and he had purchased in boyhood, was now, as then, his frequent companion in the fields at night.

During these busy months and years of early manhood Alfred gave comparatively little thought to personal religion. The Lord's day always, indeed, found him at his father's side in the church choir. For the family were musical, and in those days musical instruments of all kinds were found aiding the voices of the choir in parish churches. Alfred's ability in learning to play on any instrument was a source of pride to the home. But it might have proved a temptation to him but for his determination to become thoroughly educated. His brothers were much sought after, at all merry-makings in the neighbourhood, to entertain the company with music and song. To these entertainments Alfred would not go, and in after-life he looked back upon those days with gratitude to God, who

had thus—by implanting a love of learning—shielded him from the snares of pleasure and the intoxication of public applause.

When Alfred was about fifteen years of age he went to reside for sixteen months in Sevenoaks. His leisure time there, as before in Borough Green, was spent in solitude with his books in the open country. In writing many years later to his daughter after those months he said: 'Those [Sevenoaks] hills and valleys have been traversed again and again. . . . Knowle Park is the most beautiful of any I have seen. . . . I remember some of the pictures in its gallery till to-day.' In after conversations on this period of his life he spoke in glowing terms of the beauty of the scenes around him, and the mental refreshment experienced. It was also during this stay in Sevenoaks that the great spiritual change came to which he ever afterwards looked back with deep and adoring thankfulness.

It was Sunday evening. Alfred was inclined to wander into the fields for quiet reading and communion with Nature; but, as he passed the small Baptist chapel, he was arrested by the singing of a hymn. He stood to listen; then, drawn by an irresistible influence, he entered the building. The pastor of the church, Mr. Shirley, was absent. A stranger was conducting the service, but the Divine message was for 'all,'

for 'all have come short of the glory of God.' Alfred accepted the message, and henceforth the aim and purpose of his life was changed, he became a 'new creation in Christ Jesus.'

On his return to Borough Green he began to attend the services in the little Baptist chapel there. The pastor, Mr. Bolton, welcomed him, and he became a teacher in the Sunday school. Later he was elected to the office of superintendent.

During this time the question of believer's baptism had not appealed to him. When the thought was subsequently presented to his mind he dismissed it, and it was not till September of the year 1833 that, by the death of a respected member of the Baptist Church, he was seriously led to consider it his duty to become a member of the Baptist Church and to submit to believer's baptism. In his diary for September 15—in connection with the above-mentioned loss—these words occur: 'Let thy young servant go and join them, to fill up his place in membership: though I cannot in service.' Still his spirit evidently shrank from the public profession to which he was called, for on the following day he wrote: 'O God, quicken my dead soul, and make me able to serve Thee. *I am willing to spend and be spent in Thy service.*'

Days of depression, almost of despair, followed. But the services of the first Sunday in December quickened once more his struggling soul, and on the following Thursday evening an address from Mr. Fremlin, on Job xxiii. 3, 4, encouraged him to take the decisive step. He had an interview with Mr. Bolton, the pastor, and was at once proposed to the church for membership.

He was baptized on Sunday, January 5, 1834. From that date his ministry for the Lord became more pronounced. In cottage and village services, in public and private life, in prayer-meetings and Bible classes, he was increasingly blessed, and the opinion among his friends gained ground that he was called to the ministry.

Chapter II

THE CALL TO THE FIELD

'I am willing to spend and be spent in Thy service.'

The rivulets to rivers flow:
The rivers to the sea.
Childhood and youth to manhood grow:
Manhood, in ministry—
Fed, led, by springs Divine, unseen—
Tends Godward; never halts between.

IN January 1838 death took from the village home the father and head of the family. Alfred's elder brothers carried on the business, but Alfred was a few months later engaged as a draughtsman in Devonport Dockyard. Away from home his affections still turned to the dear ones left behind. In September of that year, in writing to his only sister, after expressing in glowing language his appreciation of the 'beautiful scenery of Devonshire, its hills and vales, waving cornfields and sweet herbage . . . the islands, the break-

water, the distant ocean, etc.,' he adds, concerning his brother John: 'his care and attention has been over me from a child . . . he shall know the feeling and the affection of my heart.'

To the new-made home in Devonport Alfred Saker, in 1840, brought his wife, *née* Helen Jessup. They had been married at St. Mary's, Newington, London, on February 25 of that year. The lady of his choice was won from the neighbourhood of his own home, her father having been for many years a wheelwright in Wrotham, and overseer of that parish. Miss Jessup had been educated and brought up away from her home, and for this reason, though Mr. Saker and she had been known by name to one another from childhood, their first introduction to, and correspondence with, one another, dated from an unexpected meeting in the little vestry of Borough Green Chapel, when on one occasion Mr. Saker was about to conduct an evening service there.

Miss Jessup, though of a Church of England family, had been also led to adopt Baptist views. She was therefore in full sympathy with her husband in his convictions, and was fitted both by education and Christian consecration to take her place by his side as a co-worker in 'the kingdom and patience of the

saints.' Some months previous to her engagement to Mr. Saker, she, with a friend—who soon after married a missionary, and proceeded to Sierra Leone—had offered herself to the Church Missionary Society as a candidate for foreign service. At that time single ladies had not found a place in mission fields. The secretary of the Society, though sympathising with their devotion, had advised both ladies to 'await the openings of God's Providence.' In the one instance God's Providence opened the path to Africa without delay, and Miss Drake, as the wife of the Rev. F. Schön, rendered noble service for Africa. To Miss Jessup was given the longer probation before the goal of her hopes was reached.

Two children were given to Mr. and Mrs. Saker to cheer their Devonshire home, and with these two Mrs. Saker also had the care of her own youngest sister and Mr. Saker's youngest brother, both of them still quite young. Success and promotion attended Mr. Saker's labours in the dockyard and in the Church, and he was held in high esteem. But steadily and surely he was being led forward into nobler service and to grander opportunities.

During the winter of 1842–43 missionary meetings were being held throughout England to stir up interest, among the Baptist Churches,

in the mission work, now newly resumed by them in Africa. The emancipated Christian slaves of Jamaica were alive to the need of their brethren in Ethiopia, and some were anxious to carry to them the good news of the freedom which had made them free, not only from the tyranny of earthly oppressors, but from the thraldom of sin. The Baptist Missionary Committee, with the same noble end in view, had inaugurated a forward movement. The Rev. John Clarke, accompanied by the eager-hearted Dr. Prince, had been dispatched from Jamaica to look for a locality on the Western Coast which might offer the best and most suitable opportunities.

At this time the Church Missionary Society was engaged in Sierra Leone and other societies had located themselves elsewhere on the coasts of Guinea. Mr. Clarke had therefore chosen the at present unoccupied Island of Fernando Po, in the Bight of Biafra, and already Mr. and Mrs. Sturgeon had been sent from England to open work among the Adeeyahs, aborigines of that island, and among the rescued slaves, who had, by the British cruisers, been landed there to begin life afresh under the protection of the British name, though not of the British flag, as the island was claimed by Spain.

Volunteers were now sought for from the

British Churches to join Mr. Sturgeon in this important work.

As deputation from the Baptist Society Dr. Prince and Mr. Clarke visited Devonport to tell their tale and arouse the enthusiasm of the Churches. Among their hearers in Morice Square Chapel sat Mr. Saker. Mrs. Saker, though loving the cause of missions with all her heart, was unable through sickness in the family to be present.

'Are you prepared to go to Africa?' said Mr. Saker to his wife on returning home from the meeting.

The answer came quickly but characteristically from his wife, 'The children! How can we?'

Then came the equally characteristic response, 'Think about it for a week: do not decide now.'

To both Mr. and Mrs. Saker it was a week of anxious questioning and heart-searching, for both had early in life offered themselves to the Lord for Foreign Mission service. Now that the call had come to them—as once it came to Abraham in the days of old—to 'forsake their fatherland, and to go into the place which the Lord their God should show,' they, like Abraham, were prepared to obey. They accepted the invitation from the Baptist Missionary Society, and prepared forthwith to take up the new work.

On August 16, 1843, they sailed with their eldest born in the 'Chilmark' from Portsea They left behind them a little grave in Saltash Cemetery. The death of their infant was to both parents a sore bereavement, but they realised and rejoiced in, the safety and blessedness which their little Sarah had now attained to. 'I love to feel,' wrote Mr. Saker to his sister at the time of bereavement, 'that every spring of joy is in Him, so that if every earthly comfort were removed I should still be happy. . . . Our lovely intelligent babe will be admitted among the redeemed host.'

The 'Chilmark' was bound for Jamaica, chartered by the Baptist Society to convey a party of Jamaica native Christians from that island to Fernando Po as colonists and helpers in the new mission project. On board, from England, were Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, Mr. and Mrs. Hume (for Jamaica), Mr. and Mrs. Saker and child. They then came to anchor off Poole at 4 a.m. Mr. Saker writes: 'We lay watching for the morning . . . About eight o'clock our captain with Mr. and Mrs. Hume and Mr. and Mrs. Clarke left us to go on shore. . . . On returning to the vessel in the evening the friends from the chapel accompanied them to the beach. Hearing that we had one little girl on board, they sent us a large box filled with cakes, packets

of sago and groats, also two loaves of bread—this, while it showed their kindness, was very acceptable, especially for the child, as at that time we had only biscuits on board.'

The voyage to Jamaica was rendered particularly trying by the want of accommodation; Mr. and Mrs. Saker had no cabin allotted them. A berth in the saloon, shut off by a curtain, was their only sleeping place, and through some oversight in the arrangements made by Mr. Clarke with the captain, no provision had been made for the little girl; Mr. Saker had therefore to sleep upon the saloon floor. To add to this discomfort the captain declared the child could have no food, and never ceased throughout the passage to visit upon the parents what he considered this wrong done to him by stinting them of necessaries.

Baffling winds and calms retarded the vessel's progress, but after eight weeks at sea they arrived safely in Jamaica. Mr. Saker, in writing to his family, said: 'We experienced Christian sympathy at Kingston from the dear brethren there, stayed with them thirteen days, when we embarked again for Black River Bay, near which Mr. John May is labouring, with whom I was intimate at Saltash.' A fever resulting from exposure to the sun in travelling, detained Mr. and Mrs. Saker with these kind

friends for many days. On November 16 they—refusing the earnest request of the brethren that Mr. Saker would remain in the ministry in Jamaica—crossed the country over the mountains, a distance of forty miles, to Montego Bay, and thence went on to Falmouth. Whilst there Mr. Saker wrote: 'I have felt peculiar sensations in preaching to the large congregations of black and coloured people here. Their attention and order are pleasing. I have examined many for baptism at some of the churches, have heard them pray, have met them in their class houses, and form a high opinion of their Christian character and deportment.'

The party for the 'Chilmark' met on board and sailed from Falmouth on the morning of November 29, 1843. They were accompanied to the ship by Messrs. Knibb, Dawson, Clarke, and Henderson. The company on board was now greatly increased. Miss Stuart had taken the place of Mr. and Mrs. Hume. She was engaged as a teacher for the school in Clarence. The hold of the vessel had been fitted up for the other passengers—Mr. and Mrs. Bandytt, Mr. and Mrs. Innes and three children, Mr. and Mrs. Norman and four children, Mr. and Mrs. Gallimore and two children, Mr. Duckett, and Miss Cooper. These all were accepted teachers for Africa. Besides these there were twelve

adults and five children, making in all in the cabin six, in the hold forty passengers.

The hardships of the passage in this crowded condition were severe. Added to these was the ill-treatment of the passengers by the captain. Mr. Saker wrote to his mother: 'The malice and brutality of the captain become every day more apparent. . . . He has bound himself in £500 bond to supply the passengers with a certain quality of provisions every day . . . 4 lb. of flour has been divided among forty in three days! . . . The bread or biscuit he has now for the first time supplied to them can scarcely be eaten—black with age and filled with insects.'

Of personal or family suffering nothing can be gathered from Mr. Saker's writings, though from other sources we know them to have been severe. Throughout the tedious sailing passage, becalmed often in the tropics, one glass per head per day of drinking water was allowed, and one only, and this not from scarcity of water, for the captain on arriving at their destination boasted that he had enough water on board for his return journey to England, and did not need to take in water from Fernando Po.

'Neither count I my life dear unto me,' wrote the great apostle, and it was in this spirit that Mr. and Mrs. Saker had entered upon the trials of pioneer mission work in Africa. The suffer-

ings of the Jamaica brethren greatly affected him, but he wrote: 'Notwithstanding sufferings, peace is undisturbed among us, and communion is enjoyed. Mr. Clarke and myself spend an alternate evening in the steerage in explaining some portion of the word of God.'

Chapter III

FIRST EXPERIENCES OF AFRICA

Within the acorn lies the oak,
Within the bud the flower;
Within the child—the man. God spake—
Creation sprang in power.
Lord, speak the word! and lo! in me
Beauty, grace, power, the world shall see.

ON Friday, February 16, 1844, the 'Chilmark' arrived in Clarence Cove, Fernando Po. Dr. Prince and his party, consisting of Mrs. Prince, Mr. and Mrs. Merrick, and Mr. Alexander Fuller,[1] had arrived from England the previous September, and all now united with Mr. and Mrs. Sturgeon in giving the voyagers from Jamaica a cordial welcome. It was difficult to find accommodation for so large a number, but love and kindness met the emergency. Mr. and Mrs. Saker were in special

[1] Mr. Fuller was one of the 'sons of Africa,' a member of Mr. Phillippo's Church at Spanish Town for about nine years. One of the first Jamaica converts to leave the island to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the land of his fathers.

difficulties, as their personal belongings, which they could not take with them to Jamaica, but now so sorely needed, had not been forwarded for them from the mission house in London, when the other missionaries came out. Their bedding they much missed in those first days of African fever, when a board was the only sleeping accommodation to be obtained. But gratitude for a safe arrival in port, and joy in the prospect of work for their Master, swallowed up every thought of discomfort. On the evening of the day of arrival at seven o'clock the whole party assembled at the mission house for thanksgiving and prayer.

On the first Sunday spent in Clarence Mr. Saker preached in the morning from John iii. 16. The house, crowded with a thoughtful, attentive throng, led Mr. Saker to exclaim, 'What hath God wrought! Who can forget that three years since they were all given up to work all wickedness greedily? I feel it in my heart to live and die for the delightful work!'

That Sabbath day was rendered memorable by the fact of the conversion of Thomas Horton Johnson. Johnson was a native African, who had made more than one journey to England on sailing ships. He had gathered from the sailors some knowledge of the English tongue, but none of vital religion.

Rumour in the slave settlement at Clarence stated that a 'boy preacher' had come from England in the 'Chilmark,' and that *he* would preach on Sunday morning. Johnson said he would 'go to hear what he had to say.' He went, and John iii. 16 was God's message to his soul. From that day he became Mr. Saker's attached friend and helper.

On February 20, a missionary meeting was held in Clarence. At that meeting £7, 4s. 10d. was collected for Foreign Missions. 'Freely' this small band of rescued slaves had received, and 'freely' did these 'give.'

But sorrow soon fell on the missionary household. A little daughter, whom they named Mary, born to Mr. and Mrs. Saker on February 25, was not permitted long to cheer them. Repeated attacks of malarial fever prostrated Mrs. Saker, and these were followed by rheumatic fever. Mr. Saker and his little girl were ill at the same time, and unable to rise. The three sufferers lay for some days unconscious of each other's state. Mrs. Saker's prolonged illness told most heavily on the infant daughter. She began to decline, and on Sunday, 'before the Sabbath lamp expired, her happy spirit took its flight to the regions of an eternal Sabbath.' She slept, the first of all the mission band.

Severe as were the illnesses and afflictions of those early days in Africa, Mr. Saker's energy was remarkable. 'I have no less than five houses building for the missionaries and teachers,' he reported, a few weeks after his landing; and on July 31, two days after the death of his little one, he further writes: 'It was not till last Monday I felt able to assist Brother Merrick in attempting to cast some quadrates for the printing office.' Mr. Saker made his moulds from some old leads, and borrowed a ladle. Thus equipped he set about casting, and by Wednesday noon had finished nearly a thousand, quite to his own satisfaction and to the joy of Mr. Merrick, who needed them. This labour was too much for him, and ere he had accomplished all he wished, the fever from which he had but just rallied returned in a severe form.

Bodily pain and suffering became from that time Mr. Saker's constant companion. Pain was the 'thorn in the flesh' which kept him perpetually drawing upon the Divine grace, and in him the grace and power of God was abundantly magnified. His fellow-missionaries wrote home to the committee their fear that Mrs. Saker would soon have to mourn his death. To this statement he returned answer, as if from the gates of death, 'I shall not die.' He had

asked for life, a life of service, and he believed for, and worked towards, the accomplishment of his desire. At the close of the year he tells us that all the missionaries in Fernando Po were suffering from destitution of some of the necessaries and many of the conveniences of life. 'No biscuit, no flour, no meat of any kind, except sometimes a fowl, a squirrel, or a piece of good mutton.' Yam, the chief dependence of the islanders, was now getting scarce. But while difficulties perplexed they could not daunt him. 'Oh for the zeal of an apostle!' he exclaims, 'to spend my days in cheerful labour to spread the knowledge of the great salvation.' It was enough for Alfred Saker to be engaged in any department of this task.

In Clarence settlement there were at this time gathered 1017 souls in 201 families. Of these persons 144 could already read the Scriptures; 222 persons could read imperfectly, and 41 could write. Church members numbered 79. All but the sick and infirm attended the Lord's Day services, Sunday school included, and for their needs there were 30 teachers. All this result from a few months of seed-sowing was inspiriting.

Stations had also been opened among the Adeeyahs, the aborigines of the island, commonly called Bubias. At one of these stations, Basippu,

a teacher had been located. During March and April Mr. Saker stayed there with him, laid out the grounds, finished the schoolroom, taught the children, and preached the word. Mr. Saker also visited Rehoboth, another station, for a time. Besides these Banappa and Basilli were stations but half a mile apart, and therefore under the care of one teacher. Another station was 25 miles southward from Clarence, and yet another 25 miles westward, which was reached only by water. The cause of the Master was thus gaining ground.

Among the 79 baptized members of the Church some few were Bubias. The story of one of these was typical of the way in which the Gospel was taking hold of these untaught savages.

Biso, a chief of Basippu, came down from his mountain home to do some little trading with the settlers. He entered the chapel, and looked in wonder at the strange doings. He went again and again, himself the strangest sight there—his clothing a deeply fringed grass mat, his hair a stiff erection of mingled hair, mud, oil, and ochre. His body unwashed, but covered with clay, ashes, oil, and colouring. Surprise and interest in what he heard led him on to questioning, and slowly his dulled mind opened to the truth of a Saviour from sin and death.

Biso stayed under instruction through the months of the rainy season. Then he returned to his home, but not to rest! He had a story to tell, a story for all, and he wandered from homestead to homestead, from village to village, to repeat what he had learned of the 'old, old story.'

The rainy season found Biso again in the settlement. He *must* learn more. But again he spent the dry hot months in evangelistic labours, to return once more to Clarence for more instruction in the ways of righteousness. It was noticed that the man was feeble and worn. Though himself a mountaineer, his wanderings had nevertheless told upon his strength. The following rainy season did *not* find him in Clarence. He had 'done' what he 'could,' and found in doing it the gate of life eternal. He died on pilgrimage.

Chapter IV

FIRST SETTLEMENT IN CAMEROONS

'Oh for the zeal of an apostle!'

Life will suffice me for the great denial!
Life will suffice me for the high emprise!
Forward! march boldly! shadows on the dial
Lengthen and strengthen, but they daunt not me.
Mine is the victory—Time is Eternity,—
God is before me, I shall win the prize.

WHAT about the Great Dark Continent with its unexplored lands? What about its millions going down into eternity, blind, hopeless, oppressed, betrayed? The western coast-line was known fairly accurately by the English naval commanders, and by the wary Portuguese slavers. But beyond! Dark night brooded there, and men lived in the shadow of a great death.

Mr. Saker's thoughts, while his hands were busy in Fernando Po, turned ever towards the sun-rising. On the mainland, north from Fernando Po, towered the volcanic mountain

of Cameroons. Its highest peak—then unexplored—lifted itself 13,700 feet into the blue. Its spurs and outlying hills reached to the sea frontage. On one of its headlands Mr. Merrick was even now at work reducing the language of that particular people—the Isubus—to writing. The tribal king of that district was known to Europeans by the name of William. He had sold land to the mission, and was willing that his people should be taught, but he had little enough of control over those who owned his sovereignty. His people were superstitious, and dominated by their witch doctors. Every man went in terror of his life from secret poison, sorcery, or open denunciation from these cruel men.

In February 1845 Mr. Saker crossed to the mainland to visit Mr. and Mrs. Merrick. From Bimbia he hoped to see his way to some advance upon this kingdom and continent of darkness.

Not far from Bimbia to the east lay the mouth of the Cameroons River. The name Cameroons had been given to it by Portuguese travellers from the fact that prawns were found abundantly in its waters.

Westward from Bimbia, rounding the mountain spurs by numerous bays and inlets, lay the Rio-

del-Rey, with savage peoples on its banks. Still farther westward flowed the river of Calabar, also pouring its waters into the southern Atlantic. Who would go to teach its unevangelised tribes? Mr. Merrick and Mr. Saker discussed this question with hearts full of sympathy and love for these tribes. Where should entrance for Christ be made? What was the mind of the Spirit for Mr. Saker? Always the answer pointed to Cameroons.

They began to arrange for a preliminary visit to Cameroons, to find out the will of the people, and to choose, if possible, a site for a mission. With the native African time was of no account, and if a passage were secured in a canoe journeying to Cameroons, the time of departure was by no means fixed. 'If no be to-day, to-morrow we go,' said they; and, when several 'to-morrows' came and went, the missionaries found that the over-sufficient amount of load in the canoe made it impossible for *them* to be passengers.

Then fever assailed the brethren. First Mr. Merrick was stricken down; then Mr. Saker was unconscious in high fever. Mr. Merrick, alarmed for Mr. Saker's life, sent a canoe to Fernando Po in haste to call Dr. Prince to his aid.

Dr. Prince arrived, and, himself anxious

for Mr. Saker's life, determined on conveying him across the intervening sea to his wife and little child. The crossing was hazardous, and his patient was greatly exhausted. Arrived in Clarence, however, recovery began, and under the careful nursing of Mrs. Saker convalescence ensued.

The time which had been spent in Bimbia had not been wasted. Earnestly had Mr. Saker co-operated with Mr. Merrick in labour for the welfare of the Bimbians. Inland villages had been visited with the glad tidings of great joy; chiefs had been seen and taught; the idlers in the market-places, the fishermen by the seashore, and the slaves in their villages had been warned of the 'one thing needful.' During Mr. Saker's stay in Bimbia he had also erected for Mr. Merrick a sundial—a valuable help in that clockless land.

The visiting of the villages on the slopes of those Bimbian hills entailed laborious climbing by narrow tracks through dense forest growths. In those jungle and forest tracts lay scattered hamlets, often also lonely huts. To one such hut came the missionary. A woman sat on the doorsill—scantily clothed, dejected, vacant-eyed. What unconceived sorrows had crushed that woman's soul? What nameless terrors had darkened her mind? By her side sat the

patient missionary with his story of a Divine love, exceeding words, *for her*. But she moved not nor gave any answer. Day by day he found her there, and day by day he repeated his message of mercy.

Was the dead soul beginning to live? Were there any stirrings to indicate that the seed of life had penetrated the hard soil of her nature? The missionary saw no gleam to give him hope, so one day he passed her by to visit and preach and pray where the soil seemed more promising.

Evening found him once more in his home resting from his labour. Then in the short gloaming a boy reported a woman weeping at the gate. It was the lonely woman from the mountain-side.

'Why have you passed me by? Why have you deceived me? Why did you tell me a lie? You said that some one loved me! It is not true, or you would not have passed me by.' So she moaned in her sorrow. The unresponsive woman had found her voice. The fountains of the great deep of a human soul had been broken up.

An unexpected joy had come to that mission house that night, and more, 'there was joy in the presence of God' that evening.

Slowly the light had dawned on that darkened

ignorant mind, but the light *had* dawned. Slowly the signs of life manifested themselves in her, but the light was divine, and changed the woman's whole nature. She arose from the stupor of sorrow and despair to life and faith and service for God.

But we must return to watch events in Clarence, Fernando Po.

The arrival of the long-expected mission schooner 'The Dove' from England with reinforcements infused new life into the whole drooping company of missionaries. Mrs. Saker feared to excite her husband by telling him the news that some vessel was approaching the land. But the sounds of expectancy could not be suppressed, and hearing them, he eagerly asked, 'Is it "The Dove"?' Finding that it was likely to be the hoped-for messenger, he said, 'Then we must be ready to entertain our guests.' After that Mrs. Saker was busy — on hospitable thoughts intent—and it was some time before she returned to her invalid's room, then only to find him gone.

