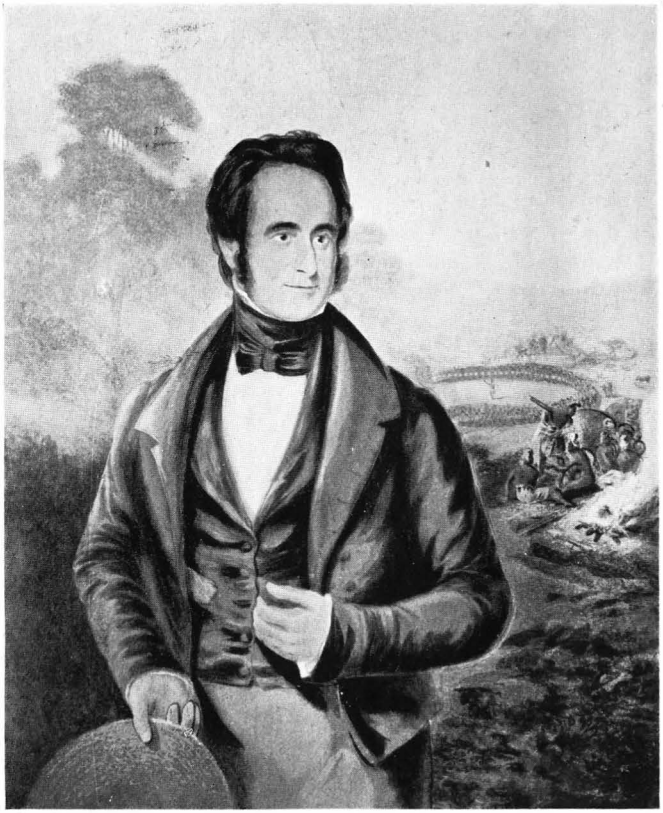

ROBERT MOFFAT
AT FORTY-THREE

ROBERT MOFFAT

ONE OF GOD'S GARDENERS

By

EDWIN W. SMITH

LITERARY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE
BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY
CHIEF TRANSLATOR OF THE ILA NEW TESTAMENT
AUTHOR OF
A Handbook of the Ila Language
The Religion of Lower Races, etc.
CO-AUTHOR OF
The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia

And there you'll see the gardeners, the men and 'prentice boys
Told off to do as they are bid and do it without noise:
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words.

RUDYARD KIPLING

LONDON
CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY
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EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS volume is the fifth of a uniform series of new missionary biographies, in the production of which a group of unusually able writers are collaborating.

The series makes no pretence of adding new facts to those already known. The aim rather is to give to the world of to-day a fresh interpretation and a richer understanding of the life and work of great missionaries.

The enterprise is being undertaken by the United Council for Missionary Education, for whom the series is published by the Student Christian Movement.

K. M.
A. E. C.

U.C.M.E.
2 EATON GATE
S.W.1

TO

NAMUSA, MY WIFE

ANOTHER GARDENER

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

My object throughout this volume has been to place Moffat in the historical and ethnological setting of South Africa—a country that has changed so much during the last hundred years that it is difficult for the present generation to realize the conditions under which he worked. For the facts of Moffat's life I have relied chiefly upon his own book, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa* (published in 1842), and the biography by his son,[1] the late Rev. J. S. Moffat. Much information has been gathered from the works of the early travellers, some of which are named in footnotes. I would express my gratitude to the London Missionary Society, which gracefully placed its records at my disposal; and to the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society who allow me to use letters which have never before (so far as I am aware) been printed. My best thanks are also due to the Rev. J. Tom Brown, late of Kuruman, who most generously allowed me to read, and make use of, his manuscript on the history and customs of the Bechuana, which I hope will before long be published. My own experiences as a pioneer missionary in South Central Africa, and a visit I made to Kuruman in 1912, have helped me considerably in appreciating Moffat's work.

Perhaps it is inevitable in the case of a man who

[1] Referred to in footnotes by the initials "J. S. M."

has received such adulation as Moffat has received, that one approaches a study of his life wondering whether it will leave him in exactly the same high position. I have not praised him indiscriminately, but have tried to estimate him and his work dispassionately. I have not refrained from pointing to what I think were his deficiencies. But I wish to say that from a diligent investigation and an honest effort to see him without his halo, Robert Moffat emerges as a greater man than ever in my mind.

EDWIN W. SMITH

WALTON-ON-THAMES
February 1925

¶ The frontispiece is reproduced from an oleograph which has been generously lent for the purpose by the Rev. Arthur Baldwin, F.R.G.S., a missionary pioneer to the trans-Zambezi tribes. It represents Moffat as he was in the year 1838 when he left for his only furlough in England. On his way from Kuruman to Cape Town he was told that it was unfashionable to appear with a beard; so one morning he retired behind a bush, and returned to his wagon cleanly shaved—greatly to the astonishment of his native attendants. In later years he grew the long beard which photographs have made familiar.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

Asked him no more, but took him as he found him,
Filled him with valour, slung him with a sword,
Bad him go on until the tribes around him
Mingled his name with naming of the Lord.

F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

I

In the autumn of 1873 a little, quaint, old-fashioned woman, clad in short gown and mutch, stood with a tall patriarch before the tailor's shop of the village of Carronshore in Scotland. They entered and found the tailor seated cross-legged on his board and absorbed in his work. With great eagerness the little woman addressed him: "Andrew, man, here's Moffat come to see you, the great missionary from Africa." The tailor was eminently Scottish—and cautious. Without lifting his eyes or ceasing to ply his needle he replied: "Aye, aye, maybe he is, maybe he isna. There are plenty of folks ganging about the country noo-a-days passin' themsel's aff as great men, and they are just a wheen impostors." The little woman was hurt by the tailor's incredulity. "O man!" she cried, "are you no believin' me, and I've kenned him mysel' a' my days!" Andrew looked up at last and said oracularly to the stranger: "Are you aware, sir, that if you were really the person you represent yourself to be, you would be

the father-in-law of Livingstone, the African explorer?" "So I am," replied the venerable old gentleman with the flowing white beard. It was indeed Robert Moffat, home finally after nearly a lifetime of missionary service in Africa—Robert Moffat, translator of the Bible, newly-capped Doctor of Divinity at Edinburgh—now visiting the village whence, sixty-three years before, he had gone to serve his apprenticeship as a gardener.

It is of him, and of the pleasant Garden of God which he planted in a remote African wilderness, that these pages are to tell: of him and of his wife, Mary.

II

Of Robert Moffat's forefathers nothing seems to be known. He came of the class that has no history. Of his father not much is recorded; of his mother but little beyond the fact that she came of a family distinguished for its piety, and was herself one of those godly Scotswomen who, through their sons, have left so deep a mark upon the world. They had five sons and two daughters. Robert was born at Ormiston in East Lothian, on 21st December 1795. Two years later the family removed to Portsoy, near Banff, where the father had been appointed to a post in the custom-house. In 1806 they settled at Carronshore, a village near Falkirk on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth. Robert was sent to the parish school kept by a stern dominie named Wully Mitchell. The Shorter Catechism was his first book. Having learned the alphabet printed on the title-page he was plunged straightway into those questions and answers beginning, "What is

the chief end of man ? " which have put bark and steel into the blood of many successive generations of Scottish youth. But beyond the catechism, Robert learned little in school at that time. He was more at home down among the shipping at the quayside. A friendly captain took him, with his parents' reluctant consent, on many a voyage along the coast. It is not clear, indeed, whether their consent was really given, or asked; in later life Moffat said that he ran off to sea. Anyhow the boy soon became disgusted with sailoring—much to the satisfaction of his elders.

At about the age of eleven he was sent with his elder brother, Alexander, to a school at Falkirk kept by a Mr Paton. Of this he wrote in later years as follows :—

> It was properly only a school for writing and book-keeping, and those who chose to pay, or could afford to pay, received lessons in astronomy and geography after school hours. My brother was one of the class of young men, who were nearly all the sons of the better sort of folks. Having some distance to walk home I was allowed to remain in the large room. I felt queer to know what the master was doing within the circle, and used to look very attentively through any little slit of an opening under an elbow, while I eagerly listened to the illustrations given, the master all the while never suspecting that I was capable of understanding the wonders of the planetary system. What I could not understand my brother explained on our way home. I was only six months at this school, the last I ever attended.

In the home of his pious parents, and chiefly from his mother, young Robert early received lasting religious impressions. Mrs Moffat was of a type familiar to us in Scottish literature—the

type that finds it possible to unite with a tender heart a theology of a stern inflexible character. In the long winter evenings the boys were taught to knit, and while engaged in this useful art—not altogether congenial to them—their mother read to them tales of the missionary pioneers. Little, we imagine, did she dream of living to see her son Robert recognized as one of the greatest of these heroes.

The time came when the lad, now fourteen years of age, must leave home to win a way for himself in the wider world. He was apprenticed to one John Robertson, a gardener, of Parkhill, Polmont—a hard but just man. Robert served him for about three years, and it was no bed of roses that he lay upon during that time. He and his fellow-apprentices would be roused at four o'clock on a bitterly cold morning, and, while it was still dark, turned out to dig the frost-hardened earth. Their master was not a man to pamper youth; he gave his lads what food was necessary, but not a bit more, and exacted from them the maximum of labour of which they were capable. But he taught them their business, and Robert was not so weary in the evenings that he could not attend an occasional class for Latin and mensuration. He learnt also to play the violin, to swim, and to wield the blacksmith's hammer.

When his apprenticeship terminated Robert found employment in the gardens of the Earl of Moray at Donibristle. His parents had in the meantime moved their residence to Inverkeithing, a few miles from where he worked. For about twelve months he was able to visit them occasionally, and then he

made up his mind to follow the road across the Tweed that so many of his fellow-countrymen have taken. He secured a situation as under-gardener to Mr Leigh, of High Leigh, in Cheshire.

To reach Cheshire from the Firth of Forth involved a journey of twenty-two days: first by boat through the canal and along the Clyde to Greenock; then by ship to Liverpool, and finally by coach and on foot to High Leigh.

Long afterwards Robert Moffat described his parting from his mother:

My mother proposed to accompany me to the boat which was to convey me across the Firth of Forth. My heart, though glad at the prospect of removing to a better situation, could not help feeling some emotion natural to one of my age. When we came within sight of the spot where we were to part, perhaps never to meet again in this world, she said: "Now, my Robert, let us stand here for a few minutes, for I wish to ask one favour of you before we part, and I know you will not refuse to do what your mother asks."

"What is it, mother?" I inquired.

"Do promise me first that you will do what I am now going to ask, and I shall tell you."

"No, mother, I cannot till you tell me what your wish is."

"O Robert, can you think for a moment that I shall ask you, my son, to do anything that is not right? Do not I love you?"

"Yes, mother, I know you do; but I do not like to make promises which I may not be able to fulfil."

I kept my eyes fixed on the ground. I was silent, trying to resist the rising emotion. She sighed deeply. I lifted my eyes and saw the big tears rolling down the cheeks which were wont to press mine. I was conquered, and as soon as I could recover speech, I said: "O mother! ask what you will and I shall do it."

"I only ask you whether you will read a chapter in the Bible every morning and another every evening."

I interrupted by saying: "Mother, you know I read my Bible."

"I know you do, but you do not read it regularly, or as a duty you owe to God, its Author." And she added: "Now I shall return home with a happy heart, inasmuch as you have promised to read the Scriptures daily. O Robert, my son, read much in the New Testament. Read much in the Gospels—the blessed Gospels. Then you cannot well go astray. If you pray, the Lord Himself will teach you."

Robert never forgot the promise he made his mother that day.

So the lad of eighteen began his new life far from home. The gardens at High Leigh were extensive; Robert was one of several employés; the head-gardener, a Mr Bearpark, took to him and left a good deal of the work in his hands; his master and mistress looked kindly upon him. There was every likelihood, it seemed, that Moffat was settled for life, that in due course he would succeed to the head-gardenership and develop into the old Scots retainer of whom Scott and Stevenson have left such delightful pictures. But two events, following in swift succession, changed the even current of his life.

The first of these was his contact with the Methodists. A friendly neighbour induced Moffat to attend some of their meetings, and the fervid appeals to which he listened, so very different from anything he had heard in his own land, went to his heart. There ensued a spiritual struggle, of which he has left some record.

For many weeks I was miserable. I wished to feel that I was converted, but I could not believe I was. I

thought I had the faith required, and that I had repented or turned to the Lord, and could adopt the words, "To whom shall I go but to Thee, O Jesus"; but still my soul was like a ship in a tempest. At last I made a resolve to become as wicked as I could make myself, and then if converted I should be so sensible of the change that all doubts would vanish. I looked over this awful precipice down which I was about to leap, and trembled at the thought that I might perish in my sins. I turned anon to my Bible, and grasped it, feeling something like a hope that I should not sink with it in my hands. I knew of no one to whom I could unbosom the agony that burned within. I tried to pray fervently, but thought there was a black cloud between me and the throne of God. . . . Living alone in a lodge in an extensive garden, my little leisure was my own. One evening, while poring over the Epistle to the Romans, I could not help wondering over a number of passages which I had read many times before. They appeared altogether different. I exclaimed with a heart nearly broken: "Can it be possible that I have never understood what I have been reading?" turning from one passage to another: each sending a renovation of light into my darkened soul. The Book of God, the precious, undying Bible, seemed to be laid open, and I saw at once what God had done for the sinner and what was required of the sinner to obtain the Divine favour and the assurance of eternal life. I felt that, being justified by faith, I had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

He wrote to his parents about it, and these hard-shell Calvinists rejoiced in their son's spiritual awakening, yet with some dread of his turning Methodist. His father exhorted him not to be high-minded but to fear. Mr and Mrs Leigh disapproved of their gardener's becoming a Methodist and no longer showed him the favour they had at first extended to him. But Moffat continued along the path he had chosen.

Then happened the second of the events to which we have referred.

One beautiful summer evening Moffat set out for Warrington, about six miles away. As he passed over the bridge at the entrance to the town his eyes fell upon a placard which announced a meeting of the London Missionary Society, at which the Rev. William Roby of Manchester would take the chair. It was the kind of thing we pass by every day without taking much notice, but it was the first that Moffat had ever seen, and it made an extraordinary impression upon him. The date of the meeting had already passed, and anyone who noticed his intent gaze upon the now useless bill must have wondered at his absorption. As he read and re-read it, the stories of the Moravian missionaries which he had heard in his home in Scotland came back to mind. He went on to do his errand in the town, and on his way back read the placard again. "Then," said Moffat, "I wended my solitary way homeward—another man, or rather with another heart." All thoughts of advancement in his present calling vanished, and their place was taken by an overmastering desire to become a missionary. But how? He had never been to college; no missionary society, he concluded, would ever accept his services. He recalled the short time he had spent at sea as a boy; and it seemed that he could reach his goal now by turning sailor and landing on some far-distant island or foreign shore—there to stay and teach.

Then he determined to seek an interview with the Rev. William Roby, whose name he had read upon the placard. He found the house, but could not

summon up courage to knock at the door. He climbed the steps, but descended again and walked up and down the street. At last he ventured to knock—and then wished he had not. But before he could run away a servant opened the door and ushered him into the presence of Mr Roby, who listened to his falteringly told story. The good man evidently discerned that hidden away behind the plain exterior of this young gardener there was the stuff of which missionaries are made, for he promised to write on his behalf to the Directors of the London Missionary Society. At first the Directors replied that they could not accept Moffat's offer, but Mr Roby persuaded them to reconsider their decision.