He was soon after descried seated in a boat which boys were pulling towards the fast-approaching vessel, and he — the sick one — was the first of the whole mission band to greet the newly arrived missionaries, alarming them, however, by his extreme feebleness.

The reinforcement consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. Newbegin, and Miss Vitou, Captain Milbourne being in command. They brought — in 'The Dove'—much-needed stores and some clothing.

'The Dove' had been purchased by the Society to act as a support and comfort to the missionaries, to ply between the newly opening stations, carrying food and building material, and to give to the mission staff the necessary opportunity for fresh invigorating sea-breezes when they should be overborne by the sicknesses of that deadly climate. There is no wonder that its appearance was hailed with enthusiasm by the fever-enfeebled little bands in Clarence and Bimbia.

Not many days after the arrival of 'The Dove,' Mr. and Mrs. Saker and child, accompanied by Dr. Prince, sailed in her for a visit of inquiry to Cameroons. Could they effect a settlement there? The people were wild, turbulent cannibals. Their occupation for many years had been that of middlemen between the slave-hunters of the interior and the slave-ships on the coast. In the year 1842 the British Government had made an agreement with the two kings of the district, in which they had promised to trade lawfully with the people for oil and ivory, on condition that the trade in

human chattels should cease. This commercial treaty was now in force. Vessels from Bristol and Liverpool were arriving with stores of cloth, tobacco, looking-glasses, etc., and rum to exchange for native produce. The Duallas, with their domestic slaves, received these goods from the shipping in their canoes, and carried them into the country, returning some weeks later with their loads of oil and ivory. They were still middlemen, and to them labour was a disgrace. The more humane trade of the past few years had had some salutary effect upon their characters, but to venture to live among them demanded the heroism of an apostle.[1]

This visit to Cameroons was, however, successful. A chief, who recognised the suzerainty of King Akwa, offered land and a native hut to the missionary and his wife. Their little child was a great attraction. When they first landed it was found necessary to stand her upon a cask, where she was encircled by the arms of the two gentlemen to protect her from the crush of men, women, and children who wished to touch the fair face and flaxen hair of the strange English child.

[1] Commander Gootch of the West African Squadron in 1845 when speaking of the tribes of the West Coast, especially of those who dwelt in the Oil Rivers, remarked: 'Missionaries there require more courage than those who stand at the cannon's mouth.'

On June 10, 1845, Mr. Saker left Clarence in 'The Wasp,' 'The Dove' being otherwise engaged, to take up in Cameroons what proved to be his life-work. With him went Thomas Horton Johnson. He had wished to dissuade Mr. Saker from this enterprise, assuring him that he would be eaten, to which Mr. Saker had replied, 'I am too thin.' Johnson had then responded, if not in the words of Ruth at least in her spirit, 'Where thou goest I will go,' and God richly blessed his decision by granting to him a host of spiritual children in the land of his adoption.

Difficulties met them on the very threshold of their enterprise. They landed their belongings at the beach of the Didos. The next step was to take possession of the house offered to them by Ned Dido on the occasion of their first visit.

This episode is best described in Mr. Saker's own words. He wrote :—

'In consequence of my previous exertions in packing up the articles which it was necessary to take with me from Clarence, I went on board "The Wasp" in a very weak state. The land-breeze bore us out about seven miles, where we lay becalmed from ten in the morning till midnight, when a strong sea-breeze arose and carried us rapidly over the waves. . . At midday we anchored between Akwa's and Dido's Towns. . . .

We landed in the afternoon at Dido's Town, and took possession of the house he had offered us. . . . Next morning at break of day the town seemed all commotion. . . . The chiefs—Dido's —soon entered the house to inform me that King Akwa was coming for war, that the war canoes were already out and would soon be up. . . . I went out with them to the beach . . . requesting a canoe and some men that I might instantly go to the king, but not a man would leave the town . . . (I found out later that they would have been instantly massacred had they come near Akwa's canoes.)

'What a scene! men, women, and children running in all directions, some with sticks, guns, swords, or cutlasses, now collecting, now dispersing, singing, shouting, running . . . in very madness.'

Mr. Ashmall, of the barque 'Haywood,' trading in the river, sent a boat to Mr. Saker, for which he was very thankful, and he directed the 'kroomen' to pull direct for the oncoming war canoes.

At that instant a volley of musketry from these canoes, accompanied with a shout of triumph, rent the air. Amidst the wild tumult of heathen noises Mr. Saker joined the canoes. He commanded silence, and directed the Prince —Akwa's son—and his chiefs to meet him on

board 'The Haywood,' whither all now directed their course.

What a throng—seven large canoes crowded with men, about fifty in each,—near four hundred men armed for war,—a war of jealousy! It was an hour of suffering too. The guns, the shouts, increased Mr. Saker's fever. He wanted quiet rest, not excitement.

The reason of the disturbance was but jealousy on the part of the king that a European should take up his residence on the land of a subordinate. Mr. Saker felt it wiser to yield to the governing power, and he accepted a house on the king's own domain—a house which was being erected for himself, but which he willingly offered. It was a room 15 feet broad by 20 feet in length.

The king, on Mr. Saker's visiting him, received him with greater pleasure than was expected. He, however, reproved Akwa with some degree of severity for declaring war so hastily. As excuse, he said he was KING, and he did not want a white man to build in any other town than his. He told some long tales of Chief Dido's past quarrels, their former dependence on him, and their present pride.

The work of preparing for Mrs. Saker's coming was now pushed forward. The king might sell his ground and his house, but he was quite unwilling to allow the ground to be

enclosed or the house to be protected from day or night invasion. Yet the one-roomed dwelling needed to be divided into three rooms, and a native mat-house was quietly begun close by, to form an enlargement of the other. All hours of the day the crowds of native idlers gathered to see the missionary and Johnson busy at their work. Never free from interruption could they be. Tools were to the Duallas marvels, writing was uncanny, while the attempt on the missionary's part to pick up words of their language was viewed with distrust—so much was this so that the words given by the natives were purposely falsified, and it became necessary to learn from the children the correct names of things.

The story of the first Sunday's work in Cameroons will serve as a sample of Mr. Saker's first endeavours to preach the Gospel to these cannibal Duallas.

'*Sabbath Day, June* 22. Rose early and met the chiefs and people in King Akwa's Town, soon after six. We had a good meeting, and they sat for nearly two hours to hear the word of God. At nine the children with a few adults came to our little house. Johnson and myself sat with different companies nearly three hours. At half-past twelve I went to King Bell's Town to have my first meeting. I was a little

disappointed there, for I could not collect more than about twelve men, who sat with the king for about half an hour. I tried to engage their attention, but they had had too much acquaintance with the destructive rum. I left them and walked on to Joss's Town. After waiting a little, while they settled one of their palavers, we had a large yet noisy company.'

'It is indeed consoling,' wrote Mr. Saker, 'to us who labour in this distant and sickly clime, to know that thousands of our brethren at home are commending us and our labour to God. Oh that Jehovah would now visit us with the rich outpouring of His Holy Spirit! *Less than this will not suffice.*'

After returning home Mr. Saker visited a town he had not previously seen, lying back in the bush between Akwa's and Bell's Towns. There he had a meeting which was memorable.

'As I explained to them the design of the Saviour's mission into our world, and illustrated His Divine power by His miracles and His love by freely giving Himself to death for us and not for Himself, the astonishment and manifested surprise of these people is past my power of utterance. More than a hundred old and young sat in a circle before me with an attention surpassed by no congregation at home. To me it was an hour of hallowed feeling. After

closing I invited the children to school the next day, and said, should any of them be concerned to love that Great Saviour of whom I had been speaking, I should be glad to see them and give them instruction at any time. We left with fervent prayer that God would bless His word, fulfil His promise, and make the heathen His own. Wearied and rejoicing, we returned to our habitation while the sun was fast sinking from our sight. Thus closes my first Sabbath of labour at Cameroons.'

On Monday the school was opened, though 'not more than twenty children were with us at the same time.' 'I hope soon to build a school-room sufficiently large for four hundred children.' 'I am now surrounded with towns teeming with inhabitants.' The desire of Mr. Saker's heart for a large opportunity was thus abundantly granted to him. The door was open. Could he enter in and take possession for the King? On June 28 Mrs. Saker and her little girl accompanied by Miss Stuart as school teacher joined the party. The accommodation was limited. Difficulties of no ordinary character presented themselves before the brave little party of four. But hope and courage were theirs, and strong faith in God.

Among the trials of those early days was the disposition of the natives to steal. Nothing

could be put down out of hand but it vanished. Their rooms were broken into by night, and many necessaries were removed. Mr. Saker bought a goat and tied it quite near to the house. The rope was cut that the thief might find the goat straying and sell it in the nearest market. It became necessary for Mr. and Mrs. Saker to divide the night hours between them, that they might alternately watch over their few but precious belongings. Mr. Saker would rise at 2 a.m. to begin his study of the language, or read or write till daybreak. This for long months seemed to be the only arrangement whereby to secure to themselves the needful stores wherewith to purchase food.

Another difficulty soon presented itself, and this was the lack of food. All field labour in Cameroons devolved upon the women. It was work beneath the dignity of men. They only cultivated enough land for their own family needs. To do more than this seemed but folly, while law and order were unknown, for in every case of family or tribal war the first act of reprisal was to devastate the opponent's farm-lands and cut down his plantains. Only the absolute need therefore for something, such as cloth, tobacco, pipes, etc., which plantain or other vegetables could buy, would induce any householder to part with food, animal or

vegetable. For long months, too, any attempt on Mr. Saker's part to enclose land for garden purposes proved futile. Posts or fencing obtained with difficulty might be erected by day, only to be uprooted by night.

One more difficulty of early days was to obtain help in the home. To win the confidence of the children was of the first importance. Then to induce their parents to allow them to come and live in the mission house. Very soon three little boys and one girl, all under twelve, were won, and these took up their abode in the mission family. This small beginning proved, as we shall find later, of strange and blessed importance to the mission band.

Chapter V

IN PERILS BY THE HEATHEN

'Oh that Jehovah would now visit us!'

I love Thy will, O Lord my God—
And to Thy will bend low.
He is well taught who knows Thy rod
Is lifted to bestow,
From rocky fastnesses of pain,
'Midst wilderness of woe,
Life-giving, healing streams of gain
To multitudes below.

DURING the first four months after arrival in Cameroons, Mr. Saker was busily employed with his new house. Among the boys and men looking on and criticising the carpentering work of the foreigner were two lads of whom it will be interesting to learn something. One of them was a slave lad. Born far inland at the foot of the mountains of Central Africa, he was playing one day by his parents' door. Seized upon suddenly by some wandering Arab slave-catcher, his cries silenced by a

rough hand while being pushed into and tied in a sack, he had awakened from a stupor of fright and pain to find himself with others—men, women, and children—a slave. Five months of weary travel and exchange from owner to owner, with a long spell of service as herdboy in some interior township followed, until at last he had found a permanent home with a new owner, on the banks of the river of Cameroons.

His Dualla master was now, however, dead. There were no more canoe journeys to make. His mistress only demanded of him the work of a domestic slave. He had leisure, and his leisure moments brought him to watch the Englishman, his wife and child. From watching, he ventured to lend a willing hand to help, and then, as days passed on, to express a desire to learn to read, and to become an inmate of the mission home. An arrangement was entered into with his owner whereby, in lieu of his services, a monthly payment was given to her, and the happy boy was soon the diligent student. He went in the town by the name of Nkwe; in the mission he received the name of George. The name George Nkwe was destined to become an honoured one.

The other lad also stood by and watched the workers. He was no slave. To him the other boys gave some amount of reverence, for he was

the king's nephew, and the grandson of an interior country's monarch. He too became attached to the missionary's family. Quicker and brighter than the slave boy, with the prestige of a higher rank, every opportunity of education was afforded him. He soon outstripped his companion George in learning, though not in fidelity and thoughtfulness. He received the name of Thomas Horton, after Mr. Saker's pastor in Devonport. As we shall see later on in this history, it was of God's good mercy that these two boys entered the mission home.

Among the watching natives there were many who, checked in their pilfering habits, became more avaricious.

'Who is this man?' they said amongst themselves. 'What does he come here for? He has killed his father and run away from home.'

On suspicion they became more opposed. There were daily annoyances. To provoke a quarrel with the stranger would give them, they hopefully imagined, the desired opportunity to plunder his home. One great grievance, however, was that, try as they might, they could not arouse the anger of the white man or move him to retaliation. He was too calm and quiet, too persistent: he continued his work utterly uninfluenced by all their opposition. What could they do with such a man?

The frequent attempts on Mr. Saker's part to erect a fence around the land on which his house was built, annoyed them. Particularly did it irritate a chief named Angwa. Not content with bringing his men at night and stealing or throwing down the posts, he tried to poison the food and the drinking water. Finally, he gave up his last piece of cloth to buy from the medicine man, *i.e.* the secret poisoner, a powerful irritant to throw in Mr. Saker's path, which, by his treading upon it, should cause his death. He watched the path, but the missionary came and went unhurt.

Enraged, the would-be murderer seized one of the offending posts, and ran at Mr. Saker, intending to fell him to the ground. Johnson saw the purpose and succeeded in striking his arm aside. The post fell harmlessly to the earth.

The poor savage was perplexed by the failure of all his plans. He began to attend the services to learn the secret of this man's 'charm,' which rendered his all powerless. In time he found it. The Divine secret was revealed to him. He became a Christian. In later days, when the Christian Church was formed in Bethel, this man became a deacon and for over thirty years maintained an upright Christian character. No one would recognise in the quiet, gentle, patient Angwa of those later days the once fierce, wild

heathen of 1845. He bore witness to the power of Christ to subdue passion in, and transform the nature of, the most turbulent of Adam's sons.

In September Mr. Saker reported some advance made in learning the language of Dualla. From the month of June to that time he had laboured alone, greatly missing his helper Johnson, who had been withdrawn by Mr. Clarke to take charge of the schooner 'Dove.' To the joy of all, however, Johnson now returned to his chosen sphere of labour in Cameroons. Mr. Saker therefore decided upon beginning a little itineration.

The first place visited was Bassa. He left home after morning service and breakfast, to visit Bassa with its surrounding villages, a distance of seven miles. One and a half hour's quick walk brought him to the first village, where he preached the first sermon ever heard by its inhabitants. He stayed about one hour. Then forty minutes more brought him to Bassa. Upwards of a hundred wondering natives came clamouring round him, and after much noise he obtained a little silence to proclaim the word of life. The next itinerant journey was made to Mungo, twenty miles distant, by canoe. These journeys were the first of many by which not only the name of Saker

became known to the whole countryside, but the story he had come to publish, 'the God palaver,' as they expressed it, was preached abroad.

At Bethel, as the first mission station was called, a meeting-house had already been put up. All the first buildings were erected in native style, *i.e.* with mangrove-wood posts, palm-leaf thatch, and mat walls. The meeting-house, however, had at first no walls. All who passed by might stand to listen, but a good many persons attended and sat regularly at the services. The chief of the town which adjoined the King's Town, named Quan, frequented the meetings from the first. He was often so affected as to be unable to remain the whole service through.

For long this man's strange attraction to the Gospel story could not be understood, nor his deep emotion. The cause was revealed to Mr. Saker when one day he asked the question, 'Where is my father? He was a *good* man. He did not cheat or steal.'

Then followed this strange story:—'Once, some years since, when we were out in our canoe fishing, a tornado drove us out to the river bar. The canoe was capsized. My father and I hung on to the overturned canoe, and there in the darkness and cold he told me to be a better man than he had been. He told me

too that some day a white man from over the sea would come to teach the good and the true way; that for him it would be too late, but that when this man should come, he, Quan, was to listen to the message.' A remarkable prophecy!

This chief—Quan—had a little son three or four years old. About this time the child fell ill, and nothing would pacify him but that he must be carried and brought into the mission house. He *was* brought, and he recovered from his illness. From that time the boy never cared to return to the town—he must, he said, be a mission child. Quan himself never professed faith in Christ by baptism, but he gladly gave his son to be trained aright.

With her small family at home it is certain that Mrs. Saker at this time found ample occupation. The little native girl had much to learn,—sewing and reading, and washing and cooking. The little boys brought drinking water from a spring a quarter of a mile distant; they learnt to use tools, to read and write in English, and, as food was scarce and often unattainable in the river, these four little boys, once a month or oftener, took a canoe with some goods a distance of forty miles to Bimbia to obtain yam and plantain for the household. One fruit which the natives of Cameroons did

not value, and which consequently was not difficult to obtain, was the pawpaw or *papaya*, which not infrequently was the only food Mrs. Saker could provide for the day, or even days' consumption. Thus in patient continuance in well-doing, the first half-year of labour in this unhealthy climate, and among treacherous cannibals, sped away.

The year 1846 found the missionaries still holding on their way. Mr. Saker had already obtained considerable influence over old King Akwa and his chiefs. They called him 'father,' and in all their fierce wild anger they seemed to hold him in reverence. Mrs. Saker also by her fearlessness surprised them not a little.

'You no fear?' asked the king one day when he had tried to intimidate her by lifting his arm to strike her.

'No,' she answered; 'if I had been afraid of you I should not have come here.'

He turned from her, exclaiming in strong language at the anomaly of a 'fearless woman.'

Mrs. Saker's courage soon after this was put to a severe test. The old king died, and there followed a time of lawless outrage and tumult. To add to the mission danger the old king, in dying, had left Mr. Saker in charge of his property, to save it from pillage till his son and

heir could arrive from the interior to claim his rightful portion.

The sons present determined on seizing everything. In the general uproar the most turbulent spirits surrounded the mission, dancing their war-dance, brandishing their spears and cutlasses, and uttering their shrill war-cries. They intended to pillage and possibly to slay.

Mr. Saker shut the door upon his wife and child and stood without, watching, defenceless, but alert. At every fierce rush towards the house, his arm went out towards them as if to avert the danger, and, cowed, they invariably retired as if some invisible power drove them back.

Hours passed, and the savages drew back a little to deliberate over the strangeness of things.

Their next plan was to fire the house. Raising large bonfires, they resumed their dance and cries, and, with burning brands, made more frantic rushes at the building. The same quiet figure with the uplifted arm again drove them back.

But deliverance came before the darkness. The sailors on vessels in the river had seen the curling smoke from the fires, and the captains had feared mischief to the missionary. They had therefore armed their seamen and came in their boats to ascertain what was wrong. It

was a great relief to the missionary, who had been unable to go indoors to his little child; yet her pitiful cries for him had reached his ears. She was in high fever from excitement and alarm. Once only he had ventured to step inside the house during the day, intending to pacify her by showing himself alive and uninjured, but the moment of his withdrawal brought a tomahawk upon the door, which split it into three pieces. (For long years this repaired door was in use in the mission, kept as a trophy of a great deliverance.)

Five months of such turmoil followed the king's death, and very anxious months they were. The two elder sons of the king intrigued for the supremacy. Each grasped everything he could reach. The late king's houses were ransacked. As Mr. Saker was living in one of them, each son was anxious to dispossess him, yet each feared to do the deed. Night and day men from either party watched around to lay hands on anything possible. Tablecloths, knives, spoons, and forks; a small store of much-prized flour, so difficult to replace in Africa,—all were stolen. Goats and fowls were bought by Mr. Saker, only to be again appropriated by these insatiable marauders. Restful sleep was out of the question. Real or imaginary noises kept the mission party wakeful. It was well

that it was so, for their rooms were frequently broken into at night, and it was no uncommon thing for either Mr. or Mrs. Saker to open their room door and scatter by their appearance half a dozen burly men. Notwithstanding utmost vigilance, however, things *would* disappear, and Mr. Saker reported at the end of the year thefts to the amount of £16.

A letter from Mr. Saker to his sister in England gives so clear and comprehensive a view of life at this station, and the circumstances of those who sought its welfare, that it is here reproduced:—

'Having completed twelve months at this place, I am grateful to our Heavenly Father for sparing me so long in this valley of the shadow of death, and permitting me to sit down in health, in peace, and cheerful prospects, to commune with you by letter; and take a retrospective view of the past year—a year of many trials, many sorrows, many deficiencies, many sins, and innumerable mercies.

'It was twelve months yesterday morning from the time I embarked at Clarence, with the intention of attempting something at Cameroons. In a few days I was settled at the cottage I at present occupy, and commenced my labour of going in and out among the natives of the many

towns around us. Being assisted by Mr. Johnson, a member of the Church at Clarence, we commenced a school with a few boys. This cottage, then belonging to King Akwa, being small, and having but one room, we were obliged to make arrangements for building additional rooms. This, with frequent visits and meetings with the natives, took the greater part of my time. In seventeen days I was deprived of my assistant and companion, Mr. Johnson, he being recalled to "The Dove" as pilot. But "The Dove" which called away a Johnson, brought my wife and child, so that I was at once relieved from the offices of cook and housemaid.

'In July, King Akwa died. At that time my house was not more than covered in, and the rainy season had fully set in, and being almost confined to the house, I employed myself in the making of doors and shutters for my new apartments; for at Cameroons I have been compelled to be everything that is necessary—bricklayer, carpenter, and smith. I soon obtained a few boards, and, with a little contrivance, some joists; so that in a short time I had a respectable-looking floor to one room, and before the end of August all the walls were done and two rooms floored.

'With the death of King Akwa commenced some indescribable scenes of disorder, confusion, and wrong. Law and order (though previously

such only as befits heathen darkness) were now driven from the community. The two elder brothers quarrelled and intrigued for the succession. Each grasped at everything within his reach, and very soon the houses of the late king were ransacked of all their contents. Even the box (substitute for coffin) containing his remains was re-opened, and the articles of value which had been superstitiously put in for his use in another world, were taken out by one of the sons and appropriated to his own use. The surviving wives and slaves completed the destruction and distribution of his property, not excepting the houses in which he lived.

'The disorder thus introduced did not stop when all the property of the king was gone. Property of every description was unsafe, and we soon felt the effects of such a state of society. Our losses, notwithstanding our utmost care, at one time assumed a very serious character.

'But losses, though trying and painful to us, have not been our dangers. During the first stages of these disorders we were assailed in many ways. We were expected to take part with each of the aspirants, and our refusal, though firm, only served to excite their animosity, as each believed that we supported the other. It was in the midst of these disputes that the sons and chiefs assembled at my house

to sell to me on behalf of the Society the little cottage of Akwa's, and the plot of ground where we now live. This step was taken by them to prevent the slaves from destroying it, even though we lived in it. This was soon arranged, and in October we had the pleasure of sitting down on the Society's land and in the Society's building—a great pleasure if compared to the anxiety and peril of living in the house of a heathen chief, for which fifty sons, backed by 200 slaves, were daily contending.

'But the danger in this particular was not quite over. The complaint was soon raised that all the sons had not had a proper share in the goods I had paid for the cottage, and as there was no hope of obtaining anything more from the three chiefs who had divided the goods, they attempted to get more from me. About three days after having paid for the house, we were surprised by the assembling of a large number of Akwa's sons and slaves, some with fire-brands, others with guns, swords, or sticks, and, with all the wild noise of a heathen rabble, they demanded of us the house. We might take out our goods, but we must do it quickly, as they intended to burn it unless I paid them (about one-third the value) so much more money. . . . An hour's angry dispute with chiefs and sons followed, but the former were compelled to divide

more of the goods they had received, and we were again left in quiet possession. Eight days elapsed, and while sitting at tea in the evening our door was suddenly split to pieces with some heavy weapon. I saw enough. Another son was just escaping from the doorway; but the mischief was done, and I returned to see those within. The news was soon conveyed to the chiefs, and the next morning they all came to beg me not to take any notice of it. They would well punish the man who had done it, would have my door made good, and give me a goat. As they were in earnest (quite uncommon) in wishing me to pass over this and not report it anywhere, and sensible of the wrong, I accepted their goat, the more willingly that I might show them that I had no feeling towards them but for their good. They also brought me a goat which had been stolen from me about fourteen days previous.

'I feel now that I ought to regard the beginning of December as the period of learning to read, write, and converse in the Dualla tongue. About January 3, 1846, I completed a draft of my first class-book, and if I had much confidence in it should have sent it home at that time to be printed for the use of our Dualla schools.

'From my return from Clarence in February

till now (excepting one month), I have made the study of the language my special work, and although I cannot say much as to the advance which I have made, yet I hope it is something, and *I hope more, that I shall live to translate the whole Bible into the Dualla tongue.* With Divine assistance, I have a settled purpose so to do, and I hope not to relinquish my work till it is done. Yesterday I was sickly; the day before translating; to-day, from 5 a.m. till 7 p.m., transcribing my lessons and arranging grammar, and from seven till twelve writing letters. (Seven to twelve is extra, as my bedtime is nine.) I have corrected my first class-book, nearly completed the second, and shall, if spared, soon begin my oral instructions in the Dualla.

'When I remember that twelve months since I did not understand anything about the language, that we had no house at Cameroons to contain us beyond the single room, that during the time we have been absent on account of health (not less than two months), that while at labour often afflicted and hindered in a variety of ways, but that now we can look upon things as before stated, and know that we have a substantial storehouse for boxes, barrels, and provisions, which has occupied me one month this year, and that now we are in health, better health than

when we commenced the year, surely I ought to be grateful!'

One amusing incident of those early times of unrest in Cameroons will best illustrate the nature of the perplexities of the missionaries and their resourcefulness in moments of crisis. To the fearful and distrustful, life, under those circumstances, would have been impossible, but 'all things are possible to him that believeth.'

Insatiable greed was a characteristic of the Duallas. With the hope of extorting something —big or little—from the missionary, the most remarkable subjects for anger and outbreak were eagerly seized upon. Suddenly, and at any hour of the day, a chief with a large following of men would be seen approaching the little home. Quietness in their coming was often as portentous of mischief as tumult.

Mr. Saker had obtained from a distant shore a cow, hoping against hope to be able to keep this valuable animal for the support of his little family. Of course the cupidity of his neighbours was aroused, and by day and night it was necessary to guard this cow and its calf from their approach.

'Saker never slept,' said the disappointed thieves when Mr. or Mrs. Saker, bearing a light in their hands, came upon them at night to

frustrate their designs. They must therefore resort to strategy.

With a following of some hundred men the chiefs made their appearance and filed into the little sitting-room of the mission house. They had weighty matters to discuss!

Mrs. Saker in the inner room became suspicious that something was wrong, and while the extemporised 'palaver' was proceeding in the house she made her way round the back to the outer buildings. She was just in time to see about twenty slaves engaged in dragging upon the rope with which the cow was bound. The creature was vigorously resisting.

Quickly Mrs. Saker stepped back and secured a sharp knife. Hiding it in the folds of her dress she advanced, and before the natives had realised her purpose she had severed the rope, with the result that the liberated cow found its way quickly back to its shed, but the unprepared men tumbled one upon the other over the deeply shelving bank towards which they had been pulling.

Their discomfiture was by no means lessened by Mrs. Saker's hearty laugh. The chiefs thus detected were not ashamed of their part in the programme. They very generously asked for a bribe to settle the matter in which they were decidedly the aggressors.

For the time being the cow was permitted to live in its somewhat straitened surroundings. After many vicissitudes she lost her calf, and that under trying circumstances. A huge python visited the mission (its kind were not infrequent visitors), and during one night succeeded in swallowing the calf. Subsequently the attempt to keep cattle in Cameroons was abandoned till more settled days should arrive.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Saker were strong in faith, but they were also endued with a gift for recognising the comic side of things which greatly helped them through many an ordeal.

In the month of December some of Her Britannic Majesty's officers in a man-of-war visited the river, and appointed the late king's eldest son to be king. This decision restored some amount of order to the country. The remaining forty-nine sons accepted the English Court's decision, and the young man entered peacefully on his reign.

The distractions of the past months had not seriously interfered with the mission work. Great advance had been made in mastering the Dualla tongue. The house which during that time of strife Mr. Saker had bought of Akwa's sons, had been enlarged by two living rooms

and a storeroom; also kitchens had been built and other separate buildings. It was at the close of this year that in Mr. Saker's letters we read the words: '*I hope that I shall live to translate the whole Bible into the Dualla tongue.*' A hope thus expressed in a land of sickness and death, such as the West Coast of Africa presented to the European in those early days of privation, exhibits the deep-rooted faith of Mr. Saker in his calling of God to his then sphere of labour.

Scenes of turmoil such as have been detailed in this chapter served to keep alive in the hearts of these 'labourers with God' the consciousness of their utter dependence upon Him and of His near presence with them. 'Though surrounded with difficulty,' wrote Mr. Saker, 'I feel I shall do well till my work is done. In change of climates, nature has a great work to perform, many persons fall in the great struggling process, and many with constitutions weak as ours do, through the elasticity of energetic and buoyant spirit, maintain the conflict and triumph —triumph not in themselves but in Him in whom is their life and hope.'

In December of that year Mrs. Saker and her little daughter were compelled to try what change of air to the hills of Fernando Po could do for them. This island is mountainous and

volcanic, its highest peak being 10,500 feet above sea level. Mr. Thompson came for a short visit to Cameroons to allow Mr. Saker to accompany them thither.

Serious perplexities were now disturbing the peace of the Church in Clarence. A Spanish Consul had announced that by orders of the Court of Spain the chapel doors were to be closed, that all missionaries were to cease speaking in the name of Jesus, and to leave the island within twelve months. A petition was signed and sent to the Queen of Spain from the inhabitants of Clarence, and for a time the threatening cloud rolled by. Mr. Sturgeon still continued among them as the pastor of the little church. His ministry was not, however, long continued to them, for he was called to his eternal rest during the following year.

Mrs. Saker's health was not recruited by this change of residence, and it was apparent that both she and the little one—who suffered from constant fevers — must find restoration in England. New Year's Day found Mr. Saker again leaving Bethel for Clarence to meet his dear ones and speed them on their way. Mr. Merrick from Bimbia called for him in his small boat, as 'The Dove' was not available. The value of a mission schooner like 'The Dove will soon be recognised when incidents such as the

following, of travel on a stormy sea in small boats, are recorded. Bimbia was sixty miles distant and on the sea coast. The journey from Cameroons thither was often perilous. From thence to Clarence meant a still more hazardous journey of twenty-six miles across the intervening sea.

They left Bethel at half-past eight in the evening. Exposed shelterless to heavy drenching rain till midnight, they then found some shelter in the creek, and slept till day-dawn. Then the splashing of paddles was soon heard, and they, Mr. Saker, and Mr. Merrick sang together

> 'How are Thy servants blest, O Lord,
> How sure is their defence!'

By half-past eleven they had reached Bimbia, where Mr. Merrick landed, returning to his home. Mr. Saker continued his journey to Clarence. The weather was still stormy, and the boat soon shipped so much water that one man was constantly employed baling water. Twice driven far out of their course, they were compelled to shelter under the lee of Ambas Islands.

On one of those islands, while the men rested, Mr. Saker in vain tried to preach to the islanders. About a hundred savage men, capable of the worst actions, gave partial attention to the

message, and then bursting out into a savage laugh, demanded rum and tobacco.

Next day-dawn the boat was still only twelve miles out at sea, but by eight o'clock in the evening they put into a little bay of Fernando Po. Here a man who traded with Clarence, and therefore knew the missionaries, cooked them all some yam. This kindness refreshed the utterly exhausted and hungry party. At midnight they resumed their journey and arrived in Clarence at six in the morning.

Chapter VI

IN LABOURS MORE ABUNDANT

'I shall do well till my work is done.'

'Coming, always coming! with a never lessening need:
Trusting Thee with the future I dare not, cannot read:
Letting each care or burden laid on my heart by Thee
Serve but to sink me lower in the arms encircling me.'
E. A. L.

MRS. SAKER'S not infrequent absences from Bethel—whether only temporary visits to help the Christians in Clarence, or to England for health and family needs—were a sore trial to her husband, but to these we are indebted for a very full and particular account of many of the years of lonely toil and suffering which followed. Nightly some message of love was written by him to his wife. It might be that, worn and ill, he was only able to send a word of love and sympathy; at other times it might be a story of interest to all, or of interest only to the one to whom it was addressed. Yet from this diary

of events we can gather some incidents illustrative of the life of a pioneer missionary in those early days.

Thus in the year 1847 we read the following:—

'*Sabbath.* We commenced about seven o'clock. Our company was not large, chiefly men from Angwa's Town. . . . They were very attentive, and if you had seen their tears you would have felt as much satisfaction and hope as I did. I then walked to Quan's Town, as he had promised to come down with his people. I addressed them about an hour. Came home to breakfast. In half an hour Innes—a Jamaica Christian—went to Akwa's Town and I commenced school. Before I had finished teaching, a number of men came in to hear the Word of God—some who had been in the morning. The Word seemed to affect them much, and their hard hearts did seem softened. Oh that the Spirit of God may impress them deeply, and bring them to repentance! This service occupied an hour and a half. I had scarcely retired to meditate . . . ere Quan came again. After singing and prayer I addressed them. . . . It was now near three o'clock, and after refreshment we opened school again. At the close of school I gave a short address to those who were present, and closed with singing and prayer. This, with our family prayer—the family now in Mrs. Saker's absence

comprised Horton Johnson, the lads, and one little girl—has closed the day. . . . I have this day realised the importance of sowing the seed in season and out of season. . . . It may be God will yet honour us in bringing some guilty creature to himself. . . . Such a result is worth a life of labour and much more.'

'*Tuesday.* I look around at the Herculean tasks before us. The school-house, the teacher's house, translations, printing, and all the other labours of the week and Sabbath days! Who is sufficient for these things? I look at my weakness, faltering joints, trembling nerves, and a wasted frame. What can I do? Despond? No! Do as we have often done—seek Divine aid. Johnson is with me . . . he is strong and willing. . . . *We may yet live to rejoice in seeing the whole of the Scriptures translated and printed, with a rising generation quite able tc read it*;—in an efficient school with all its elementary books in English and Dualla; in a suitable building, both for the school and the services of the Sabbath, and in a teacher's house. We will ever bear in mind the memorable saying of Elliot, "Prayer and pains through faith in Jesus Christ will do anything."'

Mr. and Mrs. Saker lived to see each of these anticipations more than accomplished.

'*Thursday.* In the shop with Johnson

three hours before breakfast. . . . Dualla all the forenoon, Dualla after dinner, and two hours this evening. Have nearly prepared the first class-book for the press, together with sheets for spelling. This is the fifth class-book I have by me, and still improved. I hope to forward them to Mr. Merrick next week. Oh, for more devotedness to the work!'

The only printing press in the mission was at Bimbia, and that was a small one, insufficiently supplied with type and necessaries.

'*Saturday.* Songi (the interpreter) returned. After breakfast we sat down to our labour till two, reviewing the work done before, and now ready for the press. Afternoon, preparing for the coming day. Evening, two hours Greek. Lucy (the little maid) is a little better, but fever all day. Another lock stolen from our gate during the day. One hour in contriving a fastening that cannot be stolen. . . . Mr. Johnson shot a snake. . . . During the night we had the first tornado this season. It was very severe. The thatch was blown off the new store. . . . Rain very heavy; thunder like the breaking of great rocks. Since then the air has been pure and the distant mountains are clearly seen.'

'*March* 22. Rose at four. Spent nine hours at Dualla. In the morning after breakfast

I raised the house (the hall) up level. One corner post has decayed and the building sank. We raised it three inches and fixed a new pile under it. Preparations for the services of the next day. Cooking and all the other household duties occupied all the remaining hours after. Eighteen hours' hard work. I lie down to sleep.'

'*Monday*, 24. A day of much work, and not destitute of pleasure. Rose at four. Have sat, with slight interruptions, at my books ever since. Have copied my class-book, written some prayers for children, translated them, added to my vocabulary, written to Mr. Merrick, packed up the sheets, prepared all things for Mr. Johnson's journey, and now at eight o'clock have seen him off for Bimbia. We hope the day is not far distant when we shall have something printed to put into the hands of the people, something for the children to read and for their parents to hear. The hymn-book will be the next, and then some large sheets—reading and spelling lessons. Whether Matthew's Gospel will come before the Vocabulary, I have not decided. . . . Brother Merrick cannot print his own "Isubu" fast enough; then there is Mr. Clarke's Fernandian translations; and how the Dualla is to come in I cannot see at present. I have felt a very great desire to-day to have a press at Cameroons. With the lads I could

and will accomplish the printing of the New Testament. . . . Yesterday we finished our last yam. *Pawpaw* will be our diet. . . .

'Johnson returned to-day. Left Bimbia last night at six. Came as far as Green Patch without staying, and then so near home the men refused to paddle any farther, so tying the boat to the mangroves they lay down to sleep. When the sun rose they refused to go on because they had nothing to eat. Two of them had got up while the others slept, and ate all the food which Johnson had prepared for them. Johnson was obliged to give them his own, and when they had eaten all they said they must wait till evening. There, within sight of home and not ten miles from it, they kept him in the heavy rain at night, and hot sun all the day, and amidst mangrove swamps for ten hours. He is not well to-night. . . . Hard study to-day. Dualla verbs give me much labour. The imperative mood seems to be the root of nearly all the verbs.'

'*Monday.* Smith came in to-day: he wishes to be married. . . . They will be the first Duallas married here. . . . Being so much under our instruction I shall hope for their entire conversion from heathenism and darkness.'

'*April* 2. Every hour brings its full load. Three hours to go to Mr. Ashmall to learn when 'The Rapid' leaves for England. Two hours

were devoted to Johnson. . . . Lucy is now quite competent to do the washing. . . . Rickett can now make the bread, so these things I can leave entirely. All things beside I must think of. I must say what is to be done, and how and when,—and then must go and see it done. . . . Time hastens on with too much rapidity. My day is not long enough. . . . Oh, why must I sleep? . . . Pray for me. . . . O Africa! when will thy change come? When will thy sons receive their King?'

'*April* 19. M'Gowan arrived. . . . Anchored just above our house. Mr. Johnson went on board. How great a disappointment when he returned without a line. What shall I do without clothing? My only refuge is to wrap myself up in my cloak. All the day I have to wear my thick heavy cloak, and shut myself up. My shoes will not carry me to Bassa.'

The pitifulness of this lament for letters and clothing will appeal to every heart. The infrequent arrival of vessels on the coast from England made it important that some one in England should keep themselves in touch with the firms trading now with the coast. This had not been done, and during the four years Mr. Saker had been in Africa, not once had shoes or other necessaries reached him, though he had not failed to petition for them by every

available opportunity. Captain M'Gowan had promised to bring on his voyage any parcel, and Mr. Saker had given both his name and date of leaving England, so that he was justified in keen anticipation of needed relief without fail. He comforted himself with the patience of hope, only to be again and again disappointed, for we read on the following

'*April* 26. This afternoon another vessel has arrived in our river from Liverpool. Mr. Johnson went on board, but no letter, no parcel, no news from the dear friends in England. . . . I suppose we must bear this and every other disappointment cheerfully. The day hastens fast when every disappointment will be for ever done away. A blissful, a glorious immortality will succeed this suffering, mutable life on earth, and we shall rejoice for ever in the presence of our Father and our God.'

'*Tuesday Evening.* Looking out into the river behold 'The Dove'. . . Mr. Johnson went off. At seven returned, accompanied by Captain Milbourne. He is well. Brings tidings of the death of Mr. Fuller (one of the Jamaica brethren). Thus another of our valued friends is gone. No letters from England, no packages, no clothing, no shoes, no medicines. What shall I do? Mr. Clarke has sent me a little tea. This is very acceptable.'

The hope which had buoyed Mr. Saker up that possibly the committee had shipped some things for him to Mr. Clarke in Fernando Po, was now dispelled. Mr. Saker wrote: 'When "The Dove" had fairly gone I felt very lonely indeed.' Mr. Johnson had gone in her to visit his family, and Lucy had gone. But his energy had returned by the next day.

'*Wednesday.* Very unwell, and cold. Heavy rains and bleak winds all day. Tried to manipulate a pair of warmer pantaloons, and have succeeded in a measure. It will be past my art to make a pair of shoes. The cold has caused me much pain. Have sat at Dualla seven hours.'

'*Thursday.* Not well. Nine and a half hours at Dualla, and four hours at private letters. Cold and weak.'

'*Friday.* All well to-day. Ten hours at Dualla. Several chapters now of Testament quite ready for the press. How shall I get it printed? Forgot to have dinner cooked to-day, till feeling very hungry I looked up and saw it was three o'clock. . . . Would I had a press to print as I get ready!'

'*Monday.* Yesterday—Lord's day—I rose at four quite refreshed, and at half-past six met a goodly number, to whom I preached from Matt. viii. 23–27. There was some seriousness in

the hearers, and I did hope some heavenly dews were falling around our little camp. Some cheeks were damp—O that this may be evidence of hearts softened, so as to receive the heavenly seal! From ten to twelve, school—rather larger than usual. Reading class, twelve to one. Evening at four, preached from Matt. ix. 18–26. Not so many as in the morning. Our domestic service as usual.'

'Rose this morning at four. Dualla nine hours. Reading three. At seven this morning dispatched a boat to Bimbia for yam or plantain — Joseph, John, and Smith. Forty miles to obtain vegetable! One hour in preparation for this and in writing a note to Mr. Merrick.'

'*May* 18. "The Dove" took from Bimbia Mr. and Mrs. Duckett and child, Williams, and Phillips, and crossing to Clarence, gathered a large contingent of the Jamaica Christians to return with them to their old home. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke accompanied the party—never to return.

Besides the loss to the mission staff of these brethren and friends, death had during this twelve months taken from the mission Mr. Sturgeon, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Newbegin, and Mr. A. Fuller.

Mr. Newbegin was also being compelled to

return to England in search of health. The working force was thus seriously reduced. Dr. and Mrs. Prince—of whom Mr. Saker writes, 'Thank God for such a man as Dr. Prince'—remained in Clarence with a mere remnant of the Jamaica band. Mr. and Mrs. Merrick occupied in Bimbia with the two sons of Mr. Fuller. Mr. Saker was alone in Cameroons with Horton Johnson. Mr. Merrick wrote to Mr. Saker: 'We accompanied "The Dove" a far way out, and left with hearts full of sorrow. Several of them we shall see no more till we meet them in the glory.'

Pleasure followed quickly upon this pain of parting, for on the morning of May 22 word was brought to Mr. Saker that goods had come for him on the barque 'Heroine.' Many days, even weeks, passed before he secured these treasures from the mass of cargo in the ship's hold, but two casks of medicines and vinegar were first welcomed. These medicines had been promised three and a half years before, but were none the less gratefully received now.

June 9. Have been much better and have worked eight hours at my Testament. I am happy to say Matthew is completed. I have reason to be very thankful for this, that through such feebleness I have been enabled to keep on to see it completed. I shall now rest from

writing for one day, and on Friday begin Mark's Gospel.

June 26. Yesterday afternoon I finished Mark's Gospel, for which I am thankful. . . . I must now send away the cutter before I have any more time to think what I shall do next. . . . Dr. Prince has no medicines, so I shall send him at least the half of what I have.

'It was no small pleasure to see Johnson back again. . . . As soon as the weather permits I must put up a *school-house* at Bell's Town, which will serve as a temporary building for Mr. Johnson and his family, and ultimately as a good school-room and meeting-house. We will place a native hut on the land immediately, and let Smith live in it. No doubt this will cause a sacrifice of some hours daily from my Dualla, but the importance of the work will warrant it. It is impossible to get a carpenter to do the least thing.'

The erection of this hut in Bell's Town led to another scene of wrath and confusion at Bethel. A false report of Mr. Saker's intention to leave Akwa Town and go to settle in his rival King Bell's territory, reached the young king. Like his father, he was exceedingly jealous for his own dignity. Happily Mr. Saker was in Bethel when the king, with a mad rabble armed with guns and spears, invaded its peaceful precincts.

Having to wait a few seconds for the door to be opened, the king seemed to get into a mad rage. Mr. Saker politely invited him in and offered him a chair, but so great was the clamour that it was impossible to hear or ascertain the cause of the noise and excitement.

The king in his passion was hurling abuse and wrathful expletives at Mr. Saker, calling him a thief, a rogue, etc., and when his limited English vocabulary of abuse failed him, he began again in his own Dualla tongue.

At last Mr. Saker sat down and drew to himself paper and ink.

'What you be do now?' questioned the king.

'I am going to write all you say in a book,' replied Mr. Saker.

'No, you no go write them!' Akwa exclaimed in fear,—'you no go write them,' and he jumped up to hold the hand that would do such a thing.

Finally, after reiterated threats and abuse, he gathered calmness to make intelligible what he really wanted to say, and in doing it Mr. Saker began to see what was the matter.

'No man shall take you from we,—we will fight for you! What for you go to live in King Bell's town? You no can go! This land be yours,—all the town be yours, but you no can

go away! You be "tikki"[1] for we; my father done leave you for we.'

This jumble of wrath and goodwill concluded both the interview and the king's rage. He quieted down, and he and his followers departed without doing any harm.

The next morning, having heard fresh stories of some boxes and building material going to King Bell's town, the king and his followers returned with more determined show of force. There was no doubt but that this time the rabble was intent upon plunder. They had hoped to have found the mission house deserted, and would then have devastated the home. Mr. Johnson was so much disturbed by this outbreak of violence that he became seriously ill, and the young native girl was thrown into fever. Happily Mrs. Saker with her little child was safely away in the homeland.

The next morning the king came alone, without a single follower, to make his peace with Mr. Saker. What was his method of making atonement? He begged humbly for a piece of cloth. Not a few yards, but a piece! 'Then,' said he, 'palaver set.'

This was Mr. Saker's opportunity also for getting a concession from the king. He pointed out his long-suffering patience with the people

[1] *Tikki*—inheritance

regarding the fence for enclosing his property and the king graciously promised his support and protection for the proposed fence. Hence something was gained by the turmoil, and as Mr. Saker was not going himself to Bell Town, the building there was allowed to be proceeded with. Mr. Saker wrote: 'Our friend Johnson was in a sad way when they came on Friday night to abuse us; and, if I hear aright, the people of the town were sadly disappointed that they did not have an opportunity of plundering. They hoped to have found me away from my home, and then they would have taken anything they could get. How little do they know of a missionary's intentions and desires. But the day may come, and *we may see it*, when this desert shall begin to bloom with life. . . .'

Chapter VII

IN WEARINESS AND PAINFULNESS

'The day may come, and we may see it, when this desert shall begin to bloom with life.'

'Midst perils dire and hottest fire
They pass unhurt:
Hell's hosts can never from safety sever
The God-begirt.

ON July 16, 1847, a gentleman in the river sent to Mr. Saker the cheering news that the vessel which had taken Mrs. Saker and their daughter to England the previous February, had arrived in Liverpool a few days prior to May 6, with passengers safe and in good health. Many anxious thoughts had been turned into prayers during the weary six months of waiting for this news. Now he could give 'joyful praise for abounding mercy.'

Other near anxieties remained. Not the least of these was the lack of food. Canoes sent out in search of food returned empty. A war in

Fernando Po prevented sending there for food even as a last resort. The future as well as the present looked dark. He writes: 'Our subject (Sunday) was the Providence of God as exemplified in the case of Elijah at the brook Cherith and at Sarepta. Our school was well attended, and at two o'clock (during the hour of retirement) the captain of "The Mary" called with a letter from Dr. Prince, and stated that his ship was at the bar, that he had brought two hundred yams from Dr. Prince, and would be up the river in a day or two; thus the fears of the past day were all dismissed, and the prospect of three weeks' supply before us. . . . See how our Heavenly Father . . . is mercifully about to aid us again.'

'*Monday.* We commenced our work early. At seven Mr. Johnson came to say there was not enough plantain for breakfast. I said, "We have still some biscuit." Soon after we had eaten our early meal with the prospect of no dinner unless "The Mary" came up before night, Smith's wife came in bringing a bunch of plantain and ten small yams. I called Mr. Johnson to look at our supply, and he said, "Ah, sir! you have more faith than I have. This is as you told us yesterday about Elijah—we ought never to fear!" No; fear! how can we fear with such a Friend, so powerful, so merciful! Now though

"The Mary" does not come even to-morrow we shall have enough.'

'*August* 5. This has been a lovely day. About eight this morning it cleared up, and the sun shone out upon us with cheering ray. It made us all lively and like new creatures. The prospect of its continuance all day made us put out our beds, books, and clothing, everything in fact that suffers from damp, and we have dried all. I think this is the first time we have seen the sun for thirty-five or thirty-six days. The rains seem now breaking up. The tornadoes give notice of their approach, and in five or six weeks we shall again have fine weather. I have been prevented from sitting more than three hours to-day at Dualla, but have been very busy. I have so far advanced with my medicine case as to put the bottles in their places this evening. Six months have passed since you left us and no letters! My anxieties for the dear child are too great! I want faith and confidence in our All-wise God.'

'*Saturday, August* 30. A solitary letter from my absent wife, dated May 9. . . . I have lost my appetite for good. . . . Am sorry this morning to discover our loss of small breakfast plates, which have been taken from the pantry. This induced me to go to work with my tools and nail up a few boards, which I think will prevent

a like loss in future. . . . We have had some sad doings in the town lately—noise, discord, and murder. When will this end? Oh for the Spirit from heaven to mould these hearts into new, pure ones! . . . for this we long and pray and labour every day — yea, for this we are willing to die. Pray much for us.'