Moffat returned to his work, and some weeks later was asked to visit Manchester again. Mr Roby wished to place him in a situation which would give him some opportunity of judging further as to Moffat's fitness for missionary work. After failing in some quarters, he applied to a friend of his, a nursery gardener named Smith, who readily agreed to take the young man. For the next year or so Moffat settled at Dukinfield, working in the garden most days of the week and spending the rest with Mr Roby in Manchester. The instruction he received from Mr Roby was really the only preparation of a literary kind that Moffat received for his work abroad.

One other circumstance must be mentioned here. Mr Smith had a daughter, whose name was Mary.

III

Of the four children of Mr and Mrs Smith, Mary was the eldest. She was born a few months earlier than Robert Moffat. The father was a Scot who had migrated from Perthshire and settled in England, where he found his wife. They were persons of strong piety—he a Nonconformist and she a member of the Church of England. At the time we are speaking of he was a prosperous nursery-gardener, but afterwards, through the foolishness of others, became impoverished.

Mary had grown up at Dukinfield and had attended the Moravian School at Fairfield. From her early youth she was distinguished by her piety and missionary zeal. Perhaps it was these qualities in Robert Moffat that first gave him favour in her eyes, but certainly before very long it became apparent to Mr and Mrs Smith that through bringing this young stranger to their house they were likely to lose their daughter. Friendship founded upon a common spiritual tie soon ripened into affection, and the day came when Robert asked Mary to accompany him to Africa as his wife.

It was a blow to the parents, and for a long time they would not give their consent. In the end Robert had to depart alone for Africa, but with the understanding that Mary would follow whenever she could win her way with her father and mother.

In the meantime Moffat had told his own parents of his intentions. His father wrote in return that they dare not oppose his designs lest haply in so doing they should be found fighting against God.

He paid a flying visit to Scotland to say good-bye to them.

The Directors of the London Missionary Society proposed at first that Moffat should accompany John Williams to the South Seas, but one of them, Dr Alexander Waugh, considered "thae twa lads ower young to gang tegither," and so they were separated. At the end of September 1816 a dedicatory service was held in Surrey Chapel, London, at which nine missionaries were set apart for their work—four for the South Sea Islands, and five for Africa. Moffat and his colleagues embarked at Gravesend on the *Alacrity*, Captain Findlay, on 18th October, and reached Cape Town eighty-six days later.

Moffat was twenty-one years of age at that time. It was in this way that men were sent out to the mission field in those early days—young, and with the minimum of academic training. The results were not always of the happiest: many of the young men proved failures under the terrible ordeal of life beyond the confines of civilization. Those who came through the test proved to be some of the finest men Britain has ever produced, and of these Robert Moffat was one.

CHAPTER II

SOUTH AFRICA A CENTURY AGO

Once, as I wandered by night on the fringe of the moonlit
desert,
Lapped in a vision I saw pictures of days that are dead:
Groups of horsemen rode by me—with rifles slung at the
shoulder—
Bronzed and bearded and stern, silent and watchful they rode.
And close after these there followed, drawn by the slow-
footed oxen,
Wagon on resolute wagon—white-sailed ships of the veld!
On, unfalteringly on, invincibly journeyed the trekkers,
Onward over the desert, melting away like a cloud!

FRANCIS CAREY SLATER, *The Karroo.*

I

WILLIAM BURCHELL, one of the early travellers, has left on record an eloquent recital of the difficulties involved in landing at Cape Town in the old days of sailing ships.

Land was sighted, a hundred miles away, at five o'clock one afternoon (13th November 1810), and next morning Table Mountain was clearly distinguishable through the haze. The wind increasing to a gale the ship made such headway that by noon they were within two leagues of the shore. They prepared to anchor in Table Bay that night, but a furious wind suddenly and unexpectedly assailed the vessel. It was as if the wallet wherein Æolus bound the blustering winds for Ulysses had been carried

by some giant's hand to the top of Table Mountain and there cut open all in a moment. In vain the mariners sought to beat into the bay. For two days they continued standing off and on—at one time approaching within half-a-mile of the surf-fringed shore, and then being hurried by the gale out of sight of land. With hatches closed, deadlights bolted in, cabin dark as a dungeon, deck deluged by the waves, pumps working day and night, spars crashing—the gallant ship fought against the storm which it seemed hardly possible to survive. Not till the evening of the thirteenth day after sighting Table Mountain could they drop anchor, lower a boat, and land passengers on the old wooden jetty. Nowadays the mail-steamers take only sixteen days to accomplish the whole voyage from England to Cape Town. The storms which rage around the Cape are as boisterous to-day as they were four hundred years ago when the old Portuguese navigator named it Cabo Tormentoso, but steam has robbed them of their most appalling terrors. To-day (to use Joseph Conrad's words) the mail-steamer comes, breathing black smoke into the air, pulsating, throbbing, shouldering its arrogant way against the great rollers, in blind disdain of winds and sea.

The contrast is suggestive of the change that has come over South Africa—a change so enormous that it is difficult for us to realize to-day what the country was like when Robert Moffat landed there in 1817.

We are not writing a history of South Africa, but if we are to understand Moffat's life we must break our narrative at this point and try to picture the

land as it was in the early years of the nineteenth century.

II

When the Portuguese navigator, Bartholomeu Diaz, with his intrepid companions, landed from their two little ships of sixty tons burden at Angra Pequena (the modern Luderitz Bay) shortly before doubling the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, it was, so far as is known, the first time that Christian men trod the soil of Africa south of the Tropic.

The Portuguese never made any permanent settlement at the Cape. They, and the Dutch who followed, had no intention of founding a colony in South Africa; they regarded it merely as a port of call on the way to the Far East, whose wealth offered far greater attractions to merchants than did the barren Cape. It was no more to them than a turning-point on the great highway which, before the excavation of the Suez Canal, was the only road by which trading vessels could reach India and beyond. The Netherlands East India Company established a refreshment station on the shores of Table Bay in 1648, and four years later Jan van Riebeek built a fort there. Contrary to original intentions a settlement inevitably grew up around the fort, and, as time went on, stretched out its tentacles through the mountain passes on to the higher land beyond. When the colony was finally ceded to Great Britain in 1814 the white inhabitants numbered about 27,000, scattered over an area of some 120,000 square miles.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Cape

Town was a clean and handsome town spreading over the valley from the seashore toward the mountains. The population was of mixed origin. Among the six thousand Europeans the Dutch element predominated and Dutch was still, under British rule, the language of the Courts. The English inhabitants belonged principally to the military and mercantile classes. The coloured people of various races numbered nearly eleven thousand, and were almost all slaves. The *Cape Town Gazette* was the only newspaper in the colony, and rarely contained any information beyond Government proclamations, official notices, and advertisements of auctions. The money in general circulation consisted of small printed slips of paper bearing value from sixpence upwards to five hundred rix-dollars.[1] The only current coins were English penny-pieces which passed for the equivalent of twopence, and were called *dubbeltjes*. Prices of provisions were low in Cape Town compared with those in England. Fruit and vegetables were abundant and cheap. Coal, however, was almost unknown, and fuel of all kinds very scarce. Each family set apart a slave or two for the purpose of collecting the daily supply of firewood on the mountains.

Burchell noted that the colonial ladies dressed well and quite in the English fashion. In personal beauty they did not yield to the fair dames of Europe. He was pleased with the good behaviour of the company at a public concert that he attended. It broke up soon after nine o'clock—the usual hour—and for a time the streets presented an

[1] A rix-dollar was equal to about half-a-crown. In 1825 its value sank to below 1s. 5d.

animated appearance while the ladies and their escorts, lighted on their way with hand-lanterns, went off homewards.

Southward of Cape Town, in that charming country of the Cape Peninsula the like of which is hardly to be found elsewhere in Africa, elegant villas lay scattered about even more than a century ago, as far as Rondebosch, Wynberg, and Constantia. The last-named place was already famous for its wines. Many of the more wealthy inhabitants of Cape Town had built their country seats at Rondebosch. Everywhere beauty marked this region as it does to-day—groves and large trees of luxuriant growth, between which were interspersed vineyards, gardens, and many handsome buildings.

The region was a botanist's paradise. "As a European, I might say that we wandered through coppices of green-house plants, and forced our way through thickets of rare exotics." [1]

III

The land of South Africa rises in a series of terraces. When you have ascended from sea-level through the first of the mountain ranges that run parallel with the shore, you arrive upon a plateau, called the Little Karroo, about forty miles in width. Crossing this and climbing the next range, you reach another and still higher table-land, called the Great Karroo, which has an average width of eighty miles. Passing over this region and over the Nieuwveld mountains, you emerge upon interminable treeless plains extending far to the north beyond the Orange

[1] W. Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa* (1822).

River and about four thousand feet above sea-level. This is the illimitable veld.

League upon listless league of scrub, sad-coloured and stunted,
Broken by stone-crowned kopjes, isles in a motionless sea!
League upon league of brown earth, monotonous, vast as the ocean,
Guarded by stone-casqued kopjes—sentinels sleepless and grim.

Across this brown, sunwashed land Robert Moffat trekked in his ox-wagon in 1817, but at that date the Colony covered a much smaller area than the Cape Province covers to-day.

From the mouth of the Koussie River on the western coast the boundary of the Colony followed that river inland to its source and then bent south-west along the line of the innermost mountain-range—Roggeveld, Nieuwveld, and Sneeuwbergen—as far as a point on the Zeekoe (or Seacow) River to the west of where the town of Colesberg now stands. There in 1778 Governor van Plettenberg set up a beacon to mark the north-eastern limit of the colony. From this point the frontier trended in a general south-easterly direction to the sea. This eastern border was the source of continual disputation between the colonists and the Xosa tribes. In 1786 the lower Fish River had been declared the boundary between white and black; in 1818, after several conflicts between the races, the frontier was extended to the Keiskama and Tjumie rivers. A glance at the map will show how far beyond these limits the present Cape Province extends.

North of this boundary no European settlements were to be found at the beginning of the nineteenth

century. During the five months that the Rev. John Campbell [1] travelled in the regions beyond the frontier in 1813 he never met a white man other than a few missionaries.

South of the border eleven villages had been built in 1815 and of these only three were more than twenty years old. The now flourishing city of Grahamstown was then a mere hamlet of reeds and mud. At a later date Port Elizabeth consisted of three thatched houses erected for Government officials. The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants lived on the farms scattered at intervals over the veld—intervals so great that one might travel a week without seeing more than a house or two. The soil of the Karroo is fertile enough in parts, but except for occasional fountains and some rivers, which for a large part of the year carried no water in their beds, the region was sterile in the extreme until in recent years the sinking of artesian wells has made cultivation possible. Covered with short, stunted bushes and succulent plants the great plains provide a grazing ground in the driest of seasons for millions of sheep, and even in the days we are writing about were already being put to use in this way. Down to the middle of the century these plains of South Africa nourished countless thousands — literally millions—of wild game, large and small: giraffes, ostriches, sable, antelope, kudus, buffaloes, zebras, springboks, and many other varieties. These have

[1] John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (1815). Mr Campbell travelled as a deputation of the London Missionary Society. I shall frequently refer to him, and to his book which is a mine of reliable information.

long since disappeared save for attenuated herds in remote regions.

One of the early travellers[1] describes a farm which he visited near Graaf Reinet. Abundant fruit of the best quality and extensive cornfields rewarded the industry of the Dutch owner who had led water from a never-failing spring to irrigate a large area of fertile soil. He possessed great herds of cattle, sheep, goats, and horses. An exceptionally fine house stood in the midst of this luxuriance and round about the dwelling were grouped neat buildings to accommodate his servants and slaves. The healthy, cheerful appearance of these dependents impressed the traveller favourably. Every Sunday this Boer's children and grandchildren gathered at his house from the neighbouring farms which they occupied. They met for worship in the morning and spent the rest of the day in conversation and in walking about the farm. Next morning wagons were inspanned and horses saddled, and the sons took their families home again.

There must have been many such delightful homes in the Cape Colony of a hundred years ago, though perhaps this particular one was above the average in prosperity. Many other homesteads, especially the newly-planted, consisted of nothing but rudely-constructed shanties, often of but one apartment and nearly destitute of furniture. The owners of such places enjoyed but little, or none, of the comforts of civilization. They grew few vegetables, but lived chiefly on mutton and on the flesh of antelopes which they hunted in the veld. Little or no use was

[1] Henry Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa* (1812), Vol. II pp. 17 *et seq.*

made of milk or butter. The men lived a rude and barbarous life; the women often passed their days in listless inactivity. Most of them were unable to read or write. These Boers generally reared large families; six or seven children were considered few; from twelve to twenty were not uncommon. Some of them kept a schoolmaster in the house, generally a man who had served in the ranks of the army. Apart from a Bible and a psalm-book no literature was to be found in the majority of farm-houses. Every morning the father would gather his family around him and they sang a psalm and read a passage of Scripture.

There were not more than a dozen churches in the whole colony at this time. Attendance at public worship often involved a journey of a fortnight or three weeks, but however distant the meeting-place might be the farmers carried their families thither in ox-wagons at least once a year. Communion Sunday (*nachtmaal*, as the Dutch name it) was a time, not only for Divine worship, but also for rare social intercourse with their fellows. Distant farmers made it the occasion for bringing their produce to market in the town.

One eminent virtue the Dutch farmers invariably exhibited—the virtue of hospitality to strangers. The journals and letters of Robert Moffat and other travellers often remark on the kindly way they were received at the homesteads along their route. Generally the first question addressed to the stranger as he dismounted from his horse or descended from his wagon was, "What will *mynheer* make use of?" *i.e.* what will he eat. Meal would follow meal in embarrassing profusion, except where the farmer's

poverty would not allow of it. At the least, there was always coffee, even though it might be made from parched corn or beans or from the root of the carrion-tree (*witbloom*).

Few of these farmers led a strenuous existence. Most of the necessary manual toil was performed by the slaves on the farm. Boys and girls grew up accustomed to be waited on hand and foot. The young men could often not be induced to greater exertion than that of shooting for an occasional hour. Where the farmers lived not by cultivating the ground but on the produce of their flocks and herds, which were herded by their slaves, they found little to do—" only to smoke their pipe and once a day to count their cattle," says John Campbell.

George Thompson,[1] who knew the Boers well a hundred years ago, characterizes them generally as " a shrewd, prudent, persevering, good-humoured, hospitable and respectable class of men." Isolated as they were, and engaged in a hard struggle for existence, the wonder is not that they were so little refined: the wonder rather is that they had not degenerated further from the high level of their forefathers.

IV

In looking over the old records of the Cape it is not strange to come upon an Association for exploring Central Africa. What does seem strange is that the Central Africa they had in mind was a region so well known to us as the diamond fields of Kimberley and the surrounding country. We find it impossible to think ourselves back to the

[1] *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* (1827), Vol. II pp. 121-2.

time when the Orange River was as utterly unknown as the Zambezi and the Congo were to a later generation. It pulls one up short to hear such an unromantic traveller as Campbell speak of going to find out what was in "the very heart of Africa," when he was really going to Namaqualand, south of the Orange River. On another occasion he writes: "Our journey was now to be directed eastward, to a part of Africa hitherto unexplored by any European traveller." This was in 1813. When we examine the map, we find he was not going farther than where Vryberg stands to-day.

At the close of the seventeenth century no white man was living farther inland than forty-five miles from Cape Town; no white man had as yet set foot on the Karroo. Beyond the accounts given of men who were sent out to purchase cattle, no records exist, I believe, of the earliest explorers. Yet there was a day when the first adventurous Dutchman drove his lumbering wagon through the mountain passes up on to the Karroo—just as there was a day when the first civilized navigator saw some headland of the British Isles looming through the mist.

We must not succumb to the temptation to re-tell the story of the early travellers who have left records.[1] But if we are fully to appreciate what Moffat did it is necessary to recall a few names and the exploits associated with them.

The early exploration of South Africa went on very slowly. The first considerable journeys were taken in the seventeenth century to find the locality

[1] Sir H. H. Johnston has told it graphically in his *Pioneers of South Africa* (1914).

from which Namaquas had brought specimens of copper ore to Cape Town. The party who finally reached the Copper Mountain in Little Namaqualand (where the metal was mined until recently) heard much of the great river in the north, but were unable to travel so far. Not until 1760 was the river seen by a European, and another nineteen years passed before it was traced to its mouth, and named the Orange River, by Captain Gordon, a Scot in the service of the Dutch Company.

By the end of the eighteenth century many of the half-breeds (Bastaards) [1] had penetrated north of the Orange River. They acted as forerunners to a restless company of Dutch and German adventurers—some of them criminals—who, rebelling against the restraints of civilization and a monotonous life of farming, ranged farther and farther every year beyond the settled areas of the colony in search of cattle and ivory. One of the most notorious of these freebooters was named Jan Bloem. While engaged in pasturing cattle which belonged to one Piet Pienaar,[2] this man heard of the Korannas and Bechuana who lived north of the Orange River and who were rich in cattle. Organizing an expedition with the help of Hottentots, he raided these tribes and carried off so many cattle that Pienaar is said to have received more than a thousand head as his share of the booty. Jan Bloem remained in the country north of the river and carried on his depredations with the assistance of criminal refugees, until, during a raid upon a northern tribe

[1] The name was given by the Dutch to the offspring of white men by native women.

[2] Afterwards murdered by the brother of Africaner, see p. 64.

of Bechuana—the Bangwaketse—he died through drinking water which is said to have been poisoned by the natives.

One of the Bastaards, a man named Cornelius Kok (we shall meet him again) crossed the Orange River in the year of Robert Moffat's birth, and penetrated as far as the Kuruman river. Here he came upon the Batlhapi—the Bechuana tribe among whom Moffat was later to live. Sir Harry Johnston rightly fixes upon Kok's first journey as the beginning of the great march of Europeans towards the Zambezi and beyond. Thenceforth there was no staying the onward-sweeping tide of western civilization. For better or worse the time had arrived for the natives of South Central Africa to be brought under the white man's influence.

At first the tide lacked impetus and many years were to pass before its full power was felt. We may note some of the stages before the appearance of Robert Moffat on the scene.

Messrs Truter and Somerville, who in 1801 were dispatched by the Cape Government to purchase cattle from the natives in the interior, were the first to describe the Bechuana. They visited the town of Lattakoo, the headquarters of the Batlhapi tribe. Dr Lichtenstein carried his explorations as far as this district in 1805.

In 1806 Lord Caledon, the Governor, sent Dr Cowan and Captain Denovan, with twenty Hottentot soldiers, to make their way overland to Mozambique on the East Coast—the first of many projected transcontinental journeys. They passed through Lattakoo with safety, but farther north the whole party were murdered by the Bechuana in the

neighbourhood of Kolobeng—the place where David Livingstone afterwards built a mission station.[1]

Six years later when Burchell planned his expedition he could find no good map of the colony and contiguous territory. He speaks of the "unexplored and unknown tract of country between Graaf Reinet and Litakun"[2] (Lattakoo). It was at least unknown in the sense that wandering hunters had made no map of it and Burchell seems not to have known, or to have ignored, Lichtenstein's work. His own map, published in 1822, is of very great value as showing the extent to which South Africa had been explored in his day. Much of the country south of the Orange River is there left blank: the course of the river itself is incorrectly drawn, though its general direction is fairly well shown as far eastwards as about where Aliwal North stands to-day. Crossing the river he made his way north past the Kuruman River and across the Moshowa (or Mashowing River) to about the latitude of Vryberg and then turned towards the south again. All the country which, as the Transvaal and Orange Free State, was afterwards to play such a tremendous part in South African affairs, is left a blank on Burchell's map, save for a few hypothetical native villages. Indeed, except his own track, hardly any features are shown.

In the same year (1812) the Rev. John Campbell arrived in South Africa, deputed by the London Missionary Society to visit and report on its mission stations there. "A short, ugly, dark-eyed Londoner," Sir Harry Johnston calls him, "a shrewd, quiet,

[1] No records were left, I believe, by Dr Cowan.—E. W. S.

[2] The name is spelt in various ways: Litakun; Thakun; Dithakong.

plucky, little man." His narrative is well worth study to-day as a description of conditions which, on the whole, have long since passed away for ever. After travelling in his wagon from Cape Town to the Great Fish River, keeping near the sea-coast all the way, he turned towards the north, as far as Graaf Reinet, and thence struck boldly across the border into the practically unknown. On his map—where his course and the position of places are incorrectly marked—the words "Wandering Boshesmens Country," "Wild Boshesmens Country" are written large across the otherwise almost blank space intervening between the colonial frontier and the Orange River. He struck the river at what he calls "English Ford" (east of Prieska) and had to ascend the stream to Read's Ford (which is still to be found on the map). There he crossed and proceeded via Griqua Town to Lattakoo. Campbell received a kindly welcome from the chief Mothibi (whom he calls Mateebe), the head of the Batlhapi. In the manner of the time Campbell writes of "the city of Lattakoo," "the king of Lattakoo," "the royal family," "princesses," and a round hut is pictured as the "palace of Mateebe." As a matter of fact "the city" contained about one thousand five hundred huts and somewhere about seven thousand five hundred inhabitants. Of the chief, Campbell said he appeared thoughtful, deep and cautious, "extremely like the portraits I have seen of Buonaparte which were taken ten or twelve years ago." Campbell inquired as to his willingness to receive Christian teachers, and at first Mothibi objected that his people had no time to attend to instruction—to teaching, moreover,

which was contrary to customs that they would never give up; but finally he said: "Send instructors and I will be a father to them." As if divining the importance of these words, Campbell prints them in capital letters. They were indeed momentous, for out of this invitation there was born the Bechuana Mission, with Moffat's long career, Livingstone's explorations, and the labours of their colleagues, none of whom we would willingly overlook.

From Lattakoo Campbell proceeded in an easterly direction as far as the Malalareen (or Hart) River, which he followed down to its junction with the Yellow (or Vaal) River; then by way of Griqua Town through the Asbestos Mountains to the Orange River. Thence he took his wagons over the extremely rough, and often barren, country along the southern bank of the river as far as the Pella mission station, less than a hundred miles from the mouth. From there he turned south through the desert of Little Namaqualand and so back to Cape Town. He thus accomplished what must always be regarded as one of the most remarkable journeys in the history of South African exploration.

When Robert Moffat landed in Cape Town at the beginning of 1817 he had before him almost unknown regions to venture into.

V

So far in our survey we have said nothing about the missionaries whose travels and labours have left so deep a mark upon South Africa. It all forms a thrilling story but in this book we are concerned

with only part of the enterprise undertaken by a single society—the London Missionary Society.

The first agents of this Society sailed in a convict ship from England to South Africa in the year 1798. In the course of a short period the mission stations were scattered over a very wide area, but here we will notice only two fields—Namaqualand and Bechuanaland.

The first of these is the district to the north-west of the old Cape Colony, both north and south of the Orange River. Hither came in 1805 the heroic brothers Albrecht who travelling north from Cape Town and across the Orange River settled at Warmbad. In 1809 stations were founded in the region that is named Little Namaqualand immediately south of the Orange River.

Before this, the missionary Anderson had penetrated to the Orange River farther to the east and had commenced work among the nomadic Griqua. After travelling about in their company from place to place for some time, he settled with them in 1802 at a fountain named Klaarwater—the station subsequently known as Griqua Town. Some distance north of this place lay Lattakoo, visited, as we have already narrated, by John Campbell in 1813. Encouraged by the words of the Batlhapi chief, Mothibi, the London Missionary Society dispatched the missionaries Evans and Hamilton, and later James Read, to commence a mission among this Bechuana tribe. Evans soon retired from the mission, but Read and Hamilton worked on and in 1817 prevailed upon Mothibi and his people to remove their town to a better site on the Kuruman River. This town was called New Lattakoo. Read

was afterwards transferred to a station within the Colony and Hamilton worked on alone till May 1821, when Robert Moffat joined him.

Of all the stations founded by the London Missionary Society only those in Bechuanaland were destined to continue as such to the present day. Some of them were for good reasons handed over to other societies. Others became self-supporting churches and ultimately attached to the Congregational Union of South Africa. Others, again, served their temporary purpose and were abandoned. None of them can be pronounced a failure, for they were all the scenes of the labour of devoted men and women, and only the Lamb's Book will reveal the numbers of people, of various races, who found Eternal Life through them.

One other subject demands our attention before we concentrate our gaze upon Robert Moffat: the history of some of the people to whom he was to minister.

CHAPTER III

THE BUSHMEN AND HOTTENTOTS

Mild, melancholy, and sedate he stands,
Tending another's flock upon the fields—
His father's once—where now the white man builds
His home, and issues forth his proud commands:
His dark eye flashes not; his listless hands
Support the boor's huge firelock, but the shields
And quivers of his race are gone: he yields,
Submissively, his freedom and his lands.
Has he no courage?—Once he had—but, lo!
The felon's chain hath worn him to the bone.
No enterprise?—Alas! the brand, the blow
Have humbled him to dust—his HOPE is gone.
"He's a base-hearted hound—not worth his food"—
His master cries;—"he has no *gratitude.*"

THOMAS PRINGLE, *The Hottentot.*

I

THE scene is on the borders of one of the least hospitable regions of the globe—the Kalahari desert of South Africa. A vast expanse of sand-dunes stretches away to the horizon—sun-scorched, treeless, almost waterless. Before us there seems to be a large, unbroken lake, in which the few clouds of the sky are reflected perfectly. Now there appears a herd of antelope, standing up to their hocks in the water. Across the lake move swiftly three or four tall columns: they are not water-spouts, but sand-whorls, made by eddying winds which carry upwards the sand of the desert. The scene changes suddenly:

the lake vanishes, and in its place there is nothing but a sea of red sand upon which a solitary antelope —multiplied a moment ago by the mirage into a herd—is slowly wending its way.

In some such place as this Robert Moffat once came upon a little group of desert Ishmaels, men and women. They were not attractive people: none of them were taller than five feet; their skins dry, and of a dirty-yellow colour; their heads large and low; their noses depressed, their eyes deeply-set. One of their number, a woman, was lying dead wrapped in the sheepskin she wore when alive. The others were engaged in scooping out a grave in the sand, which they loosened when necessary with a fire-hardened stick, weighted with a heavy, rounded, perforated stone. On the sand lay some bows and arrows—the latter tipped with chipped flints or agates, coated with a deadly poison made from a certain spider. So intently engaged were they upon their grave-digging that they did not notice the approach of the white man and his companions. When they saw him, they grasped their weapons, but his genial voice put them at their ease. Speaking rapidly with strange sounds like the popping of corks, the Bushmen explained what they were doing, though no explanation was really necessary. They had been wandering in search of *tsamma*—a desert-melon that is both food and drink, for it stores up water beneath its rind. And now one of their number had died—a woman with two little children. Since they could not be burdened with motherless bairns (who should feed them?) and it seemed right that in the shadowy spirit-world the mother would need them, they

proposed, according to their custom, to bury the little ones too—alive. Horrified at the cruel deed to be done under the broad heavens, Robert Moffat expostulated, and the diminutive folk, men and women, could find no answer except, "Who will care for them?" "I will," replied Moffat, "give them to me and I will take them with me to my home at Kuruman, near to the fountain of Klaborungani, the great serpent. There I will feed them and clothe them and when they grow up will teach them about the Great God of whom you are ignorant."

Thus it came to pass that when Moffat returned home he carried with him two children, and Mary, his wife, brought them up with her own babies, as part of the family.

In his wanderings, to be described in our later chapters, Robert Moffat often came upon little bands of these Bushmen, who led a nomadic existence on the mountains and plains of the interior. On one occasion when he was without food, faint and weary through hunger and travel, he struck one of their rude encampments. Since they had killed no game they were reduced to eating the larvæ of ants, and of these, the best they had to offer, they gave him a meal. For, untamable though they might appear to be, these people had their virtues.

The Bushmen are usually considered as one of the most degraded races on earth. Their character has been described in the harshest terms—mostly by people upon whose consciences the extermination of the race must have rested uncomfortably. They are said to have been the most treacherous, vindictive, untamable of savages, only fitted to be wiped out

as a blot upon nature. But more fair-minded people who knew them well, speak more favourably of them. They are said to have been distinguished for loyalty to their chiefs; they were certainly marked by a very high degree of courage; and, admittedly, they were gifted far beyond any other African race in their artistic skill. Their paintings, still to be found on the walls of caves in South Africa, are delightful in accurate characterization of animals. The astonishing wealth of their folk-lore is shown by the fact that Dr Bleek's collection fills eighty-four stout MS. volumes.

The story of this people in modern times provides one of the tragedies of inter-racial contact. How numerous they were we have no means of knowing; but we do know that hardly any of them remain. They were gradually swept out of their mountain fastnesses, driven from cave to cave, by a deliberate policy of extermination. It was said, of course, that they were the aggressors. They would raid the farmers' herds and carry off and kill the cattle and sheep. But much is to be said for the contrary assertion of their sympathizers that this was only their method of retaliation. Nor are these sympathizers all missionaries. Some of the most indignant protests against the cruelties meted out to the Bushmen have been uttered by colonists—such, for example, as Mr George W. Stow, who studied their history closely, and states: "From all the evidence that can be obtained, the Bushmen in their undisturbed state appear never to have been aggressors." [1]

As the Europeans advanced into the interior they

[1] *The Races of South Africa* (1905), p. 38.

calmly assumed that nobody held any proprietary rights in the land. They gradually killed off the immense herds of game, and occupied all the fountains. The Bushmen saw their means of subsistence disappearing, and, ignorant of the white man's stringent ideas of property, they very naturally drove off or killed the cattle they found grazing where the game, which they had regarded as their own property, had been exterminated. The farmers as naturally resisted; followed and recaptured when possible their cattle, and slew the marauders as often as they could. Reprisals provoked further reprisals, until, in their exasperation, the Europeans organized commandos with the express purpose of wiping out of existence these troublers of their peace. When closely pursued, the Bushmen took refuge in the caves on the almost inaccessible mountain sides: and there, in many cases, they were smothered to death in scores by their ruthless pursuers, who blocked up the entrances with brushwood and set it on fire.