'*September* 29. Two days more of labour have enabled us to make some advance with the school-room. I find the work too much for me. I would gladly engage a carpenter to make some doors and shutters if one could be obtained. I feel weak this evening.'

A severe illness followed this entry, but on November 22 Mr. Saker wrote: 'When free from pain and too weak in my head to write, I had a chair carried to my bench, and by littles made a small printing-press, and then set up some type which Mr. Merrick had sent me, with the design of printing some proof-sheets of such things as I want to pass through the press at Bimbia. . . . I succeeded tolerably well . . .' [Mr. Saker's attempt to cast type had failed. The lead would not bear pressure.] 'Thus although I spent three long weeks of much weakness and pain they were not wholly lost. The services of the Sabbath were neglected by me only once totally and on that day Mr. Johnson and Peter Nicholls conducted worship both at Bethel and at Tabernacle.'

'*October* 9. The mission cutter boat arrived from Fernando Po with a timely supply of yams (for eight days previously we had nought to eat save pawpaw and maize); the boat also came for repairs.' (The cutter had been purchased by Mr. Newbegin to aid the mission work while 'The Dove' was absent from the coast.) 'I was obliged to leave these to Peter Nicholls . . . and, during the whole time it was here, could go to direct him only three times, the labour of the walk brought on fever each time. . . . Then for the sails . . . weak and trembling I cut out the sails myself under a burning sun, having one boy to shelter me with an umbrella and Mr. Johnson to use the knife, and, although I know nothing about sail-making or ship-building, I have the credit of having much improved the shape and service of the sails. Mr. Johnson, assisted by one of the boatmen, made the sails in a very creditable manner.'

No good work was ever undertaken even by the best of men without meeting with some unkindly criticism. Mr. Saker during his long and arduous missionary career, suffered more than most from this sort of trial, and that from the very outset to the close of his public life. In answer to some such complainings we find him writing about this time to a friend: 'I have had for nearly a year the distraction of domestic

cares. I have taught a lad to make bread, and another Mrs. Saker had made a tolerable cook before she left; just competent to cook my yam and boil a piece of salt meat. This with the occasional use of a fowl to make soup, constitutes the "extravagance" at Bethel. I ought to add that I take a cup of tea when I can get it in the evening, but I lately passed four months without tasting it. . . . When sugar-and-water fails we take water only, and water never fails—what a mercy! Yet we send the lad a mile to procure it in the dry season. We have built a school-house at another town near to us with our own hands, for we could not get the least assistance, and you know that a school of 36 feet by 78 is not built in a day. At our own station the decay of fences and the destruction of buildings effected by the natives in the darkness of the night must all be made good by us when the morning comes. It is a constant trying labour. The malicious wanton cruelty of the natives is a sore trial to our spirits as well as causing us much work. In the manual work and in the schools I am assisted by my worthy helper Mr. Johnson. He is a good man, and labours hard. Ought any man to charge me with indifference to my duties, of neglect, or idleness?'

The year 1847 closed in gladness. On

December 23 he had a visit from his 'good friend Dr. Prince,' who brought with him a box sent by Mrs. Saker with the long-needed shoes, some tea, ink, paper, and letters. 'Good news from a far country.' By these he learned of the birth of a little daughter during the previous August.

On December 27 he left with Dr. Prince for a visit to Clarence. The special inducement to take this little recreation was the intended New Year's services in Clarence, which included a baptismal service. The refreshment of this change was great.

Helped by the fraternal and spiritual intercourse he had enjoyed, Mr. Saker, after attending the annual school treat when the children were examined in Scripture and geography, and received from Dr. Prince their prizes, prepared for return to Bethel. Nothing but the vast importance of being at his post would have induced him to commit himself to so frail a barque. Yet the little boat was heavily laden with five boatmen and seven passengers, while the hatches were covered, and barrels, boxes, and yams on deck left no room for standing. Some shipping boats in the harbour came to their rescue when starting, and took them in tow as they were unable to beat out of the cove, but once fairly started they made headway.

Shortly afterwards a storm overtook them, with heavy rain. Exposed all night, they found refuge in song and prayer, cheering both themselves and the crew. They arrived safely at Bethel after a journey of thirty-six hours.

Returned from the visit to Clarence, which Mr. Saker termed 'an oasis after the desert of Cameroons,' work was resumed by him with spirit. A lad named Felix had accompanied Mr. Saker, and a house for Mr. Johnson was to be built at once. On the Friday following, the natives again rose in tumult and threw down the posts that had been put up.

'We succeeded,' said Mr. Saker, 'in pacifying them with a few trifling presents. We then fixed the four corner posts, and I called together all my household, now rather large. We sang the 572nd hymn—

> '"Great God, the nations of the earth
> Are by creation Thine."

'The writer of that hymn could not have felt when he wrote what we felt in singing it. . . . We then united together in solemn prayer that the heathen might be blessed, that we might be preserved, that we may soon witness the transforming of these hearts of stone, the foundation of a church, the gathering in of the heathen into the fold of Christ, and the glorious establish-

ment of His kingdom. All this time the heathen —a few of them—stood gazing, wondering no doubt what all this meant. Then, although the sun was pouring down upon us his brightest rays, we again set to work. The heat was 128°. My head was well protected. . . .'

Material for the house had been prepared, and some parts fitted before the house began to be erected on January 14. On Saturday, February 5, the whole house was boarded in, roofed, and covered; yet 'I still find time,' writes Mr. Saker, 'for a little writing and book work.'

Mr. Saker was anxious to return to Clarence at no late date to attend to the repair of the mission houses there, which were sadly decaying. He had not anticipated the retirement from the field of Dr. Prince. But a voyage was deemed imperative for him, and he left Africa in July 1848. Mr. Saker remained with the care of the two stations of Clarence and Cameroons, with all their sub-stations. This loss was a severe trial, for Dr. Prince was never able to return to the field.

'We have been weakened, chastened, and subdued, yet still our Heavenly Father removes not His hand,' wrote Mr. Saker. 'Sorrow comes on sorrow, and we are distressed. Oh, that we may ever bow with submissive love to all His will!'

'Oh, that the blessed Spirit may send you the men and the means, as well as the heart, to send them here! We must have them speedily. *Africa groans to be delivered from the bondage of sin.*'

This petition for aid was not disregarded. Helpers were speedily sent upon their long and tedious voyage.

Meanwhile the work was carried on by Mr. Saker with zeal and patience. A printing-press sent from his old friends in the Devonport Church reached him, and, though he required it for Bethel, it was at once set up in Clarence. School books and other needed books for Bethel were, with the help of his 'boys,' soon ready.

Here is a sketch of Mr. Saker's daily toil at this time. Preached twice on Sunday and once in the week; attended the prayer-meeting on Tuesday evening, and on Monday evening the teacher's meeting, maternal meeting, and missionary meeting in succession. On Wednesday evening all the classes (and everybody connected with the Church was in class) assembled in the chapel. On Thursday evening a Bible class met at his house. On Friday evening there was a public lecture, and Saturday evening he had to himself. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings, from ten to one o'clock,

he instructed classes of inquirers; Monday evening, from five to six, another class composed of those who could not attend earlier. Other hours were filled up in visiting the people, or in study, and even at table he could not sit without some one calling on business.

To these constant and severe labours he added the superintendence of the 'boys' whom he had taught to act as compositors and pressmen, and the supply of manuscript daily for the press. In his last letter of the year 1848, it is little wonder that he says to the secretary, 'My legs fail, my knees tremble, and I know not what I shall do. Yet, hitherto, I am mercifully helped, and, with the exception of weakness in my joints, my health is good. Pray for me, dear brother, and send me help as soon as you can.'

Mr. Saker keenly felt his own incompetency for the work of translating the Scriptures. Yet he was not daunted by this inadequacy. He wrote entreating that some portion of money granted for expenses at Bethel but not expended might be used in the purchase of books to assist him in this important work—'Books on biblical criticism, the Septuagint, elementary works on Hebrew and the Hebrew Scriptures . . . for the sake of those who come after me, and for generations to come.' He added: 'Apart

from books I need paper, ink, and pens. Ten quires of paper and twelve pens constitute the whole stationery you have sent me in four years.' This single quotation reveals a little of the strain of working without necessaries, a making of bricks without straw. It meant the purchase of writing material from the infrequent sailing vessels and traders at a very high price.

No difficulty now existed in Fernando Po with regard to food supply. The rescued slave colonists had their own extensive gardens for maize, yam, and plantain, and the missionaries had introduced into the colony the bread-fruit tree, the pomegranate, the mango, the avocado pear, and the mammee—fruits of great value, and all suitable to the climate.

Later, other fruits were also introduced, and all of these were also carried into the Cameroons. The sweet potato was greatly appreciated by the Duallas, and was soon being sown all over the countryside. Cocoa-nut palms and an avenue of mango trees had been planted by Mr. Saker on the mission ground at Bethel, all of which gave promise of abundant supply of fruit in coming years.

On February 7, 1849, Mr. Saker expressed his joy in the reception of his wife. He no longer mourned his loneliness. On that Sunday about one o'clock 'The Dove' was reported as in sight.

He strained his eyes to get a sight of it as it appeared in the offing before a boat could be obtained and manned with a dozen at the oars to convey him on board. It was a great relief to hear just before he reached the vessel from some one on the deck that 'all' was 'well.' An affectionate welcome awaited the whole party —Dr. and Mrs. Newbegin, Captain Milbourne, and Mrs. Saker—on the beach.

Mrs. Saker gives us a few details concerning this arrival which Mr. Saker termed 'a large mercy.' She writes: 'On Sabbath morning at daylight we could trace land in the distance; no sea-breeze until ten o'clock, and we were not seen by our friends on shore till one o'clock.' (This was owing to the fogs called 'smokes' which prevail on that coast during the hot season.) '. . . Several of the people had come off in canoes, and the deck of our little vessel was soon filled by the deacons and many members of the Church, and the beach and bank were soon crowded. . . . After singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," my dear husband prayed and we went on shore, where we received a hearty welcome from all. . . . After a little refreshment we went to chapel. . . . A large company met us in the chapel for prayer, and it was delightful to hear the heartfelt expressions of gratitude to

God for having brought us out to them again.

'On Monday evening . . . after Mr. Newbegin had told them of the many mercies we had received on our passage, he said, "We then promised if we reached here in safety we would have a special meeting for thanksgiving to God for His mercies to us, and for having so specially heard and answered our prayers in times of great danger." My dear husband then proposed another meeting for thanksgiving on Tuesday, which we had, and yesterday, Thursday, 22nd, just two years from the time I left Africa, we had the chapel decorated with flags and green leaves. At three in the afternoon the children of the schools with several of their parents assembled, and after an address from each of the missionaries and singing some nice little hymns very sweetly, we presented them with some little presents and a slice of cake and some lemonade. . . . There were upwards of 160 children, all very prettily dressed and beautifully clean, many of them dressed in white, and they looked so happy. My dear husband does not think of coming home while he can work in Africa. His labours are very great. It is quite astonishing how he gets through it all; he has charge of the Church of 83 members, the school daily of from 70 to 80 children, besides being

doctor for the town. Miss Vitou has the infant classes, and assists him with his classes of inquirers.'

The now strengthened mission party were not long to enjoy their united fellowship in labour. On the 12th of July Mr. and Mrs. Merrick and family arrived in Clarence from Bimbia, all in a suffering condition. Mr. Merrick had been completely overworked. A month later their infant died, and in October the family sailed for England. Mr. Merrick passed away on the homeward voyage fifteen days after embarking, and the African Mission was once more bereaved of an earnest Christian labourer. Meanwhile Mr. and Mrs. Saker, accompanied by Miss Vitou, took a fortnight's trip in 'The Dove' for the sake of the sea-breezes—a trip which Dr. Prince had long before urged upon Mr. Saker, but which he had refused to take lest he might be absent from the mission on the return of his wife.

Invigorated, Mr. Saker, in October, resumed for a little season his work in Bethel. The Spirit of God had been working in many a heart there, and Mr. Johnson's faithful labour had been abundantly rewarded. He had been longing for Mr. Saker's return. On the first Friday after return Mr. Saker met the inquirers and was filled with 'surprise and gratitude' to see the work done there. 'Not by might nor

by power is all this!' he exclaimed. 'Here are men, women, and boys earnestly inquiring the way to eternal life. For seven hours was I employed in listening to the tales of penitents, and have not yet done. Here is Smith, who ought to be baptized.' (Smith had been the first Dualla to request marriage according to Christian rites.) 'Brown, Njusu, Arramudu, Maboa, Ndii, Sissi, Angwa [the man who had tried to poison Mr. Saker], Etunde, Freeman, and Smith's wife—all give hope. The advance made is surprising. Some have been persecuted not a little, some have been beaten; but it is unavailing. They have set out for heaven, and with all the warmth of young converts they say they cannot go back.'

Mr. Saker found the Sunday services well attended, and at the daily morning and evening meetings a number would gather, and seemed unwilling to leave at the close of the meeting. The children in the mission home were already reading the English Bible. The 5th of November 1849 was memorable in the Cameroons Mission as the date of the baptism of Smith, the first convert there to submit to this Christian ordinance. Dr. and Mrs. Newbegin, now located at Bimbia, and Miss Vitou from Clarence, came to rejoice with their friends over this ingathering to the fold, and the

formation of a Christian Church among the Duallas.

At eight o'clock on the Saturday evening they held a prayer-meeting. At four next morning the missionaries again met a large number of Duallas for prayer. This meeting continued till six. On account of the tide, the next service was not held till eleven o'clock. Then after an interesting service all the congregation went down to the beach. Another Dualla hymn was followed by an address to the candidate. Mr. Saker then baptized this first Dualla convert in the waters of Cameroons. How earnestly he prayed that this small beginning might be speedily succeeded by the ingathering of a mighty host to the Lord! The spectators of this to them novel scene were very attentive: silence and order were observed by all; deep seriousness and anxiety were on the faces of many.

The afternoon was devoted to the formation of a Church, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Saker, Horton Johnson and his wife, and Smith the convert just baptized. The services were closed by the celebration of the Supper of the Lord. 'Thus,' concludes Mr. Saker, 'I have lived to witness what I have long desired intensely, the beginning of a good work at Cameroons, and the formation of a Christian Church. *Oh, that I*

may see it increased to a thousand souls! And I do hope; for the Spirit of God is doing a large work! More than twenty inquirers are hanging on my heart and lips with marks of deepest solicitude. The ferocious, demoniacal features are assuming the softness of children, and those who a little time since sought my life are saying to me "What shall I do to be saved?" I cannot describe my feelings when I see and hear what I would record if I had but time.'

Mr. Saker regretted his inability to remain among these people of his choice, but the larger Church of Clarence laid a heavier claim upon his time and strength till March 12, 1850, when it was deemed advisable for him to accept a passage to England—in the mission vessel of the United Presbyterian Mission at Calabar—which was now freely offered to him. Worn and exhausted with seven years of ceaseless toil in the land so rightly termed the 'White man's grave,' the change to England was both necessary and welcome, though it left Dr. and Mrs. Newbegin to the sorrows of lonely toil. No one, however, even faintly anticipated that the doctor's time of departure to his heavenly home was so near. Before the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Saker and Miss Vitou in England, namely on April 17, at the mouth of the Calabar River—

whither he had sailed in 'The Dove' to obtain medical advice—Dr. Newbegin had passed away. He had joined the noble army of those who counting not their lives dear unto themselves had 'offered willingly' their all, to find in the sacrifice eternal blessedness. Scarcely, therefore, had Mr. Saker landed in England, May 29, before it was necessary to prepare for an immediate return to Africa. Not a single European missionary was now on the field. The hearts of many of the supporters of the African Mission failed them.

It was at this moment of deep depression that Mr. Saker addressed the following remarkable letter to the Committee of his Society :—

'I have a fear that some of you who wish well to Africa will be discouraged, and I think you ought not to be. Let us review some of the facts. Ten years since you commenced the work. You sent many labourers and expended much treasure. Of those sent our God has gathered to Himself Thompson, Sturgeon, A. Fuller, Merrick, and Newbegin. Prince and Clarke have been driven from the field, and a small company of West Indians have fled, terrified by the toil and suffering.

'This suffering and loss of life show that the sacrifice you have made is large. But ought we to have expected less? Bloodless victories are

not common. Sometimes we have to wait long for the results we seek, but in this mission God, in His Providence, permits us to look at something accomplished before this last affliction fell on us. Let me refer to these results. There are now living in Africa about one hundred souls hopefully converted to God. In nine years past, forty may have died leaving the pleasing testimony that they are gone to a better land. They are saved, instrumentally through you and your agents.

'There are now eight native teachers engaged, more or less, in efforts for the salvation of souls. They are not all supported by you, but they are what they are through you. The education imparted is an immense benefit. In the colony of Clarence you have effected a transformation unspeakably valuable, and almost unprecedented. Among the natives of this island, impressions have been made that only need fostering to result in the glorious and happy change you long to behold. On the continent it is difficult to say what has been done. Souls have been brought to God, churches formed, and actually the wilderness is now being transformed into the garden of the Lord.

'All this stands against so much suffering, and so many deaths, and will any say that the sacrifice equals the results?

'And we must not forget that all who die are self-devoted, and God has accepted this offering, and by it wrought all that we see accomplished.

'Brethren, I think you will feel with me, that we must not be discouraged. God afflicts us, let us humble ourselves before Him, and try to bring to His service purer and more devoted sacrifices.

'You will doubtless conclude that I ought to return to Africa immediately. I can only say I am ready.'

This trumpet call to 'Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty' roused every heart.

The history of the mission was passed in review. The proofs of God's working in the conversion of souls by the preaching of the Word were patent, and destroyed every doubt in the minds of the committee as to their duty. Fidelity to the great cause committed to their charge required the continuance of their efforts to win Africa for Christ. No past suffering, no prospective peril, could daunt the firm, calm resolve of Mr. and Mrs. Saker. However fearful others might be, their lives were the Lord's, and to be spent in Africa for Him.

Arrangements for their return were made as speedily as possible, and on October 25, 1850, they again sailed from Liverpool.

In England they left three little girls. Their eldest, now a child of ten years, an infant of eleven months, and another of three years. The partings were sore, but the aim of their life was the service of the Lord.

'Deeply painful as it is,' wrote Mrs. Saker, 'to be severed from our precious children, it seems to give us greater confidence to believe that the same compassionate Father, who has preserved and watched over us, will never forsake those we have committed unto Him.'

Chapter VIII

THE CARE OF ALL THE CHURCHES

'Africa groans to be delivered from the bondage of sin.'

He spake, and the words He spake still thrill
Through my soul's deep silences:
'I claim thee Mine, let thy soul be still,
And wait on its ministries.'

ON their arrival in Africa a warm welcome awaited Mr. and Mrs. Saker at all the stations. It was again on a Sunday that the vessel in which they had sailed arrived in Clarence Cove, and the Christians, being in chapel, were not aware of their nearness till the boat had already approached the landing.

The news spread, and many came running to the beach, some with tears and others with glad smiles, all with gratitude and praise. In the chapel about 500 then gathered to give thanks for the return of their missionary. The praise on all sides was not less heartfelt when it was known that two vessels by which Mr. and Mrs.

Saker had sought to journey thither, and had not secured passages, had been wrecked on the way. Twelve days later Mr. John Wheeler, another missionary helper, arrived from England by another vessel. His stay in Africa, owing to failure of health, was not of long duration. The condition of the Christian Church in Clarence was good, and Mr. Saker had the pleasure of baptizing ten, long approved and now accepted, candidates.

Leaving Mr. Wheeler in Clarence, Mr. Saker hastened to the continent to visit the other important stations of Bimbia and Cameroons. Were these Christians also to be found steadfast and unmoved in the Lord?

In Bimbia he found the same difficulties presenting themselves which had so taxed the energies of Mr. Merrick—a fast diminishing population; a consequent falling off in land cultivation, and a return to primeval forest of once cultivated tracts of land—and all owing to the sacrifice of life resulting from the dominance of witchcraft and devil-worship. Yet of Bimbia Mr. Saker writes: 'Two persons give promise. They now seek to be married and join the Church. The congregation is small but attentive. Joseph J. Fuller (son of Mr. Fuller, the Jamaica missionary) has during my absence maintained the services and collected a class of inquirers.

His good wife is truly a helpmeet for him, and devotes herself entirely to the station she occupies.'

Mr. Saker was detained in Bimbia for some weeks owing to storms. During his detention he printed at the press some Isubu manuscripts left by the late Mr. Merrick. During Mr. Saker's stay here he buried the first Isubu convert. 'Her end,' he wrote, 'was peace.' Numbers of the natives assembled at the house and waited many hours for her death, that they might unite in their accustomed death-cry. As soon as she was dead they began their noise, and in half an hour became clamorous for rum. They soon became tired and returned to their homes, saying, 'What kind of death be this? No guns to fire and no rum to drink!'[1]

Notwithstanding some bright lights on the

[1] When death occurs guns begin to fire. The women all gather round the house. In the case of some one of importance dying, 'one or two cannons were loaded and fired. All the people near came together. The drum was calling all to *cry*.

'The emaciated body was laid out on a kind of bier, a wrapper round the middle, the head covered with a red cap, the eyes painted all round with white paint, and a feather was stuck in the ears. As many as fifty women were in the house, ranged at the head and feet, all howling and mourning, their hair all dishevelled, the tears running down their cheeks, and they uttering the most extravagant expressions of grief. . . . Imagine the hideous body, and the howling all around, an interminable din from the drum, and you have an idea of an African funeral. The men show their grief for the dead by copious draughts of rum.'—*Extract from report of Rev. Q. W. Thomson.*

work in Bimbia there were many shadows. Two recorded incidents of the character of native life in that district will serve to show why later, in 1853, Mr. Saker found it advisable to remove the press, and subsequently the mission teachers, from that early mission settlement.

'A young man, while bathing, was seized by a shark, and in a few minutes his spine was torn out by the ravenous creature. Three men, two of them slaves, were accused of having bewitched the sufferer. They were seized, carried to the town, and put into chains. It was the Lord's day, but after service Mr. Merrick and Mr. Saker went to the town and found a council sitting, consisting chiefly of slaves, debating with King William the doom of the accused men. The result was that instead of being murdered on the spot, the trembling wretches were condemned to exile. One poor fellow was, however, allowed to accompany the missionaries to their settlement. A second escaped to the home of Mr. Christian, one of the Jamaica assistants: it was soon surrounded by a violent mob and with difficulty the man was rescued. . . . Ultimately he was sent away to Clarence for safety. The third man was not permitted to escape the doom intended for all.'

The second incident is from the pen of Mr. Joseph J. Fuller. 'In June on the third

Sabbath day, the noise of drums was heard, a canoe made its appearance at the point. And what was this noise? The drum was telling (the natives can make their drums to speak) the horrible tale of their own cruel deed. It was too awful a sight for me to witness; but those who saw it said that a man's head, newly cut off, was at the bow of the canoe. It was the head of a poor innocent creature, taken by a man,—and for no just cause,—but simply for what they call a "hero." This was followed by a grand festival, the particulars of which I am unable to give.' 'Times,' added Mr. Fuller, 'with us at Bimbia are indeed those of the greatest anxiety, yet I commit all things to the hand of the Commissioner who has decreed that His Gospel must be preached to all nations; this work is all His own.'

The work in Cameroons was of a more encouraging kind. Cruelty and oppression, the practice of witchcraft and devil-worship also prevailed there, but withal there was a seeking after a higher good, a consciousness of power to rise superior to the low level of centuries of evil custom which gave hope of better days. Far, far more cheering was the evident triumph of the Gospel over the hearts and lives of many men and women, free-born and slave. 'Of Mr. Horton Johnson,' wrote Mr. Saker, 'I cannot

speak in terms sufficiently high. His devotedness and labour is beyond all praise. Without him I should be nothing. In no one thing does he give me anxiety, or fail to carry out my wishes. The natives love him with strong affection.

'During the year I have baptized sixteen persons. Fifteen of those I hoped well of in October 1849 have endured painful trials since, and through all have exhibited the Christian spirit. Many more wish to join with us. It was proved that Dualla is changed; as universally they express their joys and sorrows only with heathen noise, yet here was no noise save the sobbing of those whose deep feeling could not be repressed. . . . I have married four couples. Numbers are deeply anxious for instruction, and the only limit to our usefulness now is our time and strength. The people seek a hand to lead them. One thing may be recorded. Concern for instruction succeeds conversion. Ignorance is not deplored till guilt is a burden. Our Church now numbers twenty members; inquirers, twenty-five. The congregation fills our little temple. The school is not large, but I hope efficient.