In this struggle for existence their bitterest enemies, of whatever shade of colour they might be, were forced to make an unqualified acknowledgment of the courage and daring the Bushmen so invariably exhibited. Even when surrounded and borne down by a host of enemies, the Bushman seldom or never asked for mercy from his hated foes. Wounded and bleeding as he might be, he continued obstinately fighting to the last. Shot through one arm, he would instantly use his knee or foot to enable him to draw his bow with the one remaining uninjured. If his last arrow was gone, he still struggled as best he might, until, finding death remorselessly upon him, he hastened to cover his head that no enemy might see the expression of death agony upon his face![1]

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 216.

Indeed they died gamely. It is on record that one small group, the last to live on a certain mountain, defended themselves bravely in their stronghold till only one man was left. Posting himself on a projecting rock, where sheer precipices of two hundred feet yawned on either side—a spot where none of his enemies would dare to follow him—this plucky fellow kept up the fight. Bullets fell around him as he plied his arrows with unerring aim wherever his enemies exposed themselves incautiously. Then came the end. Disregarding the shouts of his foes, who, moved with admiration, promised to spare his life if he would surrender, he discharged his last arrow and, hurling a final defiance at the despoilers of his race, leaped headlong into the abyss.

On the other hand, not all the colonials followed this policy of extermination. Many of them showed their sympathy with the Bushmen in the most practical manner by giving them herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, thus endeavouring to tame them and wean them from nomadic habits. Many a farmer found among them most faithful servants and most skilful of herdsmen. It is on record that at least one Dutchman was accustomed, when there was no pasturage on his own farm, to give his cattle entirely into the charge of a company of Bushmen, who never failed to bring them back in so improved a condition that he scarcely knew them to be his own. Mr Stow records other facts tending to show that "had the conquering race been desirous of doing so, it would not have been difficult to have cultivated peace with these oppressed people, if measures of real kindness had been in the first instance adopted towards them."

But the efforts of their few friends could not outweigh the hatred of their many enemies. Not white men alone, but Griqua, Korannas, Bechuana, Basuto, Amaxosa, joined in extirpating the Bushmen. Robert Moffat and others like-minded might befriend individuals here and there, but as a race they were doomed. They did not take readily to the civilization of their conquerors. "Our houses are among the rocks," they said; "we are free men; we love the sun!"

II

The other race who, with the Bushmen, were the earliest people we know of to inhabit the old Cape Colony, were the Hottentots, who occupied the mountainous country along the coast.

Robert Moffat's first parishioners were Hottentots, and he had much more to do with that race than with Bushmen. He thought it not improbable that the Hottentots came originally from Egypt, and this was by no means so wild a guess as might be imagined. It is now generally accepted, we believe, that they are a mixed race—a hybrid between invaders of semi-Caucasian blood and the indigenous Bushmen. Their very difficult language preserves some features that are common to the Hamitic tongues of North Africa. At some remote period the progenitors of the Hottentots migrated from the north, bringing with them the long-horned cattle of ancient Egypt and fat-tailed sheep. Their present name was bestowed upon them by the Dutch, apparently in imitation of their uncouth speech. They call themselves Khoi-Khoin, *i.e.* "men of men."

It has been estimated that the Hottentots numbered some forty thousand souls at the time when the Dutch arrived at the Cape in the seventeenth century. They were a pastoral people, subsisting mainly on their herds and flocks, which they drove from place to place according to the state of the pasturage.

Two of the Hottentot tribes were accustomed to bring their herds to graze on the slopes of the mountains at Table Bay—where Cape Town now stands. All that stretch of country they claimed as their own. The Dutch being in need of cattle entered into trade with them, exchanging copper bars and tobacco for oxen. For a time all went well, but then the usual kind of collision took place. When the Hottentots saw that the Dutch were erecting a castle and other permanent buildings, and were gradually spreading out to the present Wynberg and Rondebosch, where for generations the Hottentots had grazed their cattle, they naturally objected to having the land filched from them. The farmers, on the other hand, objected to their bringing cattle on to ground they were cultivating. The Hottentots could not hope to drive out the Dutch by force of arms, but they might hope to worry them so much that they would retire. Hence, stealing of cattle and occasional murder of solitary colonists.

The Netherlands East India Company, desirous not only of enriching themselves but also of spreading the Kingdom of God, had given Van Riebeek, the governor of the settlement, strict orders not to molest the natives. But under the circumstances conflicts were almost inevitable. Matters drifted on

for some years, periods of friendship and trade alternating with periods of suspicion and violence. Then in 1672 the Dutch decided formally to purchase the land from the Hottentots. The agreement is still preserved. As the Cape historian pithily remarks, the Hottentot chief readily consented to the conditions proposed for they took nothing from him which he had not already lost. The whole of the territory stretching from Saldanha Bay to False Bay was ceded to the Dutch in absolute possession in return for merchandise stated to be worth £1600. Actually, according to accounts furnished to the directors, the value of the goods amounted to £9. 12s. 9d.[1]

As time went on, wars were of frequent occurrence between the Hottentot tribes, and sometimes broke out between the Dutch and the Hottentots. One or two tribes became subject to the Dutch to the extent that the Governor appointed successors in the chieftainship. A certain number of individuals, especially girls, entered the service of the colonists, but all attempts failed to induce the tribes as a whole to settle down and adopt agriculture. As the farms extended farther into the interior, only two alternatives were open to the nomads; they could either become servants to the colonists, or they could move off farther inland. Disease settled the question for many hundreds of them. The first epidemic of smallpox broke out in 1713 and wrought fearful havoc upon the clans living nearest

[1] McCall Theal, *South Africa*, p. 43. Actually there were two transactions, not one. See Theal's *History of South Africa*, 1486-1691, pp. 217 *et seq.* He gives the Dutch text of the agreement in an appendix to the latter volume.

to Cape Town, so much so that nothing more was to be feared from their proximity.

After the British came into possession of the Cape, the Hottentots' tribal system was broken up and they were made subject to European law. They could no longer roam about as they pleased within the Colony. But by this time large numbers had retired beyond the frontiers.

III

One of these remnant Hottentot tribes goes by the name of Korannas, but their proper name was the Gorachoqua. Failing to retain their lands in the vicinity of the Cape they wandered northwards to the Orange River, and occupied the region immediately below and above the Aughrabies Falls.

The Korannas are said to have been superior to other Hottentots in stature and muscular strength, but inferior in moral character. Crossing the river about 1785 they wandered with their herds in a north-easterly direction until they came into contact with the Bechuana, whose herds they looted. They had by now secured firearms, which made them a powerful foe. They steadily increased in strength and daring, and devastated tribe after tribe, as far northward as Lattakoo and to the east as far as Basutoland. They waged incessant war upon the Bushmen whom they found living in the hills of what is now the western district of the Orange Free State and Griqualand. They were joined later by a redoubtable ally in the person of Jan Bloem, whom we have mentioned in the preceding chapter,

and who was elected captain of one of the Koranna clans. He led them in an attack upon Lattakoo.

In 1820 parties of Korannas had established themselves on the banks of the Kuruman river. For many years they carried on their depredations, but the rise of the Basuto nation under Moshesh, the growing power of the Griqua, the ravages of disease, all contributed to their downfall. In Moffat's time some were still living on the Orange River, near the Aughrabies Falls, others between the Vaal and Modder Rivers, in what is now the Orange Free State.

IV

In the earlier days of the Colony there was a large surplus of male settlers. The government endeavoured to prohibit unions of these men with Hottentot women and with slave women, but in vain. In the course of a century and a half a numerous population of half-breeds grew up, and these were destined to play a large part in the future history of South Africa. Many of them mingled with the dispossessed Hottentots to form new peoples on the fringe of the Colony.

Chief of these were the Griqua, who figure largely in the early history of the London Missionary Society and in Moffat's life. We have already met them during Mr Campbell's travels. The name is probably a corruption of Grigriqua, the designation of one of the Hottentot tribes who in early days lived in the vicinity of St Helena Bay, north of Cape Town. How they came to live at Griqua Town may now be briefly told.

One of the most famous families of half-breeds, or Bastaards, was named Kok, *i.e.* Cook, apparently because one of their progenitors had served in a colonist's kitchen. Adam Kok, a conspicuous member of this family, was born about 1710. He gathered around him a band of half-breeds and Hottentots and migrated to Little Namaqualand, beyond the border of the Colony. There he became recognized as chief of the Hottentots living in that region. Adam was a great hunter and it was on one of his long excursions beyond the Orange River in search of ivory that he came upon the strong fountains at Klaarwater, afterwards the site of Griqua Town. Finding this a more hospitable district than the wilderness of Namaqualand, he settled down there with some of his people.

Adam Kok's son, Cornelius,[1] remained with a section of their people in Little Namaqualand, where he came under the influence of the missionaries. A mighty hunter, he commanded great respect and did his utmost to raise his followers to a higher level of life. In 1795 he was called to succeed his father in the chieftainship at Klaarwater (Griqua Town). By this time the Griqua (as we may now call Kok's followers) had increased considerably. They had been joined by a party of half-breeds led by Barend Barends and his brother Nicholas. A conglomerate crowd was now settled in that region which came to be known as Griqualand—remnants of various tribes, Bushmen, Hottentots, half-breeds, as well as a few Bechuana and some runaway slaves from the Colony. The missionary Anderson laboured among them with great devotion for many years

[1] See p. 38.

and we shall presently find Robert Moffat living with them for a time.

Cornelius Kok returned later to his old home in Little Namaqualand. His son, Adam, took his place as chief at Griqua Town and with Barend Barends ruled the community.

This, then, was the position of affairs in South Africa when Robert Moffat landed in 1817. The colonists, who were mainly Dutch, had spread out over a wide area; the aboriginal Bushmen had been driven largely into the regions north of the frontier; many of the Hottentots had become serfs of the colonists, while others—such as Namaquas and Korannas—preserved their tribal existence in the north. The composite Griqua were settled north of the Orange River and were becoming so powerful as to be regarded as a menace to the Colony; beyond them lay the Bechuana tribes living in regions which were only very partially known to Europeans. Beyond the eastern border of the Colony resided great tribes of Bantu, with whom we are not concerned in this book. Missionaries were already at work among Namaquas, Griqua and Bechuana, but the missions were still in their infancy.

Having now set our stage, we may ring up the curtain upon the first scenes of the missionary career of Robert Moffat.

CHAPTER IV

A SEVERE TEST

Thenceforth to labour, strong in stedfast zeal
And faithful furtherance of a mighty plan,
In noble language labour to reveal
His Maker unto man.
F. W. H. MYERS, *The Genesis of a Missionary.*

I

PROBABLY there is no more severe test of a young man's character than that provided by residence beyond the bounds of civilization. Certainly the first few years of foreign missionary service show a man's mettle. It was even more true a century ago than it is to-day. We are to see in this chapter a youth on trial. He is twenty-one years of age. He has not been brought up delicately, it is true, but the cottage at Carronshore and the gardener's lodge at High Leigh were palaces compared with the hovels in which he must now live. The comparative hardships of an apprenticeship under a stern taskmaster are as nothing to what he must now endure. He had little enough to eat then; he will have less now. The lamp of his religious faith has shone clear and bright in the atmosphere of Methodist circles in England: will it flicker and fail under opposition and in isolation? He has walked without reproach where hemmed round by convention; how will he conduct himself where

there are no restraints except those arising from within? He has sown and planted and gathered; can he influence men? This under-gardener—what strength of character will he show in dealing with wild outlaws, one at least of whom has a price set upon his head?

The cold blast of opposition quickly met Robert Moffat when he landed at Cape Town on 13th January 1817. The colonial authorities claimed the right of withholding permission to proceed beyond the borders of the Colony; and while they did not restrain freebooters they now refused to allow Moffat and his colleague Kitchingman to travel and settle beyond the Orange River. The Governor stated that he had been informed that many of the servants and slaves belonging to farmers within the Colony had fled to Griqua Town and that the missionary there, while exhorting them to return, had not in fact compelled them to do so; it was contrary to policy to allow runaways to gather in this way beyond the jurisdiction of colonial law. The answer to this was that ill-treated slaves would escape in any case, and if the Government was not prepared to take the country under its rule, then surely the need for such moral control as missionaries would exert was all the more necessary. At that period, however, the authorities had not yet been convinced that the presence of a mission was beneficial to good order, and this argument did not at the time persuade the Governor. He withdrew his objections after some months, and in the meanwhile Moffat made good use of the delay by spending the time, partly at Stellenbosch, where in the home of a friendly farmer he learned Dutch, and partly in

Cape Town, where he acquired as much practical knowledge as he could.

By September all hindrances were removed and the two men, with Mrs Kitchingman, set off on their long journey to Namaqualand.

It has been said that the great age of missionary effort in Africa ended with the coming of the railway. There is this much truth in that over-statement that the old methods of travel did lend themselves to an exhibition of heroic conduct. Both in South and East Africa missionary work in the interior involved long and very arduous journeys. In East Africa it meant several months of hard tramping with a large company of porters—undisciplined men, who at any time might tire of the hardships, throw down their burdens and desert, or, worse still, go off with their loads. It meant, further, facing wild and hostile tribes, as well as frowning nature. In the South, the missionary set out in a wagon drawn by sixteen or eighteen oxen; if the wagon broke down there was nobody but himself and his men to repair it; oxen might stray, or die, or be taken by lions; all kinds of contingencies had to be allowed for. With the building of railways and of roads for motor-cars, missionaries like other folk are carried with comparative swiftness and comfort over the long distances; they arrive unwearied by the long journey and escape the loss of valuable time. But it is not all gain to them. The moral and physical endurance of the old pioneers was severely tested, but they were acclimatized and hardened in the process; they saw man and beast and nature at their worst; they acquired experience in handling men and oxen; they learned patience.

Moffat's destination was Great Namaqualand—the country lying across the Orange River that in later days was to come under the rule of Germany and to be wrested from her again in the Great War. During that conflict, General Botha linked the principal centres by rail with Cape Colony, and nowadays it is possible to reach them within a few days from Cape Town. But in Moffat's early years not a mile of railway had yet been built in South Africa; four months elapsed before he reached Africaner's kraal.

Trekking out of Cape Town the wagons wended their way through mountain passes on to the inland plateau, across country that now is beautifully wooded and luxuriant in cultivation. Farmhouses dotted the road for the first portion of the journey, and at these the travellers were received with the hospitality that has always distinguished the Dutch of South Africa.

It was in one of these houses that an oft-quoted incident took place. It has sometimes been adduced to illustrate the antipathy of the Dutch towards missionary work. That such hostility did in actual fact prevail very largely cannot be denied. Nor is it to be altogether wondered at; the wonder rather is that so many of these early settlers took so much interest religiously in their slaves and servants. I repeat the incident, not for the purpose of reiterating the criticisms but in order to throw light upon Moffat's character. It shows that this young man was true to his principles, but had a tactful way in propagating them.

The farmer who welcomed Moffat that day was a man of wealth. The visit of a minister was a

rare event, and one to be taken advantage of, and he proposed that after supper Moffat should conduct a religious service. Moffat gladly acquiesced. When supper was over, the big Bible and psalm-books were brought out and the family took their places.

"But where are the servants?" Moffat asked.
"Servants! what do you mean?"
"I mean the Hottentots, of whom I see so many on your farm."
"Hottentots! Do you mean that, then! Let me go to the mountains and call the baboons, if you want a congregation of that sort. Or stop—I have it; my sons, call the dogs that lie in front of the door—they will do."

Moffat quietly dropped an attempt that threatened to cause unpleasantness. A psalm was sung, prayer was offered, and then he read the lesson, choosing the story of the Syrophenician woman. He proceeded, as was expected, to deliver a sermon, and his text was: "Truth, Lord, but even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Before he had got very far the old farmer interrupted: "Will Mynheer sit down and wait a little? He shall have the Hottentots." They were called in, and Moffat finished his address. After they had left again the farmer said to Moffat: "My friend, you took a hard hammer and you have broken a hard head."

As the travellers advanced towards the north, they left behind both the smiling homesteads of wealthy farmers and the rough shacks of the furthermost frontiersmen. They came to the mission station of Bysondersmeid where Mr and Mrs Kitchingman were to remain, and Moffat went on

alone with the native driver and servants. The road got worse and worse. They entered a trackless stretch of country where the oxen found the utmost difficulty in dragging the heavy wagon through the deep sand—a vast expanse, without a blade of grass and with scarcely a bush and almost destitute of water. Here is one picture:

> Becoming dark, the oxen unable to proceed, ourselves exhausted with dreadful thirst and fatigue, we stretched our wearied limbs on the sand still warm from the noontide heat, being the hot season of the year. Thirst aroused us at an early hour; and finding the oxen incapable of moving the wagon one inch, we took a spade, and, with the oxen, proceeded to a hollow in a neighbouring mountain. Here we laboured for a long time, digging an immense hole in the sand, whence we obtained a scanty supply, exactly resembling the old bilge-water of a ship, but which was drunk with an avidity which no pen can describe. Hours were occupied in incessant labour to obtain a sufficiency for the oxen, which, by the time all had partaken, were ready for a second draught; while some, from the depth of the hole and the loose sand, got scarcely any. We filled the small vessels which we had brought, and returned to the wagon over a plain glowing with a meridian sun; the sand so hot, it was distressingly painful to walk. The oxen ran frantic, till they came to a place indurated, with little sand. Here they stood together, to cool their burning hoofs in the shade of their own bodies; those on the outside always trying to get into the centre.[1]

However, they reached the mission station of Pella, and from there went on to the Orange River. The wagon was taken to pieces and conveyed across the stream on rough fragile rafts made of dry willow

[1] Robert Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa* (1842), pp. 99, 100.

logs fastened together with strips of mimosa bark. This occupied several days. Moffat's turn to cross came at last, but not relishing the voyage on a raft he swam over. The river was broad and the current swift. His men were alarmed for his safety and plunged in to overtake him, but he reached the north bank before they did. "Were you born in the great water?" asked one of them. The wagon was put together again and loaded, and the journey was resumed towards Africaner's kraal, called Vredeberg.

Who was Africaner, and what kind of people were his?

II

Africaner's father, who is said to have had a dash of European blood in his veins, was chief of a Hottentot tribe which was at one time called the Jagers, or Hunters, their original native name being lost. The tribe had lived formerly in the rugged Witsenberg range of mountains, within a hundred miles of Cape Town, but being, like many other Hottentots, dispossessed of their lands by the colonists, the majority had moved off into the interior, leaving a remnant to become serfs of the farmers. Africaner's father, who succeeded to the chieftainship of this remnant, lived for a considerable time in the service of a burgher named Piet Pienaar[1] in the district of Tulbagh, and trekked with him when he removed to the extreme border of the Colony beyond the Oliphant River. By that time the tribe had dwindled to a few families, and Africaner had succeeded his father as their

[1] See p. 37.

head. Pienaar found in him a faithful and intrepid shepherd, valorous in defending and increasing his flocks and herds. He employed Africaner and his brothers in raiding the Bushmen and Namaquas, furnishing them with guns and powder for use in their robberies. It was the custom, after surprising the unhappy victims at night, to shoot down the men and carry off the cattle with the women and children, the farmers taking most of the booty and sharing the rest among the slaves and Hottentots. Pienaar was notorious for his cruelties, and his licentiousness at last roused the suspicion of Africaner and his brothers. Ordered to pursue some Bushmen who had stolen a neighbour's cattle, they refused to obey, alleging that their master's motive was to gain possession of their wives. They were summoned at night to appear at their master's house, and Titus, one of Africaner's brothers, took his gun with him. During the interview Pienaar, gun in hand, knocked Africaner down, whereupon he was shot—either by Titus or by Africaner himself; it is not clear who did the deed.

Immediately afterwards Africaner rallied the remnant of his tribe and fled to the Orange River, carrying with him whatever spoil he could secure and all Pienaar's guns and ammunition. Crossing over into Namaqualand he became recognized there as a chief.

The colonial Government and the farmers attempted to punish Africaner, but he maintained his position in spite of the commandos sent against him. Among other vain efforts, the farmers induced Barends and his associate half-breeds to go against Africaner, and a long series of severe and bloody

conflicts ensued. Africaner was not slow in commencing reprisals upon the colonists. In his first expedition his followers murdered a Boer and also a half-breed from whom they carried off much cattle.

Africaner became a terror, not only to the Colony, but also to the tribes of the north. His name carried dismay even to the solitary wastes. At a subsequent period a Namaqua chief, pointing to Africaner, said to Robert Moffat: "Look, there is the man, once the lion at whose roar even the inhabitants of distant hamlets fled from their homes. Yes, and I have for fear of his approach fled with my people, our wives and our babes, to the mountain glen or to the wilderness and spent nights among beasts of prey rather than gaze on the eyes of this lion, or hear his roar."

Africaner was undoubtedly a man of great prowess, skilled in all tactics of savage warfare; his brother, Titus, was perhaps still more fierce and fearless (says Moffat)—a little man, but an extraordinary runner and able to bear any fatigue. Titus was a man who would enter at night an immense deep pool of the Orange River, swim with his gun to a rock just above the surface of the water, wait for a hippopotamus and shoot it at the moment it opened its jaws to seize him. He appeared incapable of fear.

When the first missionaries crossed the Orange River they settled at Warmbad, about a hundred miles westward of Africaner's kraal, among a mixed multitude of Namaqua and half-breed refugees from the Colony. The half-breeds, proud of their superior knowledge, regarded the Hottentots with

disdain and the frequent dissensions between the two parties made the work of the missionaries almost impossible. Africaner occasionally visited them and shared in the instruction they gave, but the impression was transient, for the residents feared and distrusted the notorious outlaw and he refrained from visiting them after a time. The presence of the missionaries certainly saved the settlement from destruction for a long while. At last a quarrel arose between Africaner and a man whom he had dispatched on an errand to the Colony, and the end of the story, too long to repeat here, was that Africaner threatened to attack Warmbad. The missionaries were compelled to retire with their followers across the river, after suffering great hardships. Finding the place abandoned, Africaner's men plundered and burned it. The Namaqua mission was resumed at Pella—so named as being a place of refuge.

Mr Campbell during his travels found, when he approached Namaqualand, that everybody was in terror lest Africaner should fall upon them—the very mention of his name made them tremble. On reaching Pella he wrote a conciliatory letter to Africaner, who sent a favourable reply, and Mr Ebner, one of the missionaries, went from Pella to settle at Africaner's kraal. It required, says Moffat truly, no little circumspection, acuteness and decision to gain influence over, and esteem from, a people who had been guilty of such enormities and whose hand had been against every man. Every action and sentence of the missionary was weighed by minds accustomed to scrutinize and suspect.

This notwithstanding, the missionary persevered,

and after a time Africaner, with his two brothers David and Jacobus, and a number of others, surrendered to the Gospel and were baptized.

When Moffat was travelling north from Cape Town he found the farmers of the border sceptical to the last degree about the reported conversion of the notorious outlaw. One told Moffat that Africaner would set him up as a mark for his boys to shoot at; another that Africaner would strip off his skin and make a drumhead of it. A kind motherly woman wiped a tear from her eye as she said farewell to Moffat. "Had you been an old man," she said, "it would have been nothing, for you would soon have died, whether or no; but you are young and going to become a prey to that monster."

III

These fears were groundless. Africaner received the young missionary with evident pleasure, and expressed a hope that he would live long with him and his people. He then ordered a number of women to bring bundles of native mats and long sticks like fishing-rods. Pointing to a spot of ground Africaner said to them: "There you must build a house for the missionary." In less than an hour they had set up a hut. "I never witnessed such expedition," said the astonished Moffat. In this hut he lived nearly six months. When the sun shone it became unbearably hot within; the rain came through, and dust storms made the place uninhabitable; dogs easily forced their way through the frail wall and ate his dinner.

Moffat had not been very long at Vredeberg

before he discovered that Mr Ebner and Africaner were not on friendly terms. Probably there were faults on both sides. Mr Ebner had met Moffat at Cape Town, and, before preceding him on the northward journey, had described the position in terms that very considerably astonished the young missionary, who, having heard of the conversion of some of the people, had, in his inexperience, looked to find the graces of Christianity growing up like gourds in a night. Africaner's folk, whether baptized or unbaptized, were, said Mr Ebner, wicked, suspicious and dangerous. Though he had succeeded in winning some of them for the Faith, Mr Ebner did not possess the peculiar tact necessary in nurturing such wild people. Titus, Africaner's brother, hated him with a deadly hatred, and Moffat was compelled to witness some very unpleasant scenes when this man would come to his colleague's house and curse him violently and threaten him. Soon afterwards Mr Ebner left the place and retired to the Colony. Young Moffat was left alone to face the music.

One thing could never be said of these early missionaries: they were never subject to the temptation of winning the people by promises of material advantage; in other words, of bribing them into conversion. They were as poor as their people—often poorer. Moffat at this time drew twenty-five pounds a year from the mission funds as salary. This was totally inadequate to supply him with imported provisions. The country was barren in the extreme through lack of water, and until he could make a garden and rear corn and vegetables he had to live as the natives lived—on milk, chiefly,

and on meat, when he could get it by hunting. Frequently he had nothing but a draught of milk in the morning, another at noon, and a third in the evening. He came to know the virtue of a cord tied round his middle. He records his experiences without making a complaint of them.

I had frequently pretty long fasts, and have had recourse to the "fasting girdle" as it is called; on more than one occasion after the morning service, I have shouldered my gun, and gone to the plain or the mountain brow in search of something to eat, and, when unsuccessful, have returned, laid down my piece, taken the Word of Life and addressed my congregation. I never liked begging, and have frequently been hard put to; but many a time has an unknown friend placed in my hut a portion of food, on which I have looked with feelings better conceived than described. I shall never forget the kindness of Titus Africaner, who, when he visited the station, would come and ask what he could do for me, and on receiving a few shots, would go to the field, and almost always bring me home something, for he was an extraordinary marksman.[1]

Notwithstanding these things Moffat went on with his work. The people possessed their own language, but spoke and understood Dutch, so that Moffat was able to teach them. He gathered about a hundred pupils to his school, and regularly conducted services morning and night. Moffat fortunately possessed some sense of humour, and must have enjoyed finding himself with Africaner teaching his unwashen mob of scholars to cleanse themselves and their filthy sheepskin karosses in the fountain. But at times the loneliness of his situation became almost unbearable. Then he would betake himself with his violin to a rock outside the settlement, and

[1] *Missionary Labours*, p. 147.

there solace himself by singing his mother's favourite hymn :

Awake my soul, in joyful lays,
To sing the great Redeemer's praise.

Writing to his parents, Moffat thus described his daily life :

Ebner is gone and has left me a solitary missionary with little prospect of having help. But the cause is the Lord's, and how can we be faint or weary in well-doing, while we witness immortal souls dying for lack of knowledge ? I have many difficulties to encounter being alone. No one can do anything for me in my household affairs. I must attend to everything, which often confuses me, and, indeed, hinders me in my work, for I could wish to have almost nothing to do but to instruct the heathen, both spiritually and temporally. Daily I do a little in the garden, daily I am doing something for the people in mending guns. I am carpenter, smith, cooper, tailor, shoemaker, miller, baker and housekeeper—the last is the most burdensome of any. Indeed, none is burdensome but it. An old Namaqua woman milks my cows, makes a fire and washes. All other things I do myself, though I seldom prepare anything till impelled by hunger. I drink plenty of milk, and often eat a piece of dry flesh. Lately I reaped nearly two bolls of wheat from two hatfuls which I sowed. This is of great help to me. I shall soon have plenty of Indian corn, cabbage, melons, and potatoes. Water is scarce. I have sown wheat a second time on trial. I live chiefly now on bread and milk.[1]

From Moffat's account of his life at this time it is easy to see that he quickly gained great influence over the wild people. Between him, on the one hand, and the two brothers on the other, an enduring friendship was established. Moffat was ill in the early period of his sojourn. For a time

[1] J. S. M., p. 30.

he lay in delirium and when he opened his eyes, in the first lucid moments, he saw Africaner, the erstwhile terror of the farmers, gazing at him with eyes full of sympathy and tenderness. "During the whole period I lived there," wrote Moffat, "I do not remember having occasion to be grieved with him or to complain of any part of his conduct." Africaner was a changed man, if ever there was one, assiduous in attendance at the daily services, in reading his Bible, and in seconding his missionary's efforts to improve his people in cleanliness and industry. Titus, whom Moffat described as "a fearful example of ungodliness," did not become a believer until late in life; "I hear what you say," he would declare, "and I think I sometimes understand, but my heart will not feel." He and Moffat were, however, great friends.

IV

Mr Ebner had proposed calling the station Jerusalem. Moffat likened it rather to Gilboa, on which neither rain nor dew was to fall. The extreme sterility of the land made it an impossible site for a permanent mission, and Moffat resolved to examine the country to the north-west, on the borders of Damaraland, where, so it was reported, fountains of water abounded. On examining his wagon he found it crippled, for the dryness and heat had shrunk the wheels and the tyres had come loose. He had never welded a bit of iron in his life, but he set to work now to make bellows and then, with a blue granite stone as an anvil, he effected the repairs. Thirty men, including the Africaner

brothers, accompanied him—so large a party in order to discourage any attack that might be contemplated.

They passed through much desolate country—sandy plains overrun by great herds of zebra, of kudus and other antelope, as well as giraffes, rhinoceroses and buffaloes in smaller numbers. Water was scarce; it was found sometimes in small pools, stagnant and covered with green froth; and more than once they had to dispute possession with lions. They occasionally came to a Namaqua village, and Moffat preached to the people through an interpreter but found them not unnaturally suspicious of him because of his company, from whom they, or their fellows, had suffered so much. They had a justifiable dread of "hat-wearers," as they called civilized men.

Moffat and his companions reached some of the branches of the Fish River and then, finding further advance impracticable without fighting, they returned without having found a favourable site for a settlement in a country which gave Moffat the impression of being fit only for beasts of prey.

Africaner was anxious to leave Namaqualand for some more fertile district, and a few months later Moffat journeyed to Griqualand to inspect a place which the Griqua had offered to the chief as a home. With two of Africaner's brothers and a son he set out on horseback, each carrying a kaross (sheepskin blanket) and trusting for food to what they could obtain on the road. This proved to be one of the most adventurous journeys Moffat ever undertook. They travelled along the north

bank of the Orange River—a rough, almost untrodden country in those days. The river sometimes wound through immense chasms, overhung with stupendous precipices; then it broadened out like a translucent lake with beautiful towering mimosas and willows reflected from its bosom. An extraordinary variety of birds, wild geese, flamingos, swallows, guinea-fowl, kites and hawks and many others, enlivened the scene.