'At four and five every morning the schoolroom is crowded to hear the Word of God, and in the evening the people will only retire when

bidden. . . . Numbers use every effort to learn to read. We have two schools. At the station, Bethel, where we have so long been fixed, the school may be said to continue day and night almost. Adults and children assemble soon after four o'clock in the morning for Scripture lessons and prayer until six or half-past six; the hour for children's school continues till ten. Afternoon session is short. At five the adults assemble for reading and prayer. At seven again they assemble in Mr. Johnson's house till nine, or sometimes till eleven at night. . . . *Labour, lessons, singing, and prayer form the life at Cameroons.*'

Mr. Saker during the year 1851 had printed three Dualla class-books of twenty-four and thirty-two pages, a small hymn-book, and had begun an edition of the New Testament in large type. Of this the twenty-third chapter of Matthew was completed. Every verse was a fresh translation, without reference to anything he had previously printed. He had also begun the Book of Psalms, more as an exercise in Hebrew than with the intention of printing.

The rapid decay of the mission buildings from the fierce tornado, the destructive white ant and dampness now induced Mr. Saker to turn his attention to some more permanent form of building. Stones were not available in Came-

roons, though they might be obtained and brought with much labour from the seacoast beyond Bimbia for foundation purposes. Could Mr. Saker make bricks? He writes: 'As soon as I could command a day I commenced with the clay in Clarence. . . . After a few difficulties were overcome we succeeded in making 500. . . . Our next attempt was with the clay found in Cameroons, which proved to be much better suited for our purpose, and we were full of hope. We made a few bricks and dried them in the sun. They answered well for all dry places. We then erected sheds, made tables and moulds, and at length built a kiln with fires with which we can eventually burn 4000 at once.'

When the mission was first started in Cameroons no offer of payment would induce the Duallas to labour. Labour, they said, was for slaves. Mr. Saker and Johnson set the example by continuous labour, and they laughed at them as fools. So soon as men decided for God their townsmen drove them out from the markets lest they should spoil the trade. In their sufferings they went to Mr. Saker to ask what they should do. At first he could only recommend agriculture; to cultivate and sell provisions. Then to plant cotton and open up a new source of trade. Already a sugar planta-

tion was yielding its produce. Now he could offer them payment for making bricks. Five families were soon at work, and 2000 bricks were ready.

To other engagements was now added the building of a large, commodious house in Bethel. In writing to the committee, Mr. Saker said: 'I am happy to say I have complete success (both building brick and paving tiles), and for some weeks past my brickyard has been in active operation. I suppose that 10,000 are now ready, and we are making 2000 a week.' This was a triumph—a triumph which he owed to God and to the influence of His holy Word. *Without* the Gospel Mr. Saker could get no work done; with it, he could build a house or a bridge, or convert the wilderness into a fruitful garden, because the *Christians* had a mind to work.

But the possession of bricks was of little avail without mortar to cement them together. We therefore soon read: 'In my travels I am now searching high and low for a material with which to make lime or cement. I hope to succeed, and I purpose sending out my canoe to collect oyster-shells. And then, what can hinder our work? If the Lord gives me health, we shall do well.' And he did well, for the Lord was with him. In a few years the mission

houses, the chapel, the school-houses, were all transformed, and they remain durable monuments of the practical knowledge, skill, and far-seeing sagacity of this wise worker in the Kingdom of God.[1]

Mr. Saker's summary of the work of the year 1851 concludes with these words: 'Our labours have been heavy and without cessation. The repair of buildings, etc., has given me no little toil. (Among these it may be mentioned was the re-erection of the chapel at Clarence, overthrown in a fierce tornado.) Our boats, too, have consumed many precious hours. Throughout the year the Lord has preserved me in health. I have had to travel by day and night in the creeks and open sea; in the sun and in the beating storm: yet the Lord has preserved me even when the lightning has shivered our mast and the sea washed over us.'

The triumphs of the Gospel in Cameroons were not bloodless. The little flock of believers had had to endure persecution. One convert was sold away into the interior as a slave. He was never heard of directly again, though many years later, when the first messengers of the Gospel entered Abo, an interior district, they found a few readers who had been taught by a

[1] The mission house and chapel are now in the hands of the German Lutheran Mission.

slave, and also some who knew the name of Jesus. But they said that the man who taught them was dead.

Two women were tortured till reason fled. One of these illustrates the ennobling character of the Christian faith. She heard the cries of women proceeding from the Egbo house, and forgetting the terror which the Devil-house exercised on all native women, and thinking only of pity and help, she entered and found two women being tortured. Anna's intercession for their release was in vain, and she was cruelly bound and tortured in the same way.

Six hours passed away before Mr. Johnson and others heard of this and fought their way in to rescue her. It was then too late to save her reason. Yet she had been one of the brightest of Christian women.

Twice Mr. Johnson rescued one woman from death. Other converts were cruelly beaten and chained. Attempts to prevent attendance at the chapel services proved vain. So enraged was the Great Adversary at this failure to stop the spread of Gospel influence, that he stirred up the people to make a clean sweep of the mission. But for the presence of Thomas Horton—the late King's nephew and the son of an influential chieftain in the interior of the country—in the mission house it seemed probable that they

might have accomplished this. He absolutely refused to leave the premises, and they dare not allow him to die in the riot. They sent for his favourite sister from the country, hoping that to see her he would go home; that in his absence they might carry out their purpose. But even for this he refused to leave the mission.

When she came to the house to see him, she tried to induce him to return with her, but at last she went away in anger, saying, 'Then die with them. If you do not come home to us, then you will die with the white men, for to-night they mean to kill all here.' Thus in her anger she revealed their—before only guessed—intention. His noble reply was, 'Well, if they wish to destroy the Gospel they cannot, and they shall not kill the missionaries till they have killed me; we will die together! I now see why you are sent here; go to the chiefs and say, I will not leave the Gospel of God.'

One incident shows the change which was taking place in the hearts and lives of these converts. One woman had been driven from her home by her husband. She was a bright and earnest Christian. It was the custom among the Duallas to put an infant into the grave of the dead mother, as no other woman would venture to nurse it, lest her own child should die. Mrs. Saker had one such child

rescued from death, and Mrs. Johnson had another. John Quan (a lad who had been for some months in the mission school) had learned that this custom was evil, and himself saved a child who was thus being buried. He then sent for Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson went and received the nearly famished little one. As on returning home he passed Enteppi's door he stayed and offered her the child. She responded at once that she had long wished to do something for God, and now she would 'take the child and nurse it for God.' To the amazement of her neighbours her child did not die, and the foundling also throve. Enteppi's husband became a Christian later, and, from all his wives, chose her—the woman he had persecuted and banished — as his alone wife by a religious ceremony.

A great joy had come to Mr. and Mrs. Saker in the May of that year 1851, in the birth of a first and only son. Both father and mother watched with anxious love over this little one, but they could not shield him from the fevers and sicknesses incident to the terrible climate. In Bethel, too, the mission party still often suffered from scarcity of food. It was a trial which for themselves they could bear with fortitude, but there came periods during the year 1852 when absolutely no nourishment could be

found for one so young. Mr. Saker took a boat and crossed to Fernando Po, hoping to get something from one of the ships which sometimes put in there. He returned from that long and dangerous trip with one tin of biscuits. It was all he had been able to procure. The mother had hushed her little hungry child to sleep when she heard the sound of the boat at the beach. Softly she opened the door to slip out to meet her husband and talk outside, lest, if he brought nothing, the little one should be awakened to know his want by the sound of his father's voice. This precaution was in vain; the little Fernando was soon awake and seated before the biscuits, while on either side the parents sat weeping tears of mingled sorrow and gladness over his enjoyment of the luxury.

Some idea of the expenditure of the physical force necessitated by having charge of all the stations of the mission, separated as they were by storm-tossed seas, may be gathered from the following extracts from the missionary's own narrative—

'*June* 28, 1852. I left Bimbia again at midnight, May 4th. Next day was at Clarence and with Mr. Wheeler till the 10th. On the morning of the 10th left for Bimbia; thence to Cameroons, arrived on the 12th. Left again on 14th at midnight. Next day and night exposed

to a heavy storm for fourteen hours; arrived at Bimbia, Sabbath day, 16th. Next morning correcting proof-sheets from twelve till five o'clock; then sailed for Clarence: a stormy passage; once our boat was completely on her beam-ends. I had scarcely a hope that we should reach land again: yet we arrived at Clarence at night without loss. . . . The first duties of this station detained me there till the 31st. Left at midnight for Cameroons—arrived June 1st at two p.m. Here detained again till the 11th. Left at midnight for Bimbia; arrived at two next day. The next day, the Sabbath, quite unwell and could not preach. Correcting proof, printing, and suffering till the 19th. Left at eleven a.m. for Cameroons. Arrived at nine in the evening. Found that my wife and child had left here for Clarence on account of the heavy rains. Next day still unwell; preached but once. Monday, 21st, very ill. Strong fever and intense pain at night. Next day worse; requested a visit from a surgeon, who, although the kindest trader I know in Africa, was too much engaged with his trade to come and see me. Heard that a vessel was about to sail to Clarence at night; a passage was readily granted. Next morning was carried to the vessel, and arrived here on Friday morning very greatly bettered by rest, and

have continued to do well ever since, so as to preach once yesterday, and hope to leave for Bimbia in three or four days.

'This, so far, is a mere outline of journeys;—the labour connected with it I cannot describe. To preaching and talking there is no end. Translating and correcting proof-sheets is a serious task, and frequently involves intense study by night, when there is nothing to interrupt attention. The New Testament is now our chief work, and I have printed to the third chapter of Luke. Chapter 8 is in type this week. Next to this is the Isubu grammar, which progresses slowly. Some Fernandian lessons and a new class-book for the Dualla schools are in type.'

In connection with this subject of travel, another quotation, though of later date, may be given here. The risk to the lives of the travellers was always great, and we cannot at the same time forget the lonely watcher and worker at home. Mrs. Saker was bravely heroic. No European companionship cheered those lonely hours and days while Mr. Saker visited the other stations, and to the perils among the heathen and the responsibilities of motherhood and the cares of her large family of native boys and girls was constantly superadded anxiety for her husband, his health, and safety.

It is the story of a journey by cutter boat to Victoria. Under stress of storm or danger, in crossing the river bar, or the dangerous shoals, or rounding the headlands of the rock-bound coast, Mr. Saker's own hands always held the tiller. While thus steering in darkness and storm a sudden change of wind brought the boom with force to the other side of the boat.

Mr. Saker tells us: 'I sat on the boat with umbrella held rigidly because of the wind. The boom caught that—and not my head. It was holding firmly that saved my head and destroyed my balance; and my fall was as soft as water could make it.' Some minutes elapsed before the boys missed Mr. Saker from the helm; then all was confusion while the boat was put about. The noise of the elements drowned his voice, though he endeavoured to let them know of his nearness to them. When discovered he was quickly drawn on board.

Returning again to the boat, he began to feel the cold wind. His cap was gone, and his head especially seemed sensitive to the cold. He soon remedied this, and then wanted some tea or coffee to ward off a possible chill; but the storm had put out the fire, and it was impossible to rekindle it; so he sat or stood without a shelter for eight long hours in his wet clothing till the returning sun warmed him,

and he spread his coat to dry. This long exposure to wet and cold produced a serious inflammation. They arrived at Bimbia at six, and obtaining fire they cooked their rice and boiled water. Then followed another night of wind and rain, and it was not till eight next morning they reached Victoria.

Mr. Saker, continuing his own story, says :—

'I was then conscious of my dangerous condition, and hurried on my duties as speedily as possible that I might get home again; but by Sabbath day my pains were become too strong for me. Then followed diarrhœa, which seemed fast taking away my life. This continued till Friday morning. In the evening I had all things collected together, closed all the affairs I could which had called me there, and by six in the evening I again took my place in the boat. A fine night followed and a lovely day on Saturday, and by four in the afternoon I was safely here. . . . I am thankful for these mercies. . . . I do earnestly pray that God may keep me safe till I have done my work in the Scriptures. At Victoria I assisted in the baptism of four young friends there, and next Sabbath three of my own orphan children will join the Church here. One other of the girls, who gave evidence of change of heart, has been called to heaven during my absence.'

This young girl, Ngassi, was a fair-skinned, bright and happy resident in the mission home. One morning her face so beamed with joy that her teacher noticed it, and said, 'Why, Ngassi, you look as if something pleasant had happened;' and she replied, 'Yes, I saw Jesus last night, and He has pardoned my sins.' Her death soon after this confession of faith was a sorrowful event in the home, and yet as she belonged to a very fierce wild heathen who would probably have given her much trouble in later life, her friends rejoiced in her joy in the presence of her Saviour. They were anxious to give her Christian burial. Could it be done? Certainly not with the consent of her owner, for he would be unwilling to forego the drinking, gunfiring, wailing fashions of the country! Messengers were sent to inform him of her death. He arrived with a noisy throng to take the body for country burial.

Meanwhile little Ngassi was laid in a coffin with its white lining and floral tributes, looking fair and pure. This was not what the heathen wanted. His wrath burned fiercely. Why was she in a Christian coffin? now his 'wake was spoiled,'—and he went away with his followers declaring that he would shoot any one who attempted to take the coffin to the burial ground. All day the approaches to the burial

ground were closed. On either side of the path men were in waiting with their guns, and it was late in the day before the angry heathen were satisfied with a present, and the funeral cortège allowed to proceed to the grave.

One grief which came to the mission at this time (1852) was the home-call of Mrs. Johnson. Before her departure, though exceedingly weak, she was constantly entreating the young converts especially to hold fast to Jesus Christ. 'It was at the beginning of the year 1846 that she passed the wicket-gate and was brought under the influence of truth.' In the spring of 1848 she joined her husband in Cameroons, and from the day of her landing there till her death she would not on any account leave Bethel. 'Her attachment to the people and the place was then as great as had been her former antipathy.'

In Mr. Saker's report for September 28, 1858, he throws into strong relief the lights and shadows of those pioneer days. He says: 'The work of missions as we see it and feel it, loses none of its interest. We have two scenes ever before us and painted in unmistakable colours. Here is wickedness in its most degraded and deadly forms—misery, discord, and death float around us. A corrupting mass,—a sea of death,

—subjects for deepest compassion, work for the purest benevolence.

'We have also a pleasant enclosure, apart from this fearful scene. An enclosure where the voice of prayer and praise happily continues, where the lovely plants of a better clime are springing up and bearing fruit to God. All glory to Him who plants and waters the precious seed. In our churches we have enough to make us thankful for in the steadfastness and piety of our members. That many endure so much and so well is a marvel. This is especially the case in Cameroons. That some are wavering or worse cannot be surprising. . . . But there is one thing almost disheartening. We have three churches in as many different places; we have two other places where the Word is regularly preached; yet what is the whole of this to the mass of men living in darkness around us? What proportion is a hundred members of churches to the tens of thousands treading the same soil, dancing before our eyes, alike careless of God and themselves? What do we among so many? . . . War, diseases, and witchcraft are insatiable; and a generation is almost gone since I first saw this dreary land. This fearful woe is unmitigated, except we feel the value of one soul saved from ruin, and it is not of one only we rejoice—so our joy is great.

Thus ours is a mingled lot—highest pleasures with disheartening sorrow. In such a land what manner of men ought we to be?'

Towards the close of the year 1853 death again visited the mission home, taking away a precious little daughter from Mr. and Mrs. Saker. Mr. Saker writes: 'On Wednesday at midnight I left here for Bimbia, where I had much printing to do. At the time our dear little Alice had a slight fever. . . . When I left she was as bright as day, though still hot with fever. Her general health has been so good, she was almost always abounding in health and spirits, so that I had no fear. I knew she would have slight fevers in cutting her teeth. Fever increased after I left, and by the next Wednesday there seemed little sign of life. On Thursday Helen sent a boat for me, and I arrived here on Friday night, but too late. The dear little Alice lay cold in death.' By night, in silence and fear of attracting the notice of the heathen around, the stricken parents committed their little treasure's remains to the grave dug in a secluded corner of their garden. This event, with Mrs. Saker's own severe sufferings and the little boy's need of change, necessitated another parting. Mrs. Saker sailed in February 1854. Mr. Saker wrote: 'My hands are full of toil; my heart is full of anxious solicitude regarding the

supply of all the families connected with us; the needful, the unavoidable supervision of all the work in every place; work, too, by unskilled but willing hands, and sometimes the occasional but heartrending defection of one and another, either from steadfastness of hope or from devotedness to labour. These, with their thousand other cares, interfere with and almost prevent me from writing letters. . . . An hour of suffering such as this is good for me; it gives me time to write.'

With Mrs. Saker away from Cameroons, the native girl 'Fanny' was the only person Mr. Saker had to depend on in the housekeeping. She had to provide food for about twenty or twenty-one every day. This was no small work, for one could not go to a shop to buy—there were none—and it often took one boy half a day to walk about to find vegetables for one meal . . . Clothing, too, required constant care to save from moth and rats. The difficulties of building—before there was steam communication with Europe—a large house—the first of its kind in a land like Africa, where every detail and every appliance must be the direct work of one directing brain and hand, can hardly be grasped by residents in this land of conveniences. One eye must direct the excavations for foundation, and stone-laying, and brick-placing: one hand must

use the plummet, must direct the welding of iron bars into strong and lasting rafters, and the sawing of planks for flooring; while unskilled lads essayed to do the work, scarce realising the importance of the work in hand, and certainly not the dire results of mistakes, or their want of a straight eye! Meanwhile this one directing eye and hand must be ready for every emergency: a sabre-cut to bind up; a limb torn by an alligator to be severed or healed; a fever to be cured; a death feud to be investigated; a fight to be stopped; advice to be given to kings and chiefs in things temporal and spiritual. Family cares, as above stated, had to be considered; the printing office had to be superintended, the Bible to be translated. We cannot wonder that months and years passed on their weary way while the buildings grew steadily and surely, but very, very slowly.

In January of 1855, Mr. Saker wrote: 'During the hours that I can meditate on the things of God, the sorrows and agonies of life are mitigated, at times almost forgotten. The vision of the bright future suspends for a time the influences of the present. . . . Pain, hunger, and thirst, weariness, and distress will cease. No tear there—even the cause of tears will be removed, for there will be no hard speeches, no separa-

tions, no losses of possessions, no blighted hopes, no funeral gloom, no *death.*'

Death was approaching with sure footsteps the little home in England to which Mr. Saker's thoughts often turned. Mrs. Saker was still suffering, but of the little son's recovery from the diseases of the African climate there seemed to be no hope. Medical skill was enlisted to save the little life, but the complications of disease baffled all skill. On hearing that no hope was entertained of the little boy's recovery Mr. Saker sought a vessel starting for the homeland. This vessel left in July. Exhausted and worn he went on board, 'hardly likely to live to reach the homeland,' thought his friends out there, but he himself hopeful to see his little Fernando once more. God, however, claimed the child before the father's arrival in England.

This bereavement was sorely felt. 'The little boy was intelligent, beautifully patient under prolonged suffering, exhibiting a love for prayer and praise and truth wonderful in so young a child, and round him fond hopes and prayers had centred. The name of Jesus was very sweet to this dear child, and with the words, 'I am going to Jesus,' his little spirit winged its flight to the eternal Home.

Chapter IX

CAST DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED

'The vision of the bright future suspends for a time the influences of the present.'

I feel the crash of battle!
My barque is smitten sore!
Hell's bolts come fast, and rattle,
And cruel holes they bore:
But my vessel ne'er shall founder
Though the deadliest fight may be,
For my God is my Commander
And He always stays with me.

NOT more than four months could Mr. Saker remain in the homeland. It was pleasant to snatch a few hours from those busy months for his wife and three little daughters, but stern duty was calling him to the front, and as a true soldier in the army of the Lord he could not tarry. He, accompanied by Mrs. Saker, left England in the month of December. Their welcome to Africa in February 1856 was enthusiastic, and without delay work was resumed in all its varied departments.

In May 1858, Mr. Saker visited Clarence. The Christians there said that without doubt God sent him for their hours of need. Mr. Saker preached on the Sabbath morning from the words 'Christ — The foundation'; in the evening from 'Be still, and know that I am God!' On the following morning he was engaged in loading stores into the boat for a return to Cameroons when a vessel was seen approaching which proved to be a messenger of evil tidings. The vessel was a Spanish steamer, 'Balboa,' having on board Don Carlos Chacon, commander of the Spanish squadron and Governor-General of all the islands belonging to Spain on the coast. With six Jesuits he had come to give effect to the orders of the Spanish Crown. He proclaimed the 'religion of the Roman Catholic Church to be the sole religion of Fernando Po, as it was that of the kingdom of Spain, to the exclusion of every other.' 'It was soon agreed,' we read, 'that we have a prayer-meeting to-night at seven. I felt, indeed, the appropriateness of the words I had been led to discourse on the previous evening: "*Be still, and know that I am God.*"'

On May 24 the Governor sent for Mr. Saker. He said that the Jesuits 'were all shocked to find the heretic missionaries here,'

and that 'they would put down the Protestant worship instantly.' They would not recognise at all the draft of the constitution fixed by the commission in 1843. 'This afternoon,' wrote Mr. Saker, 'as my leg was painful I decided not to go to meeting this evening . . . but after tea, while lying on the sofa, Rev. iii. 7 came to my mind, and while thinking over it a voice seemed speaking to my heart, saying, Go and tell your people that—"I have the keys." . . . I soon forgot my leg, and at seven went to chapel. After a short address by Mr. Diboll and prayers, I spoke long and with much power, the people hanging on my lips till near nine. . . . Everybody seemed there. It was supposed by many to be for the last time. . . . Be it the last time or not, my heart is at rest! Jesus has the key!'

'*Thursday.* The priests are going to people's houses. One of them says he shall baptize all their children soon. In the town the Spaniards take whatever fowls, ducks, eggs, or yams they meet with: take as if of right, nor make any payment.

'At last the day is come. Notice was sent round the town that a proclamation would be made this day at twelve o'clock. At ten o'clock the storm returned. . . . I expected it would hinder the movements of Don Carlos, but it did

not. . . . The bell rang at twelve, and in a pouring rain a few of the inhabitants came together. Mr. Diboll went down, as did also Mr. Fuller. . . . Cold and sad I walked the house to keep myself warm. Soon after twelve the guns fired to announce the proclamation made. Mr. Diboll and Mr. Fuller returned, and with them the company of our townspeople who had been present. The women cried much. . . . I then read from Isaiah, 'Come, my people, enter into thy chamber.' My words on this Scripture were few; and after earnest prayer we dismissed the friends to their homes.'

Sunday found the settlement of Clarence profoundly quiet. No sounds were heard as beforetime of praise and prayer issuing from the church and school-room. Inside the houses the Christians assembled for private services without singing. They did not know that on board the Spanish vessels the commanders were preparing to land parties of their soldiery to capture or kill any persons found assembled for religious service. The intense quiet which prevailed everywhere prevented them from carrying out their intention. A kindly Lieutenant on an English vessel sent to tell Mr. Saker of the Spaniards' plans. How thankful he was that through his influence the people had refrained from any attempt to set

the law at defiance, and thus their lives had been spared. To meet the people's need it was arranged that during the operation of the restrictive laws, services should be held in the wild jungle tracts behind the township, where the Christians could sing and pray undisturbed by the Spaniards.

Meanwhile the missionaries endeavoured to obtain a suspension of the decree till the people could communicate with the Spanish Court. Very little hope was entertained of relief from this quarter, but the necessary formalities to be observed would give the people time. To Mr. Saker there came the perplexing question, What about the future of the Christian flock? He felt the case was the Lord's, and resting in the assurance of His leadership he had peace. He rejoiced that his footsteps had been led to Clarence at this critical juncture. The people as they gathered round him asked, 'How did you know to come to Clarence just now? Before we had time to fear, you were here.'

The British Consul gave them much kindly encouragement at this time, but on Mr. Saker rested the obligation of providing for the future of the Christian settlers. A British settlement offered the only solution of the problem. His knowledge of the African coast

convinced him that a safe harbour on the seaboard was to be found. No better pioneer in the search for a new home could have been found than Alfred Saker. The intention was to find a suitable spot for a city and port. Should such a place be found an appeal should be made to the English Government to secure such ground as might be needed, and to establish it a free port.

When the final answer from the Spanish Governor reached Mr. Saker, denying permission for missionaries to remain on the island, a public meeting was called. Fearing spies and interruption, no open act of worship was performed; but at Mr. Saker's request the assembly sat for a few minutes in silent prayer. Then, with deep solemnity of feeling, the resolve was made to leave the island as soon as provision could be made for a new settlement in a land where freedom of conscience and civil liberty could be enjoyed.