On this journey Moffat missed being the first European to see the great Falls[1] on the Orange River, called by the natives the Aughrabies and, later on, "The Hundred Falls" by G. A. Farini (1885). Campbell had also passed without seeing them in 1813. George Thompson discovered them in 1824 and named them "King George's Cataract." Moffat wrote: "I wandered at noon towards the river, and supposing the Falls (from the noise) were

[1] Lieut. F. C. Cornell (*The Glamour of Prospecting*, 1920, pp. 188-9), after relating the great difficulty of reaching the spot, thus describes the Falls: "Emerging from a rift in the labyrinth of granite, we stood suddenly on the edge of a profound chasm, over the farther lip of which, a few hundred yards upstream, the huge muddy volume of the Orange was hurtling in one stupendous spout. The scene was absolutely terrifying, for the dark precipice, smooth as though chiselled, and dank and slippery with the incessant spray, fell sheer away from our very feet, and where it did not actually overhang, offered no foothold even for a baboon, whilst clouds of spray drove round us, and the solid rock trembled with the monstrous music of the fall. Rapidly converging from its width of a mile upstream, the Orange at this spot becomes pent in a deep channel, self-worn in the solid granite, until, when it takes its final plunge, it is concentrated into a terrific spout barely twenty yards in width, which hurls itself with incredible velocity over the precipice a sheer four hundred feet into the gloomy abyss below." Many people who have lived in South Africa all their days have never even heard of these falls, which are more than double the height of Niagara and higher than the Victoria Falls of the Zambezi.

not very far distant, I walked towards them; but feeling excessively tired, I sat down under the shadow of a bush, and was soon fast asleep, having had little rest the night before." He pursued his journey without making further effort to see the Falls. Unlike his son-in-law, David Livingstone, Moffat was not an explorer. We cannot imagine Livingstone passing one of the greatest sights in Africa in this way.

One afternoon the travellers reached the river after a dreadfully scorching ride across a plain. The men rode forward to a Bushman village while Moffat's horse made for a little pool of water which the retreating river had left behind. Moffat dismounted and took a hearty draught. He noticed an unusual taste and then seeing that the pool was almost surrounded with a fence, it flashed across his mind that it was a game-trap and that the water was poisoned. The Bushmen were greatly concerned; "they looked on me," said Moffat, "with eyes which bespoke heartfelt compassion." He began to feel giddy and as if his arteries would burst. His men expected him to fall down dead, but after a time he felt better and recovered in a few days. The Bushmen showed the party no little kindness.

Seven days from starting they reached a place on the river called Kwees (near the present site of Upington) and from there struck across waterless country towards Griqua Town. On the second day Moffat and one of the men became separated from the rest and went on alone, with no food in their pockets and no water. Their horses were dead-beat and Moffat and his companion rode or walked

all day and far into the night before going to sleep with their heads resting on their saddles. For three days they had eaten nothing. That night in his sleep Moffat passed from stream to stream and slaked his thirst at many a crystal fount, but from such dreams he awoke speechless with thirst. He climbed a hill to look for water while his companion went after the horses, which had wandered; but all he found was a herd of baboons, which threatened to attack but at which he dared not fire, knowing that if he wounded one, the rest would skin him in five minutes.

The horses were found and on they went. They were soon obliged to dismount from the weary beasts and to drive them slowly and silently over the glowing plain, where the mirage tantalized them with pictures of lakes and pools studded with lovely islets. It was so hot that they frequently stopped to thrust their heads into holes excavated by the ant-bear in old ant-hills, in order that they might interpose something solid between their fevered brains and the rays of the sun. Their heads felt as if covered with live coals. Not till late in the afternoon of the fourth day did they reach water which, though moving with animalcules, muddy and nauseous with filth, they drank after cooling themselves. Late that night they reached Griqua Town, more dead than alive.

From there Moffat went on to Lattakoo, where for the first time he saw Bechuana, among whom he was to live in the future.

On the return journey they found too much water instead of too little—during one night at least. They were overtaken by one of the deluging

rain-storms common in South Africa at certain times in the year. It was night and no shelter was available. Hail and piercing wind chilled them to the bone. They managed to light a tiny fire, but when they went to seek for fuel the fire went out and they found themselves in the ludicrous position of not knowing where it had been. They stumbled upon the ashes at last, and lay down in the pelting storm. Yet they slept, as tired men will sleep. The rain saturated their biscuit and tobacco, so they could neither eat nor smoke in the morning. A scorching day succeeded a tempestuous night and before sunset they would have paid any money for a bottle of the water they had washed in that morning. They reached home at last, and, as a result of the report they gave to Africaner, it was agreed to stay where they were for a time.

V

One day Moffat proposed that Africaner should accompany him to Cape Town. The chief looked at him in astonishment and said, "I had thought you loved me and do you advise me to go to the government to be hung up as a spectacle of public justice? Do you not know that I am an outlaw and that a thousand rix-dollars have been offered for this poor head?"

Moffat thought it would be a good thing, and once persuaded of this Africaner agreed to go. Had it not been for his reliance upon Moffat he would rather have put his head in a lion's mouth. As a precaution it was agreed that the chief should travel as the missionary's servant. There was not

much in their clothing to distinguish them, for Moffat's wardrobe had long ago been reduced to a minimum, and that minimum was mostly rags.

Everywhere from the kindly Boers on the road to Cape Town Moffat received warm congratulations on returning alive from Africaner's clutches. Some of them could hardly be persuaded that he really was Moffat in the flesh.

One good farmer persisted for a time in thinking him a ghost. "Don't come near me!" he exclaimed, "you have been long murdered by Africaner." "I am no ghost!" protested Moffat. But the man's alarm only increased. "Everybody says you were murdered and a man told me he had seen your bones." At length he extended his trembling hand and asked: "When did you rise from the dead?" When Moffat told him about the change in Africaner, the pious farmer was more amazed than ever. Africaner, as Moffat then learned for the first time, had killed this man's uncle. This caused Moffat to hesitate to make the men known to each other, but bethinking him of the goodness of the Boer's disposition he introduced Africaner to him. The thrice-astonished farmer was thunderstruck. "O God," he exclaimed, "what a miracle of Thy power! What cannot Thy grace accomplish!"

In Cape Town Moffat's first care was to wait on the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, who received Africaner with great affability and showed him much kindness. The Governor had sometimes doubted the utility of missionary enterprise, and, as we have seen, had not been willing at first to allow Moffat to proceed to Namaqualand. Here was proof of what could be accomplished; and the

Governor thought rightly that the money which had been promised as a reward for Africaner's head could not be spent to better purpose than in buying him a wagon.

Indeed, Moffat's bold step in taking Africaner to the Colony was amply justified. The opponents of missions could say nothing against this very evident fact of Africaner's conversion. And as we look back to those early days of missionary toil, so arduous, so apparently limited in result, we can see what it really meant. Had the missionaries not ventured among these wild outlaws beyond the frontier,—the Hottentots rendered doubly savage through resentment, and the half-breeds bent on a career of plunder—who can say what would have happened? That they did much good we know; but who can measure the amount of evil they prevented?

Africaner went back to his home; but Moffat did not return to Namaqualand. He saw Africaner once again at Lattakoo, but two years later the chief died. Died, as one writer says with a sneer, "in the odour of sanctity"—died, as another tells, after saying to his people: "We are not what we were, *savages*, but men professing to be taught according to the Gospel. Let us then do accordingly."

CHAPTER V

BUILDERS IN HOPE

What are those Golden Builders doing?
. . . Is that Calvary and Golgotha
Becoming a building of Pity and Compassion? Lo!
The stones are Pity, and the bricks well-wrought Affections
Enamell'd with Love and Kindness; and the tiles engraven gold,
Labour of merciful hands; the beams and rafters are Forgiveness.
The mortar and cement of the work tears of Honesty, the nails
And the screws and iron braces are well-wrought Blandishments
And well-contrivèd words, firm fixing, never forgotten,
Always comforting the remembrance; the floors Humility,
The ceilings Devotion, the hearths Thanksgiving. . . .
Go on, Builders in hope! Though Jerusalem wanders far away
Without the Gate of Los, among the dark Satanic wheels.

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Jerusalem.*

I

BEFORE Moffat left Namaqualand with Africaner he received letters which seemed to destroy some of his dearest hopes. Mr and Mrs Smith had persisted in refusing their consent to their daughter's departure for Africa, and in obedience to their wishes Mary had very reluctantly renounced the idea. In December 1818, however, letters written the previous April and May reached Dukinfield which, while breathing boundless hope, could not conceal from

Mary the terribly lonely condition of the young missionary. She felt that she must sink under the weight of an accusing conscience, "when I remember Robert's peculiarly trying situation and the strong affection which he seems to bear me."

Seeing her state of mind, Mr and Mrs Smith declared that they durst no longer withhold her and gave their consent to the marriage. When Moffat arrived in Cape Town in the April following this decision, he received letters bearing the joyful tidings that he might expect to welcome Mary later in the year.

Now arose occasion for conflict between love and duty. A deputation—Dr J. Philip and the Rev. J. Campbell—had been sent out by the directors of the London Missionary Society to examine and regulate the affairs of the South African Mission which had fallen into disorder. Moffat found these gentlemen in Cape Town when he arrived. They laid two proposals before him—first, that he should move from Namaqualand and take up work in Bechuanaland, and, second, that he should accompany them on their tour around the missions. It was reckoned that this tour would last twelve months, and acceptance of the proposal meant, it seemed, that Moffat would not be able to welcome Mary Smith on her arrival. His strong sense of duty, however, led Moffat to accede to the deputation's request and they set off in wagons for the eastern regions of the Colony. When they reached the frontier they found that war had broken out with the natives and that it was impossible to proceed farther, as was their intention. They turned back, and so it came to pass after all that when, at the beginning

of December 1819, Mary Smith landed at Cape Town, Moffat was there to welcome her.

Mary Moffat was constitutionally a timid woman. All through life she was subject to dark and anxious forebodings, but once she saw her path of duty nothing could turn her aside. Her son, the Rev. J. S. Moffat, speaks truly of the "resolute demeanour" she could assume when occasion called for it. She had won her way with her parents, but the facing of the unknown future, with a long journey into strange lands as her immediate prospect—this meant much more to her than it would have meant to many women. She was troubled on the voyage as to whether she should find her "dear friend" alive. But in her first letter home she was able to say: "I have found him all that my heart could desire, except his being almost worn out with anxiety and his very look makes my heart ache." As for Moffat, he wrote that her arrival "was to me nothing less than life from the dead."

Robert and Mary Moffat were married in St George's Church on 27th December, and on 20th January 1820 set out on the long journey to Lattakoo in Bechuanaland. Mr Campbell travelled with them and has left a record of the journey in his second volume of travels.[1]

Needless to say, the party went by bullock-wagon. After passing through Stellenbosch, Paarl and Tulbagh they wound their way through the Hex River Kloof—"the scenery was extremely grand and interesting," says Mr Campbell, "being marked by stupendous cliffs, rugged rocks and spiral-topt mountains of great elevation"—and on the thirteenth

[1] *Travels in South Africa* (1822).

day after leaving Cape Town emerged upon the Karroo. Water was scarce: one day they had to trek fifteen hours (nearly fifty miles) to reach a small stream. Their route through the Karroo followed very much the line of the future railway from Cape Town. At one point their driver walked a hundred miles in three days to bring in two oxen which had strayed. On the twenty-ninth day the travellers were at Beaufort West, which at that date consisted merely of a farmhouse occupied by the landdrost, or magistrate: the town had not yet been built.

From there Mrs Moffat wrote to her parents:

> We are all well, and, excepting a little headache, my health is extraordinary. It is true I feel a little feeble and languid in the very heat of the day, but am not sickly as I always was at home in warm weather. I never was more vigorous than I am now in the cool of the day; and when I consider the manner in which we live, just eating and sleeping when it is convenient, I am truly astonished. It is frequently one or two o'clock [a.m.] when we outspan.[1] I like wagon travelling better than I expected. . . . I never met with so much hospitality in my life as I have witnessed in Africa. . . . [Since leaving the Hex River] we have been in a perfect desert called the Karroo, and in the last ten days never saw but one house till last night, about two hours' ride from here. . . . We have scarcely seen any grass for a fortnight.[2]

Robert Moffat relates that one morning Mr Campbell stood still and remarked with solemn emphasis to Mrs Moffat and himself: "Sir, it would require a good pair of spectacles to see a blade of grass in this world."

[1] They trekked generally from soon before sunset on to late at night, and then again from early morning.
[2] J. S. M., pp. 51, 52.

From Beaufort West their road to the Orange River lay some distance to the west of the present railway. When climbing up over the Nieuwveld they were compelled by the steepness of the ascent to yoke twenty-two of the strongest oxen to each of their three wagons in turn. At the last farm within the Colony they were told that the farmer and his people had killed twenty-eight lions during the first month after taking possession. Leaving there they entered the so-called Bushman's country and on 7th March, forty-eight days after leaving Cape Town, they reached the Orange River. They found the water too deep for the wagons to cross and had to travel upstream three days to Read's Ford. Mr Campbell's wagon took eight minutes in crossing: the others followed and all reached the north bank in safety.

From the Orange River Moffat wrote to his parents:

> I am happy to say that Mary stands the journey amazingly well; she takes everything as she finds it, and encounters with ease what you would term difficulties. . . . I am sometimes astonished to see her possessed of such good spirits at times when human nature is spent, for we have our hardships.[1]

They pushed on to Griqua Town and then by way of Kuruman fountain to Lattakoo (which figures as New Lattakoo in the literature of the time), arriving there on 25th March.[2] This was not the town visited by Campbell on his first expedition. The "King" Mothibi and his people had removed

[1] J. S. M., p. 54.

[2] The journey from Cape Town, which then took sixty-six days, can now, by rail and motor-car, be accomplished in three days.

thence, three years previously, to this new site, fifty miles south-west, on the Kuruman river.

II

Moffat has given in his famous book, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa,* an extraordinarily vivid picture of the life of his predecessors. Evans and Hamilton, the missionaries, had reached Lattakoo on 17th February 1816. They had been preceded by two men from the Colony, named Kok and Edwards, who posed as missionaries but were really traders. Kok was shot and Edwards retired. The first demand made upon the new-comers was that they should trade as the other men had done; and when they refused Mothibi received them very ungraciously, and directed them to settle far off on the Kuruman river. The people agreed with their chief: "The missionaries must not come here," they declared. So Evans and Hamilton had to retreat to Griqua Town greatly disappointed. The real reason for their rebuff, it seems, was that a certain Dutchman who had settled in the country and was bitterly hostile to the colonial government had, through the chief's brother, persuaded Mothibi that the missionaries were in reality emissaries of that government. The disillusioned Mr Evans left the mission altogether, but Hamilton was a dour Scot who could bide his time. James Read came up from Bethelsdorp and brought his greater experience of the native character into play in overcoming the opposition of the people. He removed the mission to the Kuruman. About the same time Mothibi was worsted and wounded

in a foray against the Bakwena, and, perhaps wishing to place a greater distance between himself and his enemies, removed in 1817 to the Kuruman river where the missionaries had settled.

But alas for the bright hopes engendered by his promise to Campbell, "Send instructors and I will be a father to them." Such declarations, made in ignorance of what the Gospel demands, can never be accepted at their face value. The people looked for material advantage from the presence of the white men, who had to meet all kinds of demands and satisfy the covetousness of the highly-placed in order to maintain their footing. Mahuto, "the queen," whose influence was very great over her husband, had to be bought.

Her favour [writes Moffat] was not procured without a very considerable tax upon the comfort of the missionaries, whose resources, she presumed, were at her command. She, with many others, like the multitude of old, could express her attachment and admiration, so long as the loaves and fishes were available! Not unfrequently, if she was incensed, she would instigate her husband to acts in themselves harsh and severe.

It was a thoroughly unsound basis for a mission. And in another respect, also, those early missionaries, devoted as they were, adopted a wrong policy. They did not learn the language of the Bechuana. They preached with the aid of interpreters—"very imperfect interpreters," said Moffat. He himself in early days suffered grievously at the hands of such unhelpful assistants.

I have been very much troubled in my mind [he wrote] on hearing that the most erroneous renderings have been given to what I had said. Since acquiring the language,

I have had opportunities of discovering this with my own ears, by hearing sentences translated, which at one moment were calculated to excite no more than a smile, while others would produce intense agony of mind from their bordering on blasphemy, and which the interpreter gave as the word of God. The interpreter, who cannot himself read, and who understands very partially what he is translating, if he is not a very humble one, will, as I have often heard, introduce a cart-wheel, or an ox-tail into some passage of simple sublimity of Holy Writ, just because some word in the sentence had a similar sound. Thus for the passage, "The salvation of the soul is a great and important subject"; "The salvation of the soul is a very great *sack*,"—must sound strange indeed.[1]

The confusion here is between the two Dutch words, one for "subject" (*zaak*) and the other for "sack" (*zak*), which indicates that Moffat was preaching in Dutch and that a Griqua or Mochuana was interpreting into Sechuana.[2] This was the practice of some of the early missionaries. Hamilton never learned Sechuana at all. It cannot be wondered at that preaching of this kind failed to win the people: indeed it gave them many wrong impressions.

Hamilton was an extremely conscientious, industrious, energetic man, though he did fail in learning the language. At New Lattakoo he erected buildings, dug a long channel to lead water from

[1] *Missionary Labours*, p. 294.

[2] Moffat told the people that their salvation was *eene groote zaak* ("an important matter"), the interpreter rendered the words into Sechuana as *Khetse e e kholu*, "a large bag, or sack"! After hearing this strange statement many times the natives were intelligent enough to understand what it really meant and they even adopted what they supposed to be a Dutch idiom. To this day *khetse e e kholu* means to them "a great matter." "It is not my bag," they say (*ha se khetse ea me*) when they mean, "It is not my affair."

the river for irrigation purposes and prepared the ground for cultivation. Campbell thus described the station in 1820:

We found a commodious place of worship had been erected, capable of containing about four hundred persons; and also a long row of missionary houses, furnished with excellent gardens behind. In front of the houses, a neat fence composed of reeds has been constructed, which improves the general appearance.

III

Such was the mission station when the Moffats arrived in March 1820. A beginning had been made—nothing more.

It is always interesting and valuable to know a new-comer's first impressions, even though they may err in superficiality. Mary Moffat wrote this soon after arrival:

I am happy, remarkably happy, though the present place of my habitation is a single vestry-room with a mud wall and a mud floor. . . . On our entrance to this place I was pleased. I thought the landscape resembled that of England, the cornfields and gardens being very pleasing, and here and there trees scattered; trees are not seen in general in Africa, except on the banks of the rivers. . . . Upon the whole, as a country, I am greatly disappointed. [Evidently this refers to what she had seen since leaving Cape Town.] Were I choosing a country either for a comfortable livelihood or pleasure, it should be old England still. . . . There are no appearances of real picty among this people but in one woman who is blind; she is in church fellowship. The attendance is irregular. Sometimes the church looks well with numbers of them, and sometimes the benches are nearly empty. They seem to think they do us a favour by coming. The school is miserable. There is no girls' school, and I almost doubt the practicability of it, as the women here

do all the men's work and the men the women's. One great impediment here is not having the language. Not one of our friends here can converse surely with the natives. All is done through an interpreter, one of those who has lived at Griqua Town. They are good-tempered people in general, happy and easy, dance and sing a good deal. The strong man armed keeps his house in peace, but we hope ere long to see one stronger than he take possession. They have curious notions about God. They make Him the author of everything evil. If it rain when they don't wish it, they ask why God does so; if the ground is parched, the same.[1]

Leaving the Moffats with Hamilton at the station, Mr Campbell, accompanied by Mr Read, made an exploratory tour to the north-east among the Bahurutse, who had not been previously visited by Europeans. On his return, two months later, Mr Campbell, Mr Read and the Moffats set off on a journey to the westward along the Kuruman river, as far as Lehaise's town, the most westerly of the Bechuana, on the outskirts of the Kalahari desert.

When they got back Moffat had the great joy of meeting again with Africaner who had travelled from his home in Namaqualand to bring his friend's property that had been left in his keeping. Everything was there: nothing missing. The erstwhile freebooter had been faithful to his charge. Moffat witnessed the meeting of Africaner with the latter's old enemy, Barend Barends, once as furious a firebrand as himself. They sat down together in Moffat's tent, united in Christian worship and knelt side by side to partake of the Lord's Supper. A striking instance of the power of the Gospel in overcoming animosities. Africaner set off back to

[1] J. S. M., pp. 56-58.

his home, having planned to come and settle in the neighbourhood of his old friend. But it was not to be. He died a short time afterwards.

When Moffat was in Cape Town the Government, he tells us, "had been imperious" with him to become their missionary in Kaffirland. What this means exactly is not clear unless the Government were contemplating the employment of missionaries of their own. Moffat declined. He suggests that by barring his prospects the Government hoped to induce him to accept the offer. Anyhow they refused to grant him permission to settle among the Bechuana. He set out on his long journey knowing that, unless the authorities relented—as they had relented once before—he would have to return with Mr Campbell. On returning to Lattakoo after his excursion to the west a letter was received from Dr Philip saying that the Government were obdurate. There was nothing to do but to set their faces toward the south. They felt this very acutely. On their arrival at Griqua Town other letters reached them with the news that the Government had now given their permission. They were free, therefore, to retrace their steps. But it was decided that Moffat should stay a short time at Griqua Town to endeavour to bring into order the condition of that station.

IV

It was, indeed, high time that a firm hand like Moffat's should grasp the helm at Griqua Town and bring that unruly ship into her course.

It is all ancient history now. The Griqua are

dispersed; some of them migrated to the country on the Natal border, called after them Griqualand East. But in Moffat's day they were an important people: so important that many colonists regarded them as a menace. Griqua Town, as we have seen, was inhabited by a mixed multitude of Griqua (half-breeds), Hottentots, Bushmen and Bechuana. There were other settlements in the neighbourhood, some of them under their own captains, who were not always friendly towards each other. To weld this heterogeneous mass of folk into an industrious, law-abiding Christian community was a herculean task, and was never wholly accomplished. The wonder is not that success was incomplete, but that any success at all was gained. The traveller George Thompson, in his narrative published in 1827, expressed this opinion:

> No slight improvement has been wrought upon the manners and character of this wild horde, by the labours of the missionaries. That much still remains to be done is far more a subject of regret than surprise, considering the peculiar difficulties with which they have to contend, among a people so situated.[1]

Moffat's disciplinary measures did for a time purify the Church to some extent.

> As it regards the cause of our Lord in this place [he wrote] I cannot say much to the praise of the Griquas. It is true of late we have been delighted to see a full church. The members are numerous. The last time I administered the Lord's Supper there were upwards of forty who partook; but alas! too many of these have stains on their garments, but of such a nature as not to bring them under Church discipline. Heretofore this important duty has not been exercised to that extent

[1] *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, Vol. I p. 151.

that Paul would have done had he been here. The result of such neglect is that our church is a mixed heap of which the major part is rubbish. . . . Within the last month a number of these dead members have been amputated from the body, and their examples have the very effect which the Scriptures intimate: "others fear" and dread to commit crimes which they would otherwise have done with impunity. . . . We rejoice, however, in the faithful few who seem indeed pillars in the temple of our God.[1]

Campbell had, during his first visit in 1813, taken steps to regulate the social life of the community by appointing rulers, but things had recently fallen into disorder: two of the chiefs, with their followers, removed to other places and the remnant was more or less in a state of anarchy. Moffat took the matter in hand. A chief was elected by the people in the person of Andries Waterboer, who for many years ruled the settlement with firmness and discretion.

On 12th April 1821 a daughter—"a lovely, healthy daughter," wrote the father—was born to the Moffats: the first of their ten children. She lived to become the wife of David Livingstone—one of the heroic women of our race.

V

In May 1821 Robert and Mary Moffat, with their baby, returned to New Lattakoo—to the banks of the Kuruman river near which their home was to be for the next forty-nine years. Moffat has left an unforgettable picture of the conditions of their life during the early years among the barbarous Bechuana, and Mrs Moffat's letters help us to realize

[1] J. S. M., p. 66.

what things were like. In August 1822—that is, after they had been at work fifteen months—she wrote:

We have no prosperity in the work, not the least sign of good being done. The Bootsuanas[1] seem more careless than ever, and seldom enter the church. Their indifference seems to increase, and instead of rejoicing we have continually to mourn over them. Our consolation is derived from the promises of the immutable Jehovah. We walk by faith and not by sight. How mysterious are His works, and His ways past finding out. In almost every other part of the world to which the Gospel is sent, some of the people receive it gladly, but here the blessing is withheld. Five years have rolled on since the missionaries came, and not one soul converted, nor does anyone seem to lend an ear. All treat with ridicule and contempt the truths which are delivered.[2]

There is much more to the same effect. I confess to being weary of the complaints about the Bechuana contained in these early letters, of the "dreadful stupidity," the "corrupt notions" of these "despisers of instruction." It is all very well to call them names, and to wonder at the mysteriousness of Providence, but, dear Mrs Moffat, you have not yet taken the right road to their hearts! You confess that you are so busy about your house that you haven't learnt much of the language, and your husband is only now—fifteen months after his arrival—getting to realize the necessity of knowing it! Do you wonder that the Bechuana are afraid of their children becoming Dutchmen, and therefore will not send them to school, where a debased Dutch is used constantly in intercourse with them instead of their own beautiful, mellifluous speech?

[1] This was the way they used to write "Bechuana."
[2] J. S. M., pp. 70, 71.

Much of what they endured at the hands of the Bechuana is the common lot of missionaries to savage peoples. That of course did not make it any the less hard to bear. The Bechuana were inveterate thieves. Campbell and others of the early travellers did not suffer at their hands in this respect, but Lichtenstein who did suffer tells this story. He was buying ivory rings with bits of tobacco. He purchased one ring from a man and put it in his pocket: the man produced a second and a third for which Lichtenstein also paid. When he examined his pocket he found he had only one ring; the wily savage had picked his pocket and sold the same ring three times! Moffat said the thieves pestered them on all sides. Mr Hamilton, when he was living alone, laboured and perspired half a day in grinding sufficient corn with two hand-stones to serve him for at least eight days. Having kneaded and baked his gigantic loaf, he went to the chapel, and returned to his hut in the evening with a keen appetite, promising himself a treat of his coarse home-made bread—but the loaf was gone: a thief had forced open the small window of the hut and taken the precious bread.

Our time [writes Moffat] was incessantly occupied in building and labouring frequently for the meat that perisheth; but our exertions were often in vain, for while we sowed, the natives reaped. The site of the station was a light sandy soil, where no kind of vegetables would grow without constant irrigation. Our water ditch, which was some miles in length, had been led out of the Kuruman River, and passed in its course through the gardens of the natives. As irrigation was to them entirely unknown, fountains and streams had been suffered to run to waste where crops even of native

grain (holcus sorghum), which supports amazing drought, are seldom very abundant from the general scarcity of rain. The native women, seeing the fertilizing effect of the water in our gardens, thought very naturally that they had an equal right to their own, and took the liberty of cutting open our water ditch, and allowing it on some occasions to flood theirs. This mode of proceeding left us at times without a drop of water, even for culinary purposes. It was in vain that we pleaded, and remonstrated with the chiefs, the women were the masters in this matter. Mr Hamilton and I were daily compelled to go alternately three miles with a spade, about three o'clock p.m., the hottest time of the day, and turn in the many outlets into native gardens, that we might have a little moisture to refresh our burnt-up vegetables during the night, which we were obliged to irrigate when we ought to have rested from the labours of the day. Many night watches were spent in this way; and after we had raised with great labour vegetables, so necessary to our constitutions, the natives would steal them by day as well as by night, and after a year's toil and care we scarcely reaped anything to reward us for our labour.[1]

Tools from the workshop, oxen and sheep from the kraal—they were all regarded with covetous eyes by the natives and stolen at every opportunity. When Moffat was working some distance from the house and went off to get a draught of water he had to carry all his tools with him, well knowing that if they were left they would take wings before he could return.

The Bechuana looked upon the white men as fair game. They could not understand why they were there at all. "What is the reason you do not return to your own land?" asked a chief when Moffat begged him to endeavour to recover his

[1] *Missionary Labours*, pp. 285-286.

knife which had been stolen from the jacket he had laid down while preaching. "If your land was a good one, or if you were not afraid of returning, you would not be so content to live as you do, while people devour you," said another.

CHAPTER VI

THE BECHUANA

Look up! Look up! O Citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance! O Jew, leave counting gold! return to thy oil and wine. O African! black African! Go, wingèd thought, widen his forehead!

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Song of Liberty.*

I

THE people among whom Robert Moffat was now settled, and to whom he was to minister during many years, are called Bechuana, though it would seem that before the advent of Europeans they had no common designation for themselves, but only tribal or clan names. They form part of that Negroid section of mankind to which modern scholars have agreed to give the name of Bantu—a word which means "people," and is taken to indicate some fifty millions of Africans who speak languages belonging to a single family of speech. The Bantu originated in some locality in the far north—in the southern Sudan, perhaps—whence they began to migrate in successive streams some two thousand years ago. The Bechuana probably reached their present habitat from across the Zambezi somewhere about the thirteenth century A.D. A hundred years ago they covered an immense area of country stretching northwards from near the Orange River almost as far as the Zambezi. What their numbers

might be then, we have no means of knowing. Nowadays they are found in the northern districts of Cape Province (British Bechuanaland), in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and in the western districts of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. The Basuto are closely related to and, indeed, are to be regarded as forming one people with, the Bechuana.

As far back as our knowledge extends, the Bechuana tribes were independent or at least semi-independent, one of another, and were never united all under a paramount king. As many as thirty-one of these tribes have been enumerated. Many of them are named after plants, animals, or other objects, and each possesses a totem—or as they call it, a *seboko* or *seano*—which is held sacred.

There is no need to mention here the names of all the tribes, but only those which figure in this book as entering into the life of Robert Moffat.