After narrating the events which had transpired, Mr. Saker writes to the committee: 'Now as to the future, Jesus shall be our guide. There are a few general ideas which can be put on paper. Pray for us that we may be directed aright. Cameroons is ours—a fine station, an open door into the interior

of the land. . . . But a port is wanted where there can be British protection, British capital and laws: a depôt for coal for the Navy, a safe harbour for our merchant vessels, a free port for the commerce of these rivers, and a refuge for the oppressed and the slave. These are all essential points to be secured. . . . Now our course must be, first, to provide a home for all, if possible, where freedom to worship God must be the first requirement; and then next, for employment and, if possible, prosperity.'

Two days after penning this letter Mr. Saker set forth to explore the mountain region of the Cameroons, which with its rocky shores, bays, and islands, lay opposite, some 20 miles distant from Fernando Po.

The story of Mr. Saker's wanderings shall, as nearly as may be, be told in his own words.

Too much engaged to eat breakfast before embarking in the frail craft which was to carry him over the sea from Clarence to the mainland, exposed, hungry, to heavy seas, tropic rain, and storm winds from Wednesday to Sunday noon, it was no wonder that he arrived in Bimbia faint, and 'sick, and sore.' The provision basket he had carefully prepared for this journey, and had sent from the house to the boat, had been, by native passengers'

luggage, and without his knowledge, crowded out.

On Monday he saw King William and secured a promise to sell a portion of land in Ambas Bay. He then proceeded to Cameroons and began to erect the framework of a large house for transportation to the New Colony, for the reception of the first emigrants there. Still suffering from the effects of that terrible sea journey and from ulcerated legs, Mr. Saker, accompanied by Mr. Fuller, then returned to Bimbia. A stormy journey, during which the cutter's boat was drifted from them, followed. On arriving in Bimbia, without delaying to eat, as it was late, they started for the overland passage to Ambas Bay

He writes: 'We had a guide, and with rapid strides penetrated the wilderness. We soon came out again at War Bay and its cliffs 300 feet high. The passage round that bay took us long. It is one mass of broken rock, loose and moving, in all shapes and forms, from massive cubes of 50 feet to the smallest that can resist the force of the surf. Dreadful was it to walk over those evidences of volcanic action; . . . yet we arrived at the end safely. Then we penetrated the wilderness again—onward through ravines, across rivers, up cliffs and the lower mountains, till at last we came

where we could overlook the country. Fine, indeed, was the view. The wilderness was a dark night, but the land bore evidence of great richness, well timbered, well watered. It was much too late to descend to the bay. . . . The sun was then setting, so taking a few hasty observations, we turned back, hoping to be at home by eight o'clock. . . . The deep dark wilderness, dark by day, was black indeed by night.

'Our guide lost the track. . . . I waited a little to think. . . . Mentally I retraced the road we had come, and then fixed the direction of War's Bay. This done, we began a straight course . . . down steep ravines, over boulders that would not enter a large room . . . falling, torn and bruised, we came to a precipice, down which Fuller went with the help of the overhanging branches; I tried to follow, but the branch gave way and I fell. My legs caught in the roots and arrested me.'

Extricating himself, Mr. Saker was able to lower himself unhurt to the bottom, and after six or seven hours they found themselves once more by the seacoast at War's Bay. There was no time to lose. The tide was low: to be caught by the returning waves, shut in by steep cliffs, meant certain death. 'To walk over those stones by the faint light of a few

stars seemed impossible, but go we must. Weary and sore we began, and on my hands and knees I laboured for two hours.' The eastern extremity of the cliff was reached, but it was too dark to find the path to ascend, so climbing above high-water mark (as it is possible to do on that side) they sat close together for warmth, and awaited day-dawn.

'By half-past six we reached Fuller's house at Bimbia. . . . Shoes, clothing torn; hands pierced with thorns; and we covered with mud. Wrapped in blankets we awaited breakfast. . . . This done, we took eight strong men to go round the seacoast to visit the bay.' In the Niger Expedition of 1841 this Bay was visited by Captain W. Allen, its commander. On several occasions his ships had anchored within the islands which shelter the entrance from the mighty swell of the great Atlantic; but the officers of the survey received the impression that, while the anchorage was safe, the climate salubrious, and the proximity of the mountains favourable to health, the bay did not contain a safe landing-place. Nothing but heavy surf was visible from the steamer's deck.

On arriving at the bay, to Mr. Saker's great delight, he found there was a suitable landing:

an inner bay with a sandy beach. He writes: "Of Amboises Bay I cannot write too highly—no inhabitants, a rich country, the finest bay on the coast, deep water. I need a home for my people where a trade may be created, and to which commerce may be drawn. I search for a landing only, and, behold! God hath hidden a deep interior bay for ages, a bay with nearly two miles of beach without a storm wave, a bay large enough for 1000 boats and small vessels, while the Amboises Bay could contain a navy. Into this bay the sea-breeze blows in all its purity, and the mountain wind at night with all its freshness. Here, if Her Majesty's Government sanction and sustain our efforts, can be put up coal-stores, provision stores, building yards, and every other essential for commerce. . . . It will be a centre of civilisation, freedom, and light.'[1]

At six in the evening the exploring party were back in Bimbia. The next day, glad and thankful in heart, Mr. Saker returned to Clarence with his good news of an open door to freedom. In the cove he found three more Spanish men-of-war.

The crossing had been rough and delayed by heavy seas. How he longed for a steamer to

[1] This bay and its adjacent lands were taken by the Germans in 1885.

aid in the perilous task before him of conveying his flock across that twenty miles of turbulent sea between Clarence and the settlement, which at once received the name of Victoria, after our royal lady 'Victoria the Good.'

Returning to Cameroons and collecting the material for his first house in Victoria, Mr. Saker, with a party of men and boys, started to begin colonisation.

'On the 9th of June,' he says, 'we went on shore at Amboises Bay. Of this land we took possession with prayer. By seven in the evening we had a tenantable abode, 9 feet by 18 feet in length. There we then assembled for united worship, and there nineteen of our company laid down to sleep that night, while I and three of our boys retired to the boat.' Tropical rains hindered much in the settling of the new town. On July 5 he wrote: 'Shut up with wet and cold at Bimbia. . . . To-day I have been to William about the land, but it was a sad walk. . . . The water was over my shoes, and it was raining in torrents. I have wrapped in blankets since.'

'*July* 8. We left at six in the evening of Tuesday. In half an hour the rain began again. We had no shelter. All night we sat there till noon yesterday. Wilson and Nicholl both sick to-day from this exposure. . . . The boys are

worn out with long pulling. . . . For myself, God is all-sufficient! He will strengthen me to do all He intends. But shall I be faithful? Shall I use the strength He gives for the special work He designs? . . . I need wisdom to do right.'

While they were waiting for fine weather the brick house in Bethel was proceeded with. Also a boarded house, for Mr. Pinnock to take up country to found a new station some miles inland, was put in hand, and a boarded room also for Victoria.

On August 9th and 10th this boarded room was erected at Victoria, and on the Tuesday following, some of the 'boys,' *i.e.* workmen, took out Mr. Saker's new seine into deep sea, and returned with a large quantity of fish. The first market in Victoria was then held on the beach, and to it came natives, some from the hill-lands behind Victoria, some in canoes from the islands and from Bimbia, bringing vegetables, which they exchanged for fish, tobacco, cloth, looking-glasses, etc.

Wednesday, while the boat went out for more fish, some of the men went to work preparing more frames for houses. 'I took,' says Mr. Saker, 'with me all the hands that I could spare, and with an axe I felled two trees. Wilson followed and felled three: five other

young men one each. After breakfast others began, and by night twenty-seven trees were laid low and dressed, besides many small trees for posts of buildings. A large space is partly cleared: a few fine days will enable us to make a fire and burn up the brushwood we cannot use. . . . Timbers of large size abound—Ceba cotton trees, the African oak, brimstone wood, etc. One river finds its outlet in the centre of the inner bay. At the outlet it is 50 feet wide, depth 3 feet, velocity 50 feet per minute. The other river, on the farther side of the township from the beach, in a quiet pool near the outlet, was running more than five miles an hour. It was fine, clear, pure water. The character of the soil excellent loam.'

'14*th*. Cut a road toward the river to-day. Began to enclose our little chapel.'

'15*th*. Our first Sabbath here. Services at 7, Heb. vi.; school at 10.30; at 3.30, 2 Peter ii. 9.' A prayer-meeting for Monday evenings was established; class-meetings for Wednesday evenings, and preaching services on Friday, as formerly in Clarence.

'16*th*. The road is now through (from the inner bay) to the river, distant 1400 feet. To-night we have had a meeting. To-day I have fixed the position of the principal street. I have named some places—hence the inner bay

is now Morton Bay—after Sir Morton Peto. The mount north of us one mile . . . is now Mount Helena. The mount east of us, reserved for Government House, . . . is now Mount Henry. A small hill in front of the town is Flagstaff Hill. This is the beginning of names.'

'19*th*. I have surveyed Morton Bay and the frontage of Victoria, and made one journey into the country. This, besides the shed for immediate shelter, was the work of ten days, during which we had constantly to contend with heavy storms of wind and rain, and the results of those storms in a heavy forest. Let our hearts be very grateful to God. I had not my clothes off me from the time I left Bimbia, yet I slept soundly by night, my chair my only bed.'

The early months of the year 1858 found Mr. Saker once more alone. His wife, who was dangerously ill, he had in March accompanied to Sierra Leone, where she was carried on board a homegoing vessel. In his summary of this year's work we read: 'A year of change and of toil. Storms have beat on us, yet He has preserved us. Nor sun nor moon has been permitted to smite. In doubt or perplexity, if it has once crossed our pathway, He speedily removed it, and, in the labours of each succeed-

ing hour, He has more than supported and sustained our powers. God has opened for us a wide door at Victoria, Amboises Bay. This is now our refuge, and already the wilderness begins to rejoice. Its swelling hills and noble mountain range tell of freedom, fertility, and health. No Jesuitical craft nor Spanish intolerance will darken its increasing brightness. There, through the mercy of our redeeming Lord, we shall worship and adore till this mortal sinks and the immortal spirit soars beyond the mountain to the throne of God.

'In printing we have done some work, not to the extent we wished. In translation and the preparation of a grammar and lexicon I have wrought to the utmost . . . and have succeeded in doing much. One long journey has been made into unexplored regions, and a few weeks will, I trust, find me there again. The mountain, too, and its tribes have not been forgotten or neglected. Smith has given them all the time the weather permitted, and the results are cheering. I too have spent some long hours there, although it has been as in secret, for every opposing ordinance seems specially directed against me,—but they all fall harmless.

'Our Sabbath and week-day services have been uninterrupted. We have baptized three

times at Cameroons. The Word is heard with much attention; a growing influence surrounds the Church; the town is controlled by it in many ways. A chief who was baptized a year since, has kept his house open for religious services to meet the wants of his town. There we oft had a crowded house, and there the natives poured forth earnest prayers. In the house of another chief, too, the services have been nearly regular.

'During our absence (in March) our oldest and best unmarried girl at Cameroons was called away . . . a girl of simple earnest piety, who has feared God from very early years, whose later years had been spent oft in the management of my household, in the care of our orphans, in teaching daily and in the Sabbath school. Her loss is to us a great affliction . . . a family of orphans, a family of labouring youths all daily to provide for, my own strength much weakened, and my oldest girl left in the house not more in age than eight or nine years. Combined with this are the soul-absorbing duties of my every day. . . . This gives a view of a part of my present sorrow, but it must not hide the mercies still left me,—these are many and great. How large the mercy we still have in Horton Johnson . . . in J. J. Fuller also, in Thomas Horton, George Nkwe, Gooden, Wilson,

and Smith, and all the younger ones whose teachings and labours and presence lighten my load in many ways, and who while increasing my responsibility cheer many solitary hours, and fill me with hope that when God calls me hence there will be some whose lives will be consecrated to God in this country. . . . The interior opens to my sight. *I want to go onward, onward, and tell the tale of love* till Ethiopia runs to God. . . . I cannot help blessing and adoring the Most High for raising up such a body of helpers.'

The latter months of the year told much upon Mr. Saker's strength. Yet in all things he felt himself guided and helped. From Victoria to Cameroons and Clarence he journeyed, watching over and cheering every labourer.

From Cameroons we hear: 'House continued. Mats dispatched to Victoria. House dispatched. A new iron cooking-stove built. New gudgeon and bolts for the boat. Besides the talk, the work, and the pain, I have kept the printers on their legs. So the week has gone.'

Of Victoria we read: 'The bush and now the heavy timber is cleared from a space of ground sufficient to put up my cottage. One of the long hard piles we cut to stand the house upon was fixed. This was the beginning; before we left in the evening we had six piles fixed and

the plates of the house fitted to the tops of them.'

Again in Cameroons: 'Home, cold, cold. I called Tutu and asked for something. "There is nothing in the house," she replies. . . . My head is all free from pain; my leg, while I rest, is comparatively easy. . . . What should I have had to eat without Mrs. Pinnock (a coloured lady from Jamaica)? What would all the children have done? Oh that I could be more thankful to God, who loads me, a sinful worm, with benefits.'

'I fear that at Clarence the Governor will feel that I am neglecting to do what I can. . . . In Victoria I do not fear, it is at most a delay. But I want to be there. The large hall here at Bethel is now shut in at top and the walls are plastered. The lower part is now being cleared. The doors for this are just made. . . . To-day we have been busy in manuscript and type.'

In Clarence: 'Here I find all well, but seem providentially led here just in the right time again. Mr. Diboll had received a letter for me from the Spanish Governor requesting his *immediate* removal, and to give up the possession of all ground, etc. I requested Wilson to communicate with all our people, that everyone wishing to remove with us should give me

their names the next day, the number in family, and the present value of their premises.

'Yesterday I waited on the Governor, and had an audience of one and a half hours. I explained to him many things. . . . He expressed his opinion (of course a private one) that we have a fair claim for compensation. . . . During the afternoon a man-of-war came in, the Commodore also. . . . I hope to be able to confer with him respecting our people and Victoria. During the day about ninety householders came in to give me their names as desirous of a speedy removal. . . . The Governor was most cordial, and he deeply regretted his non-possession of a steamer to put at my service to take Mr. Diboll and family and our friends to Victoria. . . . He is not a little surprised to find a colony so peaceful and orderly. The steamer has returned to Spain conveying about sixty invalids. The Spanish Commander of the F. died here lately. . . . He was most gentlemanly. One commander is left who . . . "regrets his inability to hang us all." . . . The Governor-General has orders to expel us instanter.

Cameroons, Nov. 27. 'Travels, labours,—the absence of a home,—hurried, disquieted, perpetual toil. I left Clarence. Put Mr. Diboll and his daughters into my little iron

house (in Victoria); left myself without one. Laboured to get a second house up. Then took boys by little boat to Clarence. Loaded Samuel J.'s small schooner boat and my own. Returned to Victoria. At work again till last night. Left at nine in the evening. . . . Met a tornado—drenched in that. Arrived here at nine to-night. I come again to my own room. It seems a treat to enter and enjoy its repose after the bustle and noise of the past month.'

'*Dec.* 8. I have been trying the last few days to construct an iron canoe to assist us in our transport. I began with a model 20 feet long and 20 inches wide. Will carry four persons to Victoria, with a few small boxes.'

'*Dec.* 12. Left Cameroons Friday eve at nine. On account of heavy tornado in the morning I steered the boat down the river till three in the morning, when the wind being exceedingly light and we in deep water, I called up Tongo to take the helm while I slept for an hour. In twenty minutes we were fixed on a mud bank. . . . We had not long to wait, but there was no rest for me till daylight, when the boys could see their road. About nine we were going over the outer bar. The rollers were exceedingly heavy. There was no safety for our rigging but in keeping our boat's head on the

waves, and this involved the greater danger to the boat we were towing. In another half-hour the force of the rollers snapped the chain by which the boat was towing. We had to take in all sail, launch the small iron boat which was on our deck (I have named it the "Emily"), and send out two hands to bring up the boat, which was every minute drifting towards the breakers. It was a long and heavy work to reach it, but it was finally done, and I welcomed back the little "Emily" with real pleasure. This was its first earnest work. It had gone out and battled with rollers of 10 feet undulation, and returned in safety. . . . At four in the evening we anchored in Morton Bay, Victoria.'

Three trips were now made to Clarence to bring over persons and their property, the large boat towing loaded canoes. These journeys, with all their attendant hardships, were safely accomplished, and on the 28th December we have this entry: 'At our table on Lord's day (Bethel, Cameroons), over fifty members present. I heard of none absent through suffering. This is a great mercy.'

'*Jan.* 16, 1859. My heart is joyous indeed, for my heavy toil in removing from Clarence is over. The last load I have safely deposited at Victoria, and late last night, or rather at one this morning, I arrived here. A few hours' rest and

the meetings of the day have brought the Sabbath to a close. Sweet seems the retirement of home after such exposure and toil. Two nights I spent at Victoria and two at Clarence, the rest have been at sea, where hour after hour I have had to sit with tiller in hand. . . . There is one drawback to the joy of the present hour—ulcers at the knee-joint laid me on the deck all day yesterday. To-day I have sat up in meeting. Such is the pain, I expect I must lie down for a few days to come.' For many days, more ulcers and much sickness kept Mr. Saker low. Mrs. Pinnock was kind and helpful, dressing the ulcers and providing tempting food. 'This,' says Mr. Saker, 'is my company. No eyes to see to read, no nerves to guide a pen—my heart cries out for help.' The Sabbath of the 23rd found him 'with some difficulty' at the service in the chapel. The following Thursday a European in the river sent him a joint of fresh meat. This kindness was much appreciated. On the night of the 27th a part of the roof was blown away by a tornado, causing fresh labour and perplexity.

Two events which crowned this year with gladness for Mr. Saker may be recorded. In April, at a grand gathering of the converts, Joseph Fuller, his long trusted helper, was

ordained to the ministry; and in June he welcomed back from England, after her long absence, his wife, accompanied by her eldest daughter and Miss Goodson. The arrival of the settlers from Clarence rendered necessary some regulations by which the infant colony of Victoria should be governed, and which might afford a firm foundation for its growth and prosperity. Perhaps in nothing was the sagacity and wisdom of Mr. Saker more prominent than in the laws which he laid down for their guidance and control. Under these wise, simple, but efficient rules the colony grew to prosperity. Not that it realised all that its founder anticipated. To use his own trustful words, 'For it I toiled day and night; I have worn my spirits down to a wafer's weight, my eyes and hands too.'

This was literally true. With his own hands he showed the exiles how to build their houses. He planned the structures that slowly rose from the midst of the bush, which he was amongst the first to clear away. He was resolved that on that spot God should be freely worshipped, and the servants of the Lord have a secure home.

In view of the work achieved by this devoted missionary of the Cross, the language of the Society's Report in 1860 is not a whit too

strong: 'It is difficult suitably to describe Mr. Saker in his varied labours, and when his early circumstances are considered, and his present extraordinary attainments, some of them reaching to the highest departments of science, he seems to be not only eminently fitted for his post, but to be one of the remarkable men of the age.'

Chapter X

IN JOURNEYINGS OFT

'I want to go onward, onward, and tell the tale of love.'

'To the spirit select there is no choice.
He cannot say, This will I do, or that.
. . . . . .
A hand is stretched to him from out the dark,
Which grasping without question, he is led
Where there is work that he must do for God.'

LOWELL.

YEARS have passed away marked by incessant toil and steady advance in the growth of the Kingdom of the Lord in Cameroons and in Victoria. It is again the month of March—but the year is 1866. For now twenty years the Gospel has been preached in Cameroons. There are reinforcements in the mission also now, and advance made all along the line. Some of the strongholds of sin and Satan have fallen; some rebels have yielded to the Conqueror King Jesus. The European missionaries in the field are Mr. Robert Smith and Mr. Q. W. Thomson, the latter engaged to be married to Mr. Saker's second surviving daughter, the former

having married Miss Goodson, Mrs. Saker's able co-worker.

The appearance of the mission station in Bethel, Cameroons, is completely changed. Large brick buildings have superseded the old frail wooden and mat houses. The hill is enclosed in a neat and substantial fence. The grounds are laid out in gardens; flowers and fruits refresh the eye and afford grateful shade. The shaded avenue of mango trees leads to the beach, where boat-houses and the shed which protects the saw-mill are found in good order. Anchored opposite these boat-houses is the small steamer, with its cosy cabin, built by Mr. Saker, with the help of his boys.

In the valley on the one side lies the brick-yard with its kiln, bounded on the farther side by a little trickling stream, with its secluded bathing and washing house.

In the valley on the town side the change is even more marked, for the revolting devil-house is gone;—the devil-grove may re-echo to the sound of honest toil as the natives work at the building of their canoes, but not to the cries of tortured or murdered victims. Other 'juju' houses are closed for ever; the dreaded 'mummers' no longer patrol the street at night to claim their victims; and the 'fetish' is now the children's plaything.

The Bethel mission houses are not the only brick buildings, even in Akwa Town. The Christians, who have learnt to use the trowel, have built for themselves neat houses of brick. The carpenters, who have learned to use tools for making mission doors and windows and furniture, have now fashioned their own, and many of them find so much work to do for kings and chiefs and their own people, besides also finding employment on English vessels coming to the river, as to induce them to engage their own carpentering apprentices. It was amusing to read over these doors as one walked through the well-swept streets, such names as Tom Akwa, Jim Crow, Bottle o' Beer, Swallow,—all excellent names certainly, for were they not English?

Sounds of praise are still heard as formerly in the chapel before the break of day, ere the mission bell at six o'clock a.m. daily calls many of these worshippers to their day's employment in the mission compound. There are no loiterers there. Men or boys not in their place when the bell ceases to ring lose their half day of work! The carpenter's yard resounds to the sound of the workmen's tools from six in the morning till six in the evening, with the exception of the hour for breakfast and the half-hour for lunch.

The printing office is a hive of busy work. Here Mr. Saker's youngest daughter is engaged —one of her father's compositors, proof-reader, and general helper. The steam saw-mill, the boat-building, the brick-making, all make demands on Mr. Saker. He is still the mainspring of his home of industry. At seven every evening the chapel bell rings for service, and the voice of prayer and praise closes the day as it began it.

On Monday and on Thursday there were preaching services; Tuesday and Friday, prayer-meeting nights; and on Wednesday, class-meetings were held. These class-meetings were helpful to the Christian Church. Every member of the Church and congregation had a place in them, either as teacher or taught. There were inquirers' classes and young believers' classes, all taught by native-born Christians. Each Saturday evening the Sunday-school teachers met to study their lesson for the coming day.

The Sunday at this time was a day of peace and labour. At daybreak the Christian men and lads gathered in the mission compound. Here they divided into groups, and, under the leadership of one of the elder and competent brothers, departed to one of the appointed out-stations to conduct services; some went east,

some south to neighbouring townships, some by canoe to other riverside places. George Nkwe—the one-time captured slave—was now the pastor of this large and important Bethel centre. In Mr. Saker's absence he conducted the services.

At 7 a.m. the first chapel service was held. This was largely evangelistic, for the Christian men and boys were mostly absent on preaching tours. At eleven the Sunday school met. To this gathered old and young, for all the preaching bands had returned in time for Sabbath school. One of the most interesting classes in that school was the class for unconverted women. Amid the well-clothed Christian men and women this large class of semi-clothed women was conspicuous. They were taught by a young Dualla mother of true and godly character. From that class many passed into the class of inquirers, and so onwards into the Church.

A sight to be remembered also was presented at the afternoon service. At two o'clock the assembly met for English preaching. Into this service frequently strayed some European captains or sailors from the shipping in the river. The Dualla Christian fathers and mothers sat with their happy little flocks of children, well-dressed, orderly, and devout. There sat

also the still savage, the half impressed, the inquisitive, the sparsely clothed, but silent, attentive crowds of natives. After the English there followed a preaching service in the Dualla's tongue, to which all the Christians remained and to which gathered more of the unconverted.

From the chapel the children and young people collected in the mission compound, and, under the shade of the large mango tree, sang hymns to the accompaniment often of a small harmonium played by one of their number. When lamps were lighted in the mission house into it crowded the young people for class and teaching. Scripture picture lessons for the little ones, Bible-reading, exposition, singing, and prayer for the others. How the young folks loved that evening hour, and how reluctantly they dispersed to their homes!

But it was not all sunshine even in Bethel! This month of March 1866 was a troublous one for the whole mission.

Faction fights had always been numerous. The law of blood revenge prevailed with all its terrible ramifications of evil. Ill-will between the rival kings, Bell and Akwa, was always more or less pronounced. But now they were at war, and the Bethel mission station, situate at the extreme limit of King Akwa's territory, and divided from Bell's town by a narrow valley

only, was suffering severely. The matchlock guns of former days, through the increased trade with Europe, had given place very largely to rifles. Mr. Saker had fixed thick iron plates over every exposed window on the mission premises, and their substantial walls were able to defy the bullets. Work was largely at a standstill, as no life was safe outside the enclosing walls. Inside, the work of translating, printing, bookbinding, and some carpentering could be carried on, but religious services could not be held. The mission approaches and the gardens were swept by bullets. Nor were the nights less anxious times. Their stillness was disturbed by sudden surprises, volleys of musketry, the ping of rifle balls, the call of drums, and the shoutings of defiance and insult from the warriors on either side to their opponents.

Very strange was the mingling of primitive with modern methods of warfare in these engagements. The taunts and jeers of the combatants reminded one of the wars of Israel in the days of King Saul. The volleying which now replaced the random firing, or the fire-and-run-away practices of some few years back, was alarmingly modern.

It was during these months of danger that the Divine home-call came to the faithful

convert Johnson. For twenty-two years he had borne the burden and heat of the day. 'Faithful unto death,' he doubtless entered into the joy of his Lord; but to Mr. Saker, the churches, and to his family, the loss was a severe one. He had been a useful and faithful labourer of unblemished repute and of high moral excellence. His influence had been very great, and he had commanded the respect not only of his own race but of all who visited Cameroons for commerce. Officers of the Royal and Mercantile Navy, American as well as English, who called at the mission house, had borne the highest testimony to the character and labours of Horton Johnson.

Ten years had passed since the Gospel of Matthew had been reprinted. Mr. Saker, with his increased knowledge of the language, now gave himself to a fresh translation of the Gospels, Isaiah, Job, and other portions of the Scriptures. With regard to his great work of translation we find him writing at the close of the year 1868: 'The year's toil is over. Through God's manifold mercy I have completed the translation of the entire Bible, with the exception of a few chapters of Chronicles, which are so nearly like parts of the Book of Kings that I omitted them till other books were finished. . . The months of January and February I must be out in the country and

towns adjacent. . . . Some books have given me great trouble. There are constructions in Ezekiel which I cannot even now understand sufficiently to render into intelligible sentences; even the English rendering I do not understand. If a few things in Acts wearied my brain for hours, Ezekiel has held me for days. Some of his words I must read and read again ere I print.'

Thoroughness was stamped on each detail of the work Mr. Saker undertook. Each portion of Scripture translated passed repeatedly under revision. No labour was too severe, if necessary to perfect the task he had in hand. Hence it is not till the year 1872—four years later—that we read, under date February 23: 'I write you a line to-day with sensations of great joy. The great work of years is now completed, and I feel as a bird long imprisoned liberated at last, with permission to fly and enjoy the glories of an open sky. I feel too much joy to express it in a few words. While I write this do not think that the labour is all over and gone. There is yet much labour before us. Nevertheless, the *victory* is *gained*. The great work of getting into type this priceless boon to this country is now completed! The last sheet of the sacred volume, in good and readable type, is before me. There yet remains the task of reprinting such books as are much needed.

Although the translation of the Bible was thus finished, Mr. Saker gave every spare minute—till he finally left Africa in 1877—to revision. Often lying on the bed strewn with his books, unable to rise, he pursued the study of the divine records in the originals, noting the conclusions that his investigations led him to embrace. Thus writing in March 1876, he says: 'My day begins at four in the morning . . . and I must have translation "copy" sufficient for the printers for the day before the hour of six, or they must be kept waiting. . . . Invariably at six at night the correcting for the press begins. If visitors or any other labour has interrupted the labour of writing in the day, there is no choice for me but to make it good by sitting up at night; and although I try to bind myself to the early hour of nine for rest at night, it not infrequently happens that it is twelve or one or two o'clock ere my work is done.

'For fifteen years I have maintained the rule not to do anything that I could safely leave to others. With any other method how could the work have been done?' This rule applied to manual toil of all kinds, and preaching and teaching; yet a vast amount of labour, which none but a European could do, still devolved upon him. Printers he had trained, in many

cases drifted away from him to printing offices in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. Carpenters he had taught were now independent workmen earning thirty shillings per week and more, for the support of their families. Hence younger men were ever needed to be trained.

These trained and educated men living around the mission were its joy and crown. Their children, dressed as English children in clothes cut out and made by their mothers, washed and starched by the same motherly hand, filled the day-schools. Each native Christian 'home' was therefore the centre of good influences. These mothers—girls trained in the mission house, to bake and cook and wash and make, to care for the sick and helpless—were not content even to make their homes clean and fair for husband and children, but, following the example of Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Saker and others, they took in orphans, deserted infants and children seeking a home, and trained *them* as *they* had been trained,—sending them to day-school, clothing and feeding them,—for God and the prosperity of their homeland.

To the hard and unjust criticisms of those who could not sympathise with the utter self-abnegation of the life Mr. Saker lived, he seldom replied. With the smile which on his worn sad features invariably provoked a smile

in answer, he would say: 'The rocks bear the dash of the waves, they do not move. I cannot move from *my* purpose till my work is *done*.'

Yet such criticisms deeply wounded his loving, sensitive spirit. Writing to the secretary of the Society concerning one such criticism, he says: 'As to secular work, what is it if rightly looked at? That which I have done I look at as a portion of my highest honour. In all mechanical knowledge I have not had to give a moment's study; and what is it to me if I find a nation in utter ignorance of all common arts? . . . I point out to them a better way of labour, a word here, a five minutes' handling of tools there. . . . Then, on buildings for the mission; where would we all have been if still confined to the frail, sickly huts of the heathen? Deaths among us have diminished in proportion to a better housing; and how can we get better houses but by personal labour, persevering labour, and with a double object—to secure a healthy dwelling, with instruction to the natives, young and old, to go and do likewise? This, it is said, is all very well, but it has been to the neglect of the work of a missionary. *That* means spiritual work, as they would express it. With such, the true work of the missionary is, it seems, to go, book in hand, under a tree here

and a shed there, and preach the Gospel to the people. With me the work has ever appeared in a different light. It is to go to the man in his house, to sympathise in his sorrows and cares, to aid him to think of a better condition and of the means to attain it. Then, when his attention has been gained, to speak of that higher life which we have lost, and which the loving hand of God will give us again, if we will hear Him.

'Who is to measure the value of such a simple lesson given from one heart to another heart, from a soul in light to a soul in darkness? And what if such a lesson be given by showing a better way of planting and building? I know that this way has no *éclat*; there is no noise, but I know there are great results. In all places where God has permitted me to labour, the first efforts have in part passed away, but *now* we can get a settled congregation. Yet, while there are heathen around us, the work must go on from house to house, and from heart to heart, if it is to succeed. To me it has ever been that the *spiritual* work is to get at the heart of the *individual man*. How it is done I don't care a pin! The Master wrought so; the apostles in their various modes so worked, but still using the public assemblies when they could, as on the Mount, in an upper room, on Mars Hill, or by the water-brook, where prayer was often offered.'

The effect of Mr. Saker's methods of operation were plainly manifested in the character of the Christians in Bethel. They were self-reliant. He had a host of men around him whom he could trust in an emergency. At all hours of the day a man or men could be called from office or workshop to conduct a prayer-meeting, to lead a seeking soul to God, to attend a meeting of the chiefs in council, to give, as the chiefs expressed it, 'God's opinion on the palaver' under discussion. In this especially George Nkwe—his former serfdom utterly forgotten—was a valuable agent. However busy he might be at forge or bench, the king's peremptory order, 'Send Nkwe to tell us God's word,' would be answered by the dispatch of Nkwe to sit in the council, it might be for half a day, to listen to the lengthy harangues of chiefs, to hear the pros and cons, and then to sum up for them what God's opinion of the matter might be. This humble-minded man was often God's instrument for good in those strange conclaves; and no higher testimony to the character of the Christian community could have been borne than this respect on the part of the heathen to the judgment of the elders and officers of the Church.

There were no paid agents in the mission, yet every believer was a worker. There were no

Sunday collections, yet every believer was a contributor. From the moment of joining the Church it was understood that quarterly on a given day a regular sum—in goods, as there was no coin—would be brought into the mission house. These contributions were entered in a book against each member, from the widow's offering of a fowl, to the pieces of cloth or boxes of saleable goods, valued at £2 or even £3, from the working men of the congregation.

The first Monday in the year was the date of the missionary meeting. On that occasion a special collection was made. As early as the year 1867 the special missionary collection at Bethel amounted to over £6, 10s. The members of the Church had also been encouraged to give voluntary service to the building of their first brick chapel. This they willingly agreed to, and much faithful work was the result. Each member also provided his own special seat in the chapel. So long as they were all of the correct length they might make them as comfortable or elegant as their taste dictated. Such instances exhibit the advance made at Bethel. But Bethel, the first, was not the only centre of light in Cameroons. Mr. Q. W. Thomson with his wife, Mr. Saker's second daughter, was at this time in charge at King Bell's Town; Mr. Joseph Fuller had an interest-

ing station across the river at Hickory Town. Mr. Robert Smith was also labouring in the river, and there were sub-stations lying northwards.

Mr. Saker had ever been very anxious to raise up a body of self-supporting agents from among his converts, and was extremely unwilling to have any of his young men supported from England as evangelists. One young man from the Clarence Church had formerly been sent to the C.M.S. College at Sierra Leone for a more advanced education. He ultimately was recognised and supported by the home committee. Some of the best educated natives in Cameroons were already supported by the Church there as pastors and teachers. All other evangelistic work was done by self-supporting members of the Church.

A young man who had come first into the mission house as a lad begging to be a mission boy had been sent primarily into the kitchen to learn cooking. He soon showed ability, and was sent into the school, where he by dogged perseverance obtained an education. Then he passed with the other lads through the training for a printer and carpenter.

This young man one day came to Mr. Saker pleading 'God's call' to give all his time to the work of the ministry.

'If God,' said Mr. Saker, 'has called you to that, God will support you.'

The candidate went away sorrowful, but evidently was not daunted, for shortly after this he placed his wife and child in the care of the members of the Bethel Church, and obtained a passage in a canoe for a distant district.

He settled there. At first he accepted hospitality among the people as it was offered. In time they built him a little hut for himself and another hut for a place of meeting. A congregation of believers was gathered out from these villages, and a Church was formed, of which he was the recognised pastor. They supported him till he was called to occupy, what appeared to the missionaries to be, a yet more important pastoral sphere.

In March 1869, the mission nearly lost the services of Mr. Smith, who was seriously ill. Mrs. Smith, before her marriage, had been a valued worker in Mr. Saker's family — Mrs. Saker's right hand for a number of years. The little son who died in England had been the means used by God to thrust her forth into the field. 'Mia! tell me about Jesus,' had been his constant plea when she sat by his side No other story was so dear to the child, and she learned from that little one what the 'sweet story of old' could do for the youngest suffering

ones the wide world over. Though he died at the age of four years and six months, his little life had not been lived without blessed results, and *his* desire to 'please Jesus' was fully realised in another life lived for Jesus abroad.

In April Mr. Saker was preparing for a voyage to England to rejoin his wife and daughter, who had preceded him. On the last Sunday in March he baptized five persons, and received them into Church fellowship. Mr. Saker writes of a full house for service morning and evening. 'Our congregation was very large for this place. We seem to increase a little every week, and they are very attentive.'

A very short stay in the homeland was possible, and in November, accompanied by wife and daughter, Mr. Saker journeyed in the s.s. 'Athenian' once more to Bethel. He was further accompanied by the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, Dr. E. B. Underhill, and his wife, who went out to inspect the various missions. To the deep sorrow of the whole mission band, Mrs. Underhill died when she had been only a fortnight in Africa. The bereaved husband, utterly broken down under this severe trial, returned to England. His subsequent testimony to the wonders God had wrought in Africa touched every heart.

Mr. Saker's later years of missionary toil were

increasingly devoted to evangelistic work. With Mr. Grenfell several tours were planned into the near interior, to the river sources of Cameroons, Lungasi, Edea, Qua-qua, and the towns on their banks.

The longing desire of Mr. Saker's soul was ever onwards into the interior. His journeys during the mission's early days had been carried out in canoes; later in boats with awnings, but such were always performed under serious difficulties. Nights of exposure to dews and rains, and to no less injurious myriads of mosquitoes, were unavoidable evils in those days if the Gospel was to be preached to the inland tribes. Later the home-built steamer into which Mr. Saker put many hours of labour and weariness, contributed much to his comfort. But in the year 1875 he was rewarded for all his former toil and desire by the gift of a small English-built steam-launch from Mr. Thomas Coats of Paisley. This generous gift cheered his heart.

The launch was sent out by a mail steamer. On November 10, Mr. Saker wrote, dating his letter from Old Calabar: 'Before this reaches you, you will have learnt that the little steam-yacht was left for me at this place, and that one of the traders kindly lent me the use of his boat to visit and take charge of it. I arrived here late on Friday night, the 5th inst. Since then

I have been cleaning and finishing, for the engineers of the "Mail" could not complete all they wished on account of time. I have put the little vessel on the beach, and, while the tide was out, accomplished all that was needful to be done except some riveting in the paddle-boxes, for which I need a forge. Last evening we again floated her into deep water, and to-day I have tested her engines. At high water I shall begin my homeward journey, but anchor at the mouth of the river all night.

'It is a small thing to say that I am thankful to receive this vessel. . . . May it be a consecrated instrument to God's glorious work. I feel that its mission is one and simple—to bear the messenger safely and speedily to his distant work.'

The after-cabin was very comfortable; four could sleep in it. A curtain separated it into two divisions if needed. It was supplied with a table, drawers, cupboard, locker, and a store-room behind the ladder. On starting from Calabar Mr. Saker informs us that he 'called his young men into the cabin of this little launch, and after reading two Scriptures took formal possession of her in prayer—as from the hands of the Most High God—and sought His grace and mercy to use it only for His glory.'

The sea journey to the Cameroons proved the

powers of the little yacht—named by Mr. Coats the 'Helen Saker.' They had a 'tedious journey of toil and watching,' but the boat, though built for the river, met the sea-waves bravely and successfully. Between this date and the 10th of March (1876) Mr. Saker made three journeys in his little steamer.

It was during this year that the rivers of Cameroons were visited by a scourge of small-pox. The disease approached from the north, and passed very near to the mission stations. Among its victims was the chief, Quan, whose son was one of the mission boys. The effects of the scourge were, however, more severely felt farther away. In May the teacher returned from his station at Dibamba reporting whole villages swept away: 'three families only left at Dibamba, three school children only left alive.' The following February Mr. Saker in journeying met with fresh instances of the terrible ravages of this disease when it finds a nidus among an uncivilised people. He reported: 'I left here on the 17th. The next morning we sought to enter our eastern river for Lungasi, but a tornado debarred us. Yet, as soon as possible, we steamed on, and managed to make some forty miles with comfort. The next day we went on again, but were soon detained by shallow water. We waited an hour and then

cleared the bank. Not more than thirty miles of progress all day. The next day was the Sabbath. We tried in the morning to reach the first village; found the water too shallow for the launch, so took the small boat to communicate with the people. Judge of my disappointment in finding the village to contain only five small huts. . . . Thence onward, and at nine in the morning made the Butu landing-place.

'We visited the people, examined the school-house; it is now a ruin! It was abandoned on account of the plague, and has not been used since. Here I found all the old families gone. Two young men, sons of the former chief, welcomed us and led us over the town, such as it is. I counted fifteen houses, including the chief's three. . . . I walked three-quarters of an hour through the one-time town on the bank of the river. In that walk I counted five huts, with two new ones building. I heard of yet other huts, if I would walk a mile farther on. In all this walk the spoor of the elephant and of the hippopotamus were everywhere.

'I cannot describe the spiritless life of these few poor people. The fearful visitation, cutting off such multitudes, is so recent: stupefaction and powerlessness seem upon all. We found some of the children alive who had read the first class-book.

'After staying with these people four hours, we passed a mile into Kotto. It was here at Kotto that my heart failed me, the desolation was so great, so recent! I met a man of years—the chief. With him I walked over the ruins. The chief's street consists now of nine separate buildings. Beyond, street after street with houses cast down to the ground. In many streets not a house left . . . thus on and on, a heart-rending sight. The one-time multitude, to whom I preached the good news of the kingdom — where are they? . . . I met in my walk seven men besides the chief, some twenty women and grown girls. . . . My estimate of the former population was four thousand. To these few grown-up yet broken men and women, what could I say? My own heart was dumb, an indescribable awe was upon me; I could do little beyond commending them to God in prayer. . . . The words are constantly welling up within me, "I was dumb, for Thou didst it."'

Chapter XI

MORE THAN CONQUEROR

'Let us be faithful even unto death.'

'Say what is prayer, when it is prayer indeed?
The mighty utterance of a mighty need.
The man is praying who doth press with might
Out of his darkness into God's own light.'

TRENCH.

BLESSED as were the results of toil and endeavour in Cameroons in converted lives and moral triumphs, life to the Christian missionary was still full of hazard. 'All our safety is of God alone,' wrote Mr. Saker more than once. The customs of the country with regard to women were more often the cause of outbreak of fury and madness on the part of the natives than anything else, and the mission was often involved to the danger of life and property.

On one occasion a young wife had been stolen from the mission colony at Victoria by a chief under King Bell's control.

It was not possible to influence her captor

to return her to her husband, but finally she made her escape and succeeded in reaching a Christian's house. Here she was of course hidden, and to Bethel came the enraged chief with his followers.

Three Christian girls down at the mission streamlet engaged in washing clothes were seized with all the linen. One bright girl, Seppo by name, succeeded in getting away and reached the mission house in safety. A carpenter at the beach, busy with his apprentice repairing a mission boat, was dragged away, and all his tools seized.

When Mr. Saker appeared on the scene guns were levelled at him, and he was commanded to produce the lost woman at once. Mr. Saker informed them that the woman was not in his house, and that he certainly would not be their policeman to search for or betray a woman over whom they had no control. It was useless to speak with these irresponsible men, who fired their guns, happily at random, whenever any of the mission party appeared in sight.

When they had retired Mr. Saker wrote a letter to King Bell making him responsible for his subjects' violence, and commanding the restoration of all that had been seized. In the afternoon the carpenter was restored, with his head and body frightfully bruised and mangled.

The children were not sent back till many days had passed, and then they arrived unharmed.

On the following morning the armed mob returned, and surrounded the mission house. They broke down the fence and put the mission in a state of siege. The friendly natives around resented this outrage on their land and to their missionary, but King Akwa would not interfere.

At last they were persuaded to retire, their anger unappeased because the woman was not found. Thinking that perhaps the woman would be returned to her husband in Victoria by a mission boat, they threatened to waylay and seize any boat going down the river. Mr. Saker was not deterred by any threats, and went to and returned from Victoria without molestation. 'If they really intended an injury to me, then God only sent them a spirit of blindness,' said Mr. Saker. 'All our safety is of God only.'

God's interpositions on behalf of the Christians tended in no small measure to strengthen their faith in Him, and, further, appealed mightily to the heathen around.

Their custom of blood-revenge and their strong belief in witchcraft often led the people into crimes. The death of one of Chief Dido's men sent him out in mad fury to seek for victims to accompany the spirit of the departed into the land of the unknown. Lying in wait

in a creek, he soon captured, and killed, two defenceless men from Mungo district. Dire confusion soon spread through the towns and villages. No fewer than two hundred men from Cameroons were at that time in Mungo land engaged in trade. Whole families were therefore plunged into distress and fear for their far-away relatives and friends, who would now be in the hands of the outraged people of Mungo.

News travels fast, in spite of the absence of post and telegraph, in savage lands. Drums were beating and the terrible tale was told from town to town, till in a short time the relatives of the murdered men had heard the news.

In Mungo the Cameroons men were at once collected like so many sheep for slaughter into one house. Three of the principal men from among King Akwa's were next separated and chained for death. One of these was Songe, a Christian.

The Mungo man for whom Songe was building a house, being a chief, used all his influence to save these devoted ones for Songe's sake.

In former days there would have been no delay in their execution. The law of blood-revenge demanded it. Now there was some delay and deliberation, and, as a result, Songe, being able to read and write, and being a

Christian man of his word, was engaged to sign a writing acquitting Mungo from blame if they—after allowing these prisoners to go free, and King Akwa should fail to give due compensation for this evil thing done by one of his chiefs—should in the near future retaliate by taking life for life from Cameroons.

In bringing Songe out from his prison-house to sign this 'book,' as the natives call any written document, he narrowly escaped death. The three sons of the murdered men, as soon as he appeared, levelled their guns at him, but all missed fire.

All Cameroons men found in Mungo land were then put into their canoes and sent home, with the understanding that for six days no retaliation would be attempted. Thus King Akwa had time to settle this terrible wrong, righteously, without bloodshed. This settlement of injury by arbitration was the direct result of Christian principle operating upon a distant heathen tribe.

Another pleasant incident similar in character is found in the following story. Disputes between rival chiefs had ripened into mischief involving many persons. This palavering broke out more fiercely, and it kept the missionaries engaged for some hours trying to compose the disputants. It was difficult indeed to prevent

a desperate fight. During the following night King Akwa returned to his home from the interior country. Hearing of the disputes and of arrogant speech from one of his chiefs, John Angwa, he, in the early morning, gave orders for battle, and the drums began to beat out their warnings for the fray.

By five o'clock the mission compound began to fill with women and children. By half-past six Akwa's warriors had entered the adjoining town some three hundred strong. It was not till nine o'clock that they could be induced to withdraw. Mr. Robert Smith and Mr. Fuller were exerting themselves nobly to save the property of the poor unoffending people. Mr. Saker was at the chief's house, intent upon saving that from destruction. Yet the armed men cut down the plantain trees, broke open many houses, took away the chief's large war canoe—a serious loss to him—and stole much property.

But in all this and in the damage to plantains and houses all through the towns, in not a single instance was injury sustained by the Christian people. The wonder of this must strike any reader when it is remembered that the scene of the disturbance was the near neighbourhood of Bethel, where the converts were most numerous, and that they were not an isolated community,

but were living among their heathen neighbours and in their streets.

Among a people of such ungoverned passions it is to be expected that sad and sorrowful scenes would be often witnessed. Fierce and general free fights were not uncommon. Sticks and stones and cutlasses, if not guns, were the weapons.

Into the mission compound would often be carried the victims of these encounters. Sometimes the fight was a duel, and ere the cutlass wounds of the one duellist were bound up by Mrs. Saker or her daughter, his opponent, equally damaged, would be brought in for treatment. Precautions had to be observed lest either one should know of the other's proximity, and make attempts to renew the fight.

Nights, too, were not always peaceful in that land of turmoil. A sound of wailing would startle the tired missionaries from sleep.

It might be the death wail, a sound so common, yet so sad and distressful; or it might be a cry portending danger or suggesting calamity. The mission band must ever be on the alert. The wail might be succeeded by wild clamour—a rush of hurrying feet—a crowd of men or women pouring into the compound with shrill cries and mingled, excited, unintelligible explanations.

On one occasion a neighbouring chief had shut himself in fury into his powder-house, threatening to set it on fire. His wives and family had come to beg that he might be stopped in his madness.

On another, a fire had occurred, and the burned sufferers were being brought to the mission for treatment. At another time the shouting might indicate that a night attack by armed men was causing the women and children to fly for protection to their trusted refuge.

During the year 1872 a prolonged war between the rival kings Bell and Akwa was in progress. King Bell became furious because so many women and children were able to find shelter behind mission walls, and not only women, but the warriors also would often do the same. He demanded that this should be prevented. Mr. Saker insisted that the mission ground was neutral ground, though unavoidably it was exposed to the belligerents' bullets. King Bell was not to be appeased. Not only were both parties well armed at this time with rifles, but they had now also imported cannon into this war. Bell, conscious therefore of his power against the mission, wrathfully sent to inform Mr. Saker that the offending mission walls should be levelled at noon on the following day. A cannon to do the mighty deed was

brought into position upon the hill which overlooked the mission premises.

'What will you do?' said his daughter to Mr Saker, as the hour of noon drew nigh and signs of activity on the hill were reported in the printing office.

'Go on with our work,' he said, with a smile.

Shortly after this a sound as of an explosion was heard, but the mission house felt no shock. The cause of the sound was soon revealed. The offending cannon—overcharged with gunpowder by the angry king's order—had burst, and the greater offender, King Bell, was frightened into letting the mission alone.

Some words written at the close of Mr. Saker's life will illustrate his own bearing amongst a work of so much toil:—

'In those eighty days I have translated 280 pages—composed, corrected and printed, glazed and folded and bound up 120 copies of Gospels and Acts. . . . I am very thankful that I forced myself to this work.

'At Dido Town the members are in trouble. For refusing to join in the country practices, they brought upon them the hatred of Satan's party. Young Ned Dido stripped their houses, took all their clothing and then put them in chains. All are now liberated except Jessie—

one of Mrs. Saker's family of girls—yet none are allowed to attend the meetings.

'Last Tuesday was my birthday. Mr. and Mrs. Smith took tea with me. . . . By unusual application I have been through the Books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges. . . . I met with difficult lines. I had to refer backwards and forwards. . . . I remember one verse took me two hours. . . . It has been a labour productive of much extreme joy . . . who on earth would mind labour on translation?

'The Book of Job is finished, a difficult and dark but withal a sweet book. I am very thankful it is done. . . . The work has given me quite new ideas of Job, and some new ideas of the Mighty Jehovah.

'I have been deeply interested for some weeks past in the writings of the old prophets. Would that I had more of their spirit. The more I look at these old Hebrew writings, the more majestic and amazing they appear; that so much should be said in such few words, that so much has been left unsaid; such discrimination can only be Divine. While translating I have often had to pause, being overwhelmed with the revelation; and now, in printing, I feel again my littleness, and am but a babe.'

A visit paid to Mr. Saker by Mr. Dolheen, of the Corisco Mission, was a great refreshment.

Of this visit he wrote: 'Mr. Dolheen looked around, and expressed himself amazed. He had heard of the marvel produced here, but said, "The half had not been told." He informed me that one of our Bibles had found its way to Corisco, and a youth there, learning, brought it to his teacher and said he had found a book written in his own language and read it fluently.'

To learn that the Dualla Scriptures could be understood in districts so far removed was a matter for great rejoicing, for, increasingly, it was being borne in upon Mr. Saker's heart and consciousness that his work for Africa was drawing near to a close.

After a visit to England in 1874 he decided to leave both wife and daughter at home, and return himself to put in order the things remaining to be done, more especially to designate some of his young men to more direct earnest evangelistic work. He was accompanied from England in 1874 by the Rev. George Grenfell, and to his care Mr. Saker desired ultimately to entrust the charge of the station at Bethel.

For Mr. Grenfell there were fevers and the acclimatising suffering to be endured. But his life was spared for many years of labour for the good of Africa. He paid a brief visit

to England in the year 1875, and a return with his beloved wife followed. Then very gladly Mr. Saker handed into that lady's hands the housekeeping, and to Mr. Grenfell the oversight of the Church mission. Mr. Thomson, his son-in-law, with his daughter and her little children, had been for some time settled and labouring on the mountain-side above Victoria. To them Mr. Saker paid a brief visit before he left the country. But time was now exceedingly precious. Dibundu—one of his young men—ever spoke of those last two years of Mr. Saker's life in Africa with intense feeling and wonder. 'Mr. Saker was like a father,' he said, 'and I did not like to go from him at all. He read the Bible to me, he explained it, he prayed,—I can never forget it.'

To Mr. Saker the days of these two years were still full of labour. He wrote in 1875: 'Work seems increasing on me as fast as it can. Schools cry out, "Not one class-book left in hand."

'The house is not repaired as it must be. I feel the want of lime, cement, and boards, too, of a certain size: the getting together of materials, the various meetings of the Church, and the arranging for schools, all those take time, and it is not lost! Yesterday I took up

the flooring over the tanks. The joists are rotten . . . am putting in new timbers. Mr. Grenfell is ill.'

The taking up of the flooring over the tanks is a reminder of one of the many means by which Mr. Saker had gained both influence and prestige among the Dualla tribes. Far and wide the tidings had gone that Mr. Saker kept a powerful 'ngungu' under his house. From far away came Afric's chiefs to see this wonder. It was a wonderful and dreadful thing to own an 'ngungu,' *i.e.* a man-eating crocodile.

The wonder was nothing more than a strongly built and cemented room under the floor of one room for retaining a supply of rain-water for mission-house needs. The water was pumped up—a novel proceeding, about which there was something uncanny, and round which fabulous stories grew.

To the African the unseen is real. Invisible spirits haunt every grove and forest; every nook and corner hide some evil influence Chief among natural terrors is the crocodile. These crocodiles do the behest of evil spirits, and the evil spirits are the willing perpetrators of evil deeds, and the accomplices of wicked men carrying out for them their sinful suggestions.

What more likely then that underground should reside the power—for good or ill—which made Mr. Saker so different from themselves? The visits of the strangers to see the tank, and the well also which supplied the saw-mill with water, gave fine opportunities to tell the story of Divine power and goodness, of gracious hidden springs of water of life.

No flagging in industry appears in the following story of a Sabbath day at this period: 'I took the service here in the morning—a good company. Sent Nkwe to Dikolo. After service I took boat and preached at Bell Town; home to breakfast half-past nine. At 10.30 to school to teach the children a new hymn. Then rested till dinner-time. Afternoon at three preached again. At 4.30 took boat and went again to Bell Town. Four long services on the themes, "The love of God in Jesus"; "Partakers of the heavenly calling"; "The Apostle of our profession." I have just had our young people in for prayer, but was not able to sing much.

'The day is closing, daylight departing. I like to write at this hour—tea cleared away—none near, the house silent, no speech, no music, the solemn flow of the tide, the sinking sun, the rising mists, yet all so serene. It hushes the tumult of man's heart, yet makes

me look out and long for home society for an hour. What should I do at night if I had no wife, no daughter to write to when all work is over for the day, and when I must do something that is no strain to the spirit or the body? I cannot sleep always, nor can I work always . . . between the two comes this light occupation.'

'*December* 25. We began this day with a service in the chapel. Not many attended. I could bless God that after so long a time I was preserved and able to conduct the service. The text was "Daughter of Zion, rejoice greatly. Thy King cometh." We sang "O Zion, lift thy raptured eye." I do not remember to have sung this hymn with so much pleasure since the girls sang it for me years ago.'

The Consul and Commander called twice, and yesterday they came to carry me to the ship to look over it. I took the girls and boys to see the vessel. Nkwe went the day before with a note from me, and the Commander sent a man to show him all over the vessel. 'Dismissed one of the lads for dishonesty — often proven. I called him and gave him a box of tools so that he may get his own living honestly.'

These quotations from Mr. Saker's writings

exhibit in the one case his true kindness to the lads who came about him. He was ever their friend, determined to have straightforwardness from them, patient with their blunderings, and showing unmistakable hatred of anything untrue. The other incident shows the true courtesy of Her Majesty's commanding officers to the missionaries and to the people of Africa with whom they came in contact.

On August 20 we have this entry, disclosing the advance of the exhaustion which was so soon to bring him away from Africa: 'I battle with weakness pretty successfully. All the true-hearted seem to have died out.' This expression of sorrow was wrung from him by the home-calling of many of the old members of the Church. Their faith had taken deep root during the early days of trouble and distress. Many were left. The faithful Nkwe, who during one of Mr. Saker's absences in England had taken entire charge of Bethel mission station with all the mission property, and well fulfilled his trust; Tongo, a chieftain, reliable, gentle, and without reproach; Angwa the silent, whose calm unruffled nature showed no trace of the turbulence of former years; and others. Younger men also were worthy of their standing in the Christian Church, and many proved their worth in the days to come. But Mr. Saker, who

watched their development from boyhood, who knew them thoroughly, was not so sure of their depth of conviction, of their true loyalty to Christ as of those who had not counted their lives dear unto them in the days of stress and danger. Yet did he not undervalue them as his sons in the faith, his seals to his ministry.

Another brief sentence which follows close upon the above reveals the secret source of this hero's strength in the battle. 'My heart seems saying all day long, "Father, hold my hand."'

From this time the health of Mr. Saker declined, and it became evident, towards the close of the year, that his shattered condition could no longer endure the fervid heats of the torrid zone.

One more visit was paid to the interior, south of Bethel, in the month of June; but he was compelled to say, 'There is a general weakening going on. Daily I feel that the tabernacle is dissolving; hence I try to secure every hour for such work as seems imperatively demanded of me.'

Thirty-two years of labour in a deadly climate, and the unresting toil in which he had exhausted the energies of a frame always frail, left no alternative if his life were to be prolonged for a single day.

Chapter XII

NOT ALONE!

'Yet, yet I am not alone.'

'Oh, small shall seem all sacrifice
And pain and loss,
When God shall wipe the weeping eyes,
For suffering give the victor's prize,
The crown—for cross!'

ANON.

OWING to dense fogs on the African coast the steamer which was to convey Mr. Saker to England could not find the entrance to the Cameroons River, and meanwhile his strength was waning fast. It became necessary therefore to take one more perilous voyage to Fernando Po to join a homeward-bound vessel there. One young Dualla, who had been for some time an earnest evangelist, gladly accompanied him as nurse and companion. Mr. Saker was too ill to land in Fernando Po, but waited in his boat at anchor, carefully tended by his native companion, till the steamer arrived in Clarence Cove, and he was then lifted on board.

'I feel I dare not leave Africa while God gives me strength to feed His people in their destitution,' Mr. Saker had written only a few years previously, but now he was conscious of his feebleness and exhaustion, and looked forward to rest and loving care in the homeland with his loved ones round him.

It is to the pen of the late Dr. E. B. Underhill that we are indebted for most of the story of the closing scenes of this eventful life-history.

A letter dated December 12, 1876, and written as the ship neared Liverpool, announced the arrival of Mr. Saker. God had graciously brought him to land. The voyage, though long, had been exceedingly pleasant. He received every kindness and attention from the commander and officers, and much of his even partial restoration was due to the comforts with which they surrounded him.

'The Shadow,' as the natives of Cameroons had of late years been wont to designate him, as in weakness he moved about among them, landed in England worn to skin and bone, emaciated to a degree scarcely conceivable, and with a constitution, never strong, now utterly broken. His indomitable spirit alone kept him alive. As the spring advanced, some degree of improvement began to appear, and in the early months of the following year he was

able to visit, as a deputation, a few of the most important churches in various parts of the country.

'The mission to the Congo, which at this time was in contemplation, excited his deepest interest, and in every possible way he rendered the aid that was in his power. His long acquaintance with equatorial Africa, its people, and its languages, was of great service to the committee, and made his counsel invaluable. Joyfully would he again have gone forth as the pioneer of this great enterprise. In a speech of rare merit that he delivered at Cannon Street Hotel, at the breakfast meeting held to expound the course taken by the committee of the Society to inaugurate this mission, after recounting some of the labours and successes of his life in Africa as grounds for encouragement, he added, with "an accent of conviction" that thrilled the assembly, "Though the past years have been years of suffering and years of toil, there is nothing in this country that could tempt me to stop—tempt me to exchange a life of labour and suffering there, if so be I can have but a repetition of the joy that has been given me in that land. . . . God hath accepted our past labours and blessed them. Let us in faith and in faithful labour trust Him for all the future."

'In the year following, at the meeting held in Cannon Street Hotel to bid farewell to the four young brethren, Messrs. Comber, Crudgington, Bentley, and Hartland, who were about to enter on the Congo Mission, Mr. Saker met with a most enthusiastic reception, the whole audience rising to their feet to do him honour.

'Once more, in the autumn of 1879, Mr. Saker appeared before the delegates of the Churches assembled in Glasgow, and bore his testimony to the wondrous grace that had aided his labours and prospered him in the work of the Lord. It was a wonderful sight to see that enfeebled man, that spare frame, that fading form, in tender, quiet, and yet thrilling words, call forth the deep emotions of the vast throng gathered in St. Andrew's Hall. For several minutes he stood trembling with awe, as the assembly testified its regard and respect for the hero of the Cross. His last words were the breathing out of his life. "If," he said, "the African is a brother, shall we not give him some of our bread and a draught of our water? Oh!" he exclaimed, with a glow of passionate feeling that touched and awoke into voiceful expression the chords of every heart in his audience, "that I had another life to go out there. The field is white there, the multitudes are in darkness still. It is the Son of God calling on us to go forth

and preach the Gospel to every creature, and we have the promise that He will be with us unto the end. May His blessing be on you and on them."

'Thus closed the public life of Alfred Saker. His few last months were cheered by the promise that his work at Cameroons would not be overlooked in the more exciting interest of the movement on the Congo. Mr. Comber and Mr. Grenfell had been taken away—from Cameroons—to devote their energies and their experience to the exigencies of the new field, but Mr. and Mrs. Lyall were accepted for Bethel, Akwa Town, and his son-in-law, Mr. Quinton Thomson, would not fail to watch with deep and anxious solicitude over the best interests of the colony of Victoria. Above all, his joy was full when the committee accepted the services of his youngest daughter, Emily, that she might enter upon that portion of her father's work which more especially concerned the training of the young. From her girlhood she had aided her father in his translations and printing work. Her familiar acquaintance with the Dualla language was of great value to the mission, and all hearts were glad that the name of Saker would not be lost or forgotten among the people he had lived to save.

'Mr. Saker came home ill from Glasgow,

and from that time the disease which he had so long manfully braved, gained increasing strength. Reluctantly he was driven to decline the requests which reached him to visit various congregations where his presence would have been highly valued.

'With the cold winds of March (1880) he daily became more low. On the 8th of that month he had a very bad night, but in the morning slept a little. After he awoke, "he prayed," says the beloved partner of all his labours, "such a prayer as I had never heard. I often wish I could recall some of it, but I cannot. I felt, 'Truly God is here.'" He then slowly dressed, and descended to the room below, where he remained till the end came.

'Nevertheless he spoke hopefully to the doctor in attendance, and expressed the opinion that his work was not yet done.

'"No, my dear friend," was the reply, "it is not done, for I believe we shall have a glorious work to do yonder."

'"Yes," he answered, "but I do not think my work for Africa is done yet."

'Nor is it done: his works do "follow him," and the leaves of the tree of life he has planted on the Dark Continent remain still, and flourish for the healing of its people.

'It was evident, however, to those who watched him with tender solicitude, that the shades of the dark valley were gathering over his head; yet was the path before him lit up with the presence of Him who is the Light of Life and the Giver of Victory over death. Calmly he comforted his wife with words of cheer and hope.

'As the evening of final rest drew near, he seemed at times scarcely conscious, and when he spoke it was with difficulty that he could be understood.

'On Friday (the 12th) he realised that the end had come.

'At midnight he opened his eyes, and, looking earnestly at his wife, put out his hand for hers.

'She said, "Are you conscious that you are going to leave me?" He nodded assent.

'"Are you quite happy?" And again he gave the like token. Then closing his eyes, amidst much difficulty of breathing, gently and quietly, about one o'clock, he crossed the river of death A sweet smile passed over the pallid, worn face as the ministering angels bore his spirit to the presence of his Lord.'

. . . . . .

The sorrow felt in England had a touching and characteristic response in Africa. His native helper Dibundu, writing to Mrs. Saker

on hearing the tidings of her beloved husband's departure, says, 'King Akwa was up country when he heard of dear Mr. Saker's death. He was bitterly sorry, and all his people too, because they cannot forget all the good work Mr. Saker did in Cameroons river, and all round about. So the king made a law for his town, all of his own accord, in remembrance of Mr. Saker, that no work should be done on Sundays, but all ought to go to worship. So on Sunday, May 8, all the people with one accord came to our chapel, which was over-full, and many more outside could not get in. You will remember us, please, in your prayers, that the good work may go on, and many may be converted to Jesus.'

Little more need be said. The narrative of his labours sufficiently expresses the spirit that animated him, and shows the devotedness with which he wrought to fulfil his appointed service. He believed, with profound conviction, that the Lord of the Harvest had summoned him to this task. . . . He was the pioneer in a region in which he had no compeer, and to his hands fell the severe toil necessary to lay the foundations of the work he achieved. Yet it was in the inner circle of his home that the tenderness and the beauty of his character was best revealed.

In the infrequent, and all too short, opportunities of converse with his children in their childhood, his gentleness won upon them. And how real to them, through all the years of separation, the consciousness of the Fatherhood of God became, because exemplified in him. The words 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' bore for them no uncertain sound, and the years of intercourse that followed only deepened those early memories into an unmarred picture of tender, patient, unselfish fatherhood.

APPENDIX

[This supplementary chapter is from the pen of Dr. Edward B. Underhill, and appeared in a memoir written by him in 1882 entitled *Alfred Saker, A Biography.* The book is now out of print. It was prepared at the request of the Baptist Missionary Society's Committee, and with their permission this part of the narrative is inserted here.[1]]

ASCENT OF THE CAMEROONS MOUNTAIN, 1861-1862

ONE interesting journey had been made by Mr. Saker to the summit of the Cameroons mountain. It was in the year 1862. His companions were Captain Burton, at that time H.M.'s Consul for the coast; M. Gustave Mann, a well-known Hanoverian and botanist in the employment of the English Government; and Senor Calvo, the Spanish judge of Fernando Po. They ascended from Victoria. The distance of

[1] For the materials of this chapter, besides Mr Saker's letters, I am indebted to the report presented to the Foreign Office by Consul Burton, and kindly forwarded to the mission house by Lord Russell. It is also printed in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. vi. p. 238.

the summit from Amboises Bay, on its southern side, is reckoned at 14 miles, but the mountain in its entire extent covers an area of about 400 square miles. Mr. Merrick essayed to ascend it in 1847, and succeeded so far as to reach the open grassy plain above the forest that covers the lower slopes of the mountain. Here water failed him. His companions suffered from cold and thirst, and he was compelled to return.

. . . . . .

The route from Victoria lay through a noble forest of palms, acacias, African oak, and other fine timber trees, from 100 to 150 feet high, across a country admirably adapted for the growth of maize, cocoa, sugar, and coffee. Twice the party forded the bright little mountain stream which supplies Victoria with the purest water. 'From Bosumba, 1000 feet above the sea,' the path now led through dense bush and grass. The district was populous. The people are known as the Bakwilli, and are allied by language and race to the tribes of the lowlands. (Later some books were translated into this tongue.) Mr. Saker found they understood the Isubu when he addressed them in that tongue. As usual, their dress was the scantiest possible, a kilt of plantain leaves sufficing for every need. A few possessed slips

of rags of stuff or cloth, and a handkerchief for the head. Their ornaments, more abundant than their dress, were of beads of many colours, porcupines' teeth, and armlets of copper or brass, and occasionally of ivory. The head was bare, shaved, or, when otherwise, the hair was dressed in fantastic modes. A kind of axe, called a matchet, was carried by the men, and in a few cases a rusty old matchlock was the weapon of protection or offence. The women, as among all these tribes, performed not only every household duty, but carried on the cultivation of the ground, and were often tattooed in a fashion the most grotesque.

At half-past four they reached Maponya, in the country of the chief Botani, and the highest village in this part of the mountain. Here they met Mr. Mann. The chief received them with great ceremony. Habited in his royal garb, a tall black hat, an old scarlet and gamboge coatee of the Royal Marines, and a pocket handkerchief, 'he performed a lively dance, apparently borrowed from the movements of excited poultry. In Africa, when the king dances, you have to pay for the honour.'

Disputes arising with the natives, the party soon launched themselves on the wilderness. They bivouacked in the forest, on a steep and narrow spot, at a place afterwards called Ridge

Camp. Proceeding at eight o'clock next day, they found that the plantain and the palm had disappeared, and were replaced by the graceful tree-fern. Ferns everywhere in most graceful forms covered the ground, or ran creeper-like up the trunks of the trees. It was 'a beautiful fernery, set off by the huge tropical growth around it.'

Passing under a natural arch of fallen trees, which they called Fern Gate, they emerged on a region of tall grass. Then came a broad green slope of small ferns and moss, resting on a rugged bed of old, decayed lava, half a mile wide, the banks on either side girt with giant trees. Here they breakfasted and feasted on blackberries. A hunter's path now led them up the side of the lava river, among huge blocks which endangered their ankles. Salvias scented the air, and the surface was spangled with the blossoms of an unknown flower. Bees settled upon them, but did not sting; and the heat of the sun became intense.

The last part of the day's journey was the most rugged of all. The lava, as it approached the place of its issue, became more broken, lying about in most irregular heaps. Before attempting it, Captain Burton lay down to sleep, the rest of the party going on. The Black Crater, from which the lava had flowed,

was at length reached. It was about 100 yards in diameter, with a lip of some 200 feet above the level of the platform below. On placing his compass between the rocks, Mr. Saker found that, in an unaccountable manner, the north pole of the needle dipped to the south. Water was obtained near at hand, and here the travellers encamped.

It was a bad camping-place; a high north-east wind roared round them all night, and the thermometer fell to 40° Fahr. Next day brought them a lovely morning, and at 2 p.m. they set out for the spring to which, as he was the discoverer, Mr. Mann's name was given. They found a little runnel of pure cold water issuing from peaty earth, embowered in blue flowers, and surrounded by nettles. Here the camp was fixed, and for five weeks it became the base of their researches and the centre of their excursions. It was 7000 feet above the sea, and was held by common consent to be an admirable spot for a sanatorium or a colony. Materials for roads or for house-building lay around in abundance, and, in his enthusiasm, Captain Burton exclaimed, 'Where can a Lebanon be found equal to the beautiful, the majestic Cameroons?' 'Here,' says Mr. Saker in a lower key, 'we had a glorious sky, a dry air, in fact an English home, and no great

obstacles in the ascent but what a little patient toil will overcome.'

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were spent in taking bearings, rambling about the hills, and in naming places. The main peak they discovered to be divided into a pair of distinct heads, which they christened Victoria and Albert. 'Little did we think,' remarks Mr. Saker, 'that the nation and our beloved Sovereign were then being plunged into irreparable grief by Prince Albert's death.' Another summit was named Earthwork Crater, and the elevation near which they were encamped, Mount Helen, after Mrs. Saker, who had supplied the Christmas pudding. From its cone there was a wonderful prospect of wild scenery and of perplexing confusion. Twenty-eight deep crevasses were counted, with numberless thick lava beds and ribs of scoriaceous rock. The morning of Christmas Day was spent by Mr. Saker, in company of Captain Burton, in a climb to the summit of Earthwork Crater, about thirteen miles from Victoria, and five from the main peak of the mountain. The volcano had apparently long burnt itself out, and the pools of water formed during the rains at the bottom of the crater were the resort of the small birds that abound in its vicinity. Returning from this excursion, and breakfast dispatched,

Mr. Saker left the party and descended the mountain for Cameroons, where some important duties required his attention. Early in January, however, in company with his colleague in the mission, Mr. Smith, he rejoined the mountaineers. They had passed the time in exploring a portion of the higher regions, but were suffering from exposure and fatigue. Mr. Smith being too unwell to go farther, Mr. Saker, with some Kroo boys, on the twelfth, left the camp to climb Victoria, the highest of the twin peaks. The ascent was made on the south side.

'During my absence,' writes Mr. Saker, 'Mr. Mann had ascended the north side, while Consul Burton attempted the south face. After a day's weary toil over beds of lava, we reached the foot of a small mount, somewhat sheltering to weary travellers. There I spread my blanket and passed the night. It was a glorious evening, but somewhat cold. At early dawn I found the glass at 31° Fahr. But the sun rose, a cloudless morning, and it soon grew warm. At six I began the ascent, and at ten reached the southern summit or ridge. By this time it was very warm, and the wind that sweeps so fearfully in these regions seemed hushed. Light fleecy clouds ever and anon shut in the surrounding scenery. Towards the east I saw a range of mountains that I had never before observed,

and took its bearings; but the attempt to secure the angles of summits towards the west was not so successful. Ere I could bring two points together, one would be obscured.

'At this highest point I found the water boil at 188°, thermometer 58°. This gives an elevation nearly the same as our charts, the result of trigonometrical survey below. My attempt to explore the crater was a failure. The whole was enshrouded in cloud. The crater must be of enormous extent. Its two peaks present a large angle at seven miles distance. After a long delay I began the descent, and at two reached my last night's resting-place. After rest and refreshment, we set out on return to our camp. Here I found the Consul a little better, but still unable to walk much. As I had stayed on this second run up the mountain ten days, I was now compelled to leave for Victoria and Cameroons. We have ascertained that there are native towns at about 3500 feet elevation, that cultivation extends but little farther, and that beyond these heights there is every inducement to seek a temporary home for invalids and wearied missionaries.'

A final ascent was made by Captain Burton and his companions on the 26th of January. In this Mr. Saker did not participate, as he had returned to Amboises Bay. The investigators

encountered intense cold. Their waterproof coats were white with hoar frost, and the summit was powdered with frozen dew. Before leaving the peak, Captain Burton was able to discover a complete solfatara, lying to the north-east of Albert Crater. Smoke arose in puffy volumes from long lines of white marl and sulphur. This discovery accounts for the many detached reports of flames seen issuing from the mountain by the merchants of Cameroons and the people of Fernando Po. It would seem, therefore, that the great volcanic mountain of Cameroons is not yet an extinct volcano.

A hailstorm signalised the descent. 'Finally,' adds Consul Burton, 'on February 2, 1862, I once more saw the scattered bungalows of Victoria, where the kindly Mrs. Saker, who would not leave the place till our safe return, received me with all hospitality.'

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