The Bahurutse, living in the Western Transvaal, are regarded as the most ancient section of the Bechuana. Their totem to-day is the baboon (*chwene*). In the extreme north of the Protectorate is found the largest of the tribes : the Bamangwato, whose totem is the duiker antelope (*phuti*). Their most famous chief was Khama, who died in 1923, and whose principal town was at Shoshong and afterwards at Serowe. The Bakwena, whose totem is the crocodile (*kwena*), and whose chief at one time was Sechele, the friend of Livingstone, now live in the Protectorate around Molepelole. South of these are the Bangwaketse who also have the crocodile for their totem. The mission station of

Kanye lies in their territory. The Barolong, whose totem is the kudu (*tholo*), are found partly around Mafeking and Ganyesa, in British Bechuanaland, and partly in the Orange Free State in the neighbourhood of Thabanchu. From these sprang the Batlhapi,[1] "the people of the fish." The name is said to have been given them originally because they were fond of fish, but fish (*tlhapi*) is now their totem, and members of the tribe who retain the ancient customs will not on any account eat it. These are the people among whom the missionaries settled at Old Lattakoo and who afterwards removed to the Kuruman. They left that neighbourhood and divided subsequently, and now live mainly in the neighbourhood of Taungs. The Batlharo, with whom also Moffat had much to do, are a branch of the Bahurutse and retain the baboon as their totem. They live in the western part of British Bechuanaland.

II

Robert Moffat never showed much sympathetic interest in the traditional customs and beliefs of the Bechuana. While many missionaries delight in recording such things, he excused himself from doing so on the ground that "it would be neither very instructive nor very edifying." He could not write his book, it is true, without some reference to these matters, but if he spoke of them at all, it was with the purpose of showing them in conflict with Christianity. They were to him "a mass of rubbish," and he never gives any indication that there was

[1] The name is generally written with the addition of the locative suffix *ng*, *i.e.*, Batlhaping.

a single custom or belief that was worthy of perpetuation.

This is not the place to describe in detail the life of the Bechuana, which indeed did not differ materially from that of other Bantu tribes. They have always been agriculturists and keepers of cattle. Their dwellings, of a grade superior to those of some of their neighbours, were round huts built of wattle and daub, with thatched roofs. The centre of the tribal life was the chief, who was regarded with great respect, and whose rule was a mild autocracy tempered by the advice of the council of headmen, and by public opinion expressed in the tribal assembly, or *pitso*. Polygamy was the rule, though many men could not afford more than one wife and the majority possessed no more than two. Contrary to assertions often made, sexual morality was loose among them. Bechuana did not—as is the common notion about Africans—buy wives. Marriage was a matter of arrangement between families, and the cattle handed from the bridegroom's family to the bride's did not constitute a purchase of the woman but was a consideration in exchange for their giving her up to bear children which went to swell the numbers of the other family. This bride-price, or *bogadi* as the Bechuana call it, was the recognized mark of a legitimate marriage and formed also a guarantee for the woman's fair treatment. Should she have reason to desert her husband through a fault on his part, the cattle would not be returned; whereas were she to blame he would have the right to demand them back. If the woman were widowed, her husband's brother would take her as his wife and

the children would be reckoned as the elder brother's seed. Infanticide was a common practice. If twins were born, for example, one of them was invariably killed.

Boys and girls underwent at puberty certain rites of initiation before they could be admitted as members of the tribe. In the case of boys, circumcision was practised, and in such a barbarous manner that many of them died of the operation. The ordeals through which the young people passed were of great severity, the beatings and exposure to cold all being intended as a preparatory discipline. They were taught various matters pertaining to their future life in the community: many things of a very objectionable character. The missionaries discountenanced these ceremonies on account of the filthy practices and songs which formed part of them.

As in other tribes, various practices labelled "magical" were common. Witchcraft abounded, and the witch or warlock (*moloi*), was regarded as the greatest enemy of mankind. The diviners were called in to detect persons who were supposed to have bewitched their fellows, thus causing sickness and death, and many an entirely innocent person on being accused and failing to pass the boiling-water test, was put to death.

The *moroka*, or rain-maker, was a conspicuous institution in such a country as Bechuanaland where the rainfall is scanty and uncertain. We shall describe later on Moffat's encounter with one of these gentry.[1]

[1] P. 136.

III

As to whether the Bechuana possessed any religion previous to the preaching of Christianity, Moffat answered most emphatically in the negative. He says:

[A missionary among them] seeks in vain to find a temple, an altar, or a single emblem of heathen worship. No fragments remain of former days, as mementoes to the present generation, that their ancestors ever loved, served, or reverenced a being greater than man. A profound silence reigns on this awful subject. Satan has been too successful in leading captive at his will a majority of the human race, by an almost endless variety of deities. . . . While Satan is obviously the author of the polytheism of other nations, he has employed his agency, with fatal success, in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the minds of the Bechuanas, Hottentots, and Bushmen; leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and dread futurity, or a single link to unite them with the skies. Thus the missionary could make no appeals to legends, or to altars, or to an unknown God, or to ideas kindred to those he wished to impart. . . . To tell them, the gravest of them, that there was a Creator, the governor of the heavens and earth, of the fall of man, or the redemption of the world, the resurrection of the dead, and immortality beyond the grave, was to tell them what appeared to be more fabulous, extravagant, and ludicrous than their own vain stories about lions, hyenas and jackals. . . . Our labours might well be compared to the attempts of a child to grasp the surface of a polished mirror, or those of a husbandman labouring to transform the surface of a granite rock into arable land, on which he might sow his seed.[1]

On a later page, Moffat refers again to "the entire absence of theological ideas, or religion." Then he goes on:

[1] *Missionary Labours and Scenes*, pp. 243 *et sqq.*

Among the Bechuana tribes, the name [for God] adopted by the missionaries is *Morimo*. . . . Morimo, to those who know anything about it, had been represented by rain-makers and sorcerers as a malevolent *selo*, or thing, which the nations in the north described as existing in a hole, and which, like the fairies in the Highlands of Scotland, sometimes came out and inflicted diseases on men and cattle, and even caused death. This Morimo served the purpose of a bugbear, by which the rain-maker might constrain the chiefs to yield to his suggestions, when he wished for a slaughter-ox, without which he pretended he could not make rain. Morimo did not then convey to the mind of those who heard it the idea of God. . . . They could not describe who or what Morimo was, except something cunning or malicious; and some who had a purpose to serve, ascribed to him power, but it was such as a Bushman doctor or quack could grunt out of the bowels or afflicted part of the human body. They never, however, disputed the propriety of our using the noun Morimo for the great Object of our worship, as some of them admitted that their forefathers might have known more about him than *they* did. . . . I never once heard that Morimo did good, or was supposed capable of doing so. . . . Thus their foolish hearts are darkened; and verily this is a darkness which may be felt. Such a people are living in what Job calls "a land of darkness and the shadow of death," spiritually buried, and without knowledge, life, or light.[1]

These statements do not lack for emphasis. Moffat could not have more plainly declared his convictions that the Bechuana were without any form of religion when the missionaries first arrived among them. Nor is it without some temerity that one can dispute with him to-day. He wrote his book in 1842, when he had lived twenty years among the people. He knew the language, he found the people scarcely touched by missionary influence at

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 257 *et seq.*

Lattakoo and travelled extensively in the interior where that influence had not reached in the slightest measure. His testimony is therefore of first-rate importance. Any writer who to-day seeks to controvert his statements must reckon with Moffat's warning that if modern inquiries in regard to native conceptions of God lead to other conclusions it must be remembered that the Bechuana have enjoyed a long period of missionary labour, "the influences of which, in that as well as in other respects, extend hundreds of miles beyond the immediate sphere of the missionary."

Nevertheless, we believe Moffat to have been wrong in his denial of all religion to the Bechuana. Not for a moment would we call in question his absolute sincerity, but we think his preconceptions as to the nature of religion led him astray. Whether you think people religious or irreligious depends upon your definition of religion. If, in the words of Mr Thwackum, you say: "When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England"—then, of course, Moffat was right, the pagan African has no religion; and on the same line of argument Moffat himself had no religion. If we broaden the term, as modern investigations require us to do, and define religion as a felt practical relationship with what is believed in as a superhuman power—then we may be driven to different conclusions as to the Bechuana.

The Bechuana, it must be remembered, are a member of the Bantu family. Since Moffat's day scores of these tribes have been closely studied by

sympathetic and competent observers whose unanimous testimony is to the effect that the Bantu are a profoundly religious people. Their religion, it is true, is not our religion, but it cannot be called other than religion. Their attitude towards the world is an essentially religious attitude. Their conception of God is not our conception, but almost universally among them there is found a more or less clear idea of a Supreme Being, who is the Creator, and who controls alike the destiny of men and the operations of cosmical forces. As to whether He is beneficent they have not made up their minds; but they have certainly been impressed by the gifts of rain and harvest which come from Him. They also believe universally in the survival of the human personality after death, and revere the spirits of their ancestors, offering them prayers and sacrifices. This is true of the Bantu generally, and if the Bechuana were, as Moffat declares, destitute of the slightest vestige of religion, then we have to explain why they should be so exceptional. *A priori* we should expect to find them religious.

This consideration gains in weight when we discover that the Basuto, who form, as we said before, really one people with the Bechuana, had a considerable degree of religious belief. The evidence on this point of Mr Ellenberger, who worked among them as a missionary for over forty-five years and was a diligent collector of old traditions, is the more valuable because, like Robert Moffat, he held preconceived notions of what religion is, and declared the Basuto to have no religion except a lively fear of bad spirits; yet, fortunately for us, he allows the natives to speak in their own words, and we

discover that—to say nothing of their ancestor cult—the Basuto possessed some idea of a powerful and beneficent Supreme Being. He records, for example, a prayer addressed to Modimo [1] in times of severe drought, beginning: *Ke le ngoana wa Modimo, ka ota* "I am a child of God, yet I starve." And what is still more to our purpose, he records a prayer in use among the Barolong, a Bechuana tribe, which, curiously enough, was first printed in 1843, the very year after Moffat published the statements reproduced above, that Modimo was only regarded as something cunning or malicious, etc. This prayer runs thus:

Modimo wa borare,—God of our fathers' fathers,
Ke letse ke sa ya,—I lie down without food,
Ke letse ke tlala;—I lie down hungry;
Ba bangwe ba yele—Though others have eaten,
Ba letse ba khotse.—And lie down full.
Leha e le mocha,—Even if it is but a polecat,
Le sekomenyana,—Or a little rock-rabbit,
Nka itumela—(Give me) and I shall rejoice.
Ke bitsa Modimo—I cry to God,
Borare mogolo—Father of my ancestors.

The man or woman who uttered that touching prayer certainly did not believe that Modimo was only a malevolent *selo*, or thing.

We are not without other evidence on this point from among the Bechuana. Dr Lichtenstein, who visited them in 1805 and had therefore known them long before the missionaries arrived, reports that by Murimo (so he writes the word *Morimo* or *Modimo*) the Bechuana meant "the cause of all

[1] The Basutoland missionaries spell the word with a *d* or *l*, while Robert Moffat used an *r*.

appearances in nature and the origin of all the good and evil that happens to them without any act of their own." They were not, however (he says), agreed among themselves whether He were an entirely beneficent or malevolent being—which may be said of the Bantu generally.

Three years after his arrival in Bechuanaland, David Livingstone wrote a letter[1] to the Rev. Adolphe Mabille, the eminent French missionary in Basutoland. From this letter, written from Motito on 24th February 1843, I quote a passage which is very pertinent to our present discussion:

> The aspect of the mission is not so inviting as we might expect. But still the change which has been effected in a portion of this people is very great indeed. It is not such as would strike a visitor from Europe or the Colony with anything but disappointment, particularly if he had heard the accounts of it which the good Christians in England usually do. But after one sees the depths from which they have been elevated exemplified in the interior tribes there is considerable cause for thanksgiving. By the way, when I think of the degradation of these people I shall be glad if you will let me know if you believe they are really so very far sunk as has been represented. I heard Mr Moffat say in England that the Bechuanas had really no conscience until it was formed by the missionaries. Now although the statement excited my risible faculties a little at the time, thinking it was only a poetical figure expressive of the wonderful creative powers of us *Zendelings* [Dutch for "missionaries"] the same statement nearly appearing in his book[2] as I understand, inclines me now to believe that it was meant as plain prose. What do you say as to their beliefs? I mean of the Bechuana in relation

[1] A copy of this letter has kindly been lent to me by Mrs Kruger and Mrs R. H. Dyke, the daughters of Mr Mabille, who possess the original. As far as I know the letter has not been published before.

[2] He refers to the book from which we have quoted.

to God, futurity, etc. Besides other fragments of knowledge which I have found among them, they seem to have had the idea of the future existence clearly. For instance, what else than this idea can we deduce from the fable of the chameleon and dark lizard? I heard a Mochuana in an address reason thus: "Is it not a fact that we Bechuanas of old believed that we should not perish entirely at death? I don't speak of the knowledge the white man has brought. I speak of the knowledge we had of old. God sent the chameleon with a message to man saying, You must not do wickedly. You must reform, for when you die you will come again. You will not *uyelela hela* [simply pass away entirely]. But the black lizard (Katoane) was sent by the devil (Barimo) and as it runs fast it soon preceded the chameleon and said to men: 'You may live as you like, there is no God and when you die you are gone for ever. Another messenger is coming and he will tell you lies. He will say you will be judged for your deeds, but don't believe him!' So spake the Katoane." Now this Mochuana after appealing to his audience if this were not real Bechuana belief of old, turned to Mr Edwards and myself, and said: "These men are the chameleons. The devil's messenger came before them and has destroyed both us and our fathers. But now I beseech you, listen to the message of the chameleon and live."[1] The same individual referred also in his address to the Bechuana idea of the soul and reasoned with his countrymen most powerfully, arguing that our doctrine was not new even to the people he was addressing. . . . I have since found that these and other points were really the common beliefs of old. If you can give me any information respecting this ancient creed I shall feel obliged.

This letter shows that the open, enquiring mind of David Livingstone was not satisfied with what Robert Moffat had said as to the Bechuana's lack of religious belief. We ought not to pit him, with

[1] There are many versions of this ætiological myth. I have not heard this one before. I suspect it is coloured with Christian teaching.—E. W. S.

barely three years' experience, against the older man : yet, taken in conjunction with other evidence, what he says is significant. Unfortunately we do not know what Mr Mabille replied.

IV

I may relate a slight experience of my own, conscious as I am that in such a matter my word can weigh little against Robert Moffat's, for we cannot be confident that any statement made by a native to-day represents accurately the belief of the Bechuana of over a century ago, before Christian influence had saturated the tribe. Some years ago when I was at Kuruman I was fortunate in meeting with a native pastor, whose family for four or five generations back have been the depositories of the esoteric wisdom of the Bechuana ; he himself was the first of his family to embrace Christianity. I asked him to tell me what his forefathers had believed about God, and with the help of the Rev. J. T. Brown, the missionary—I needed his help for I found the Sesuto which I spoke very different from the Sechuana—I was able to elicit much from him. The name Modimo, he said, was derived from a verb *ho dima.* He spilt a drop of oil on a piece of blotting paper, and, turning it over, showed that the oil had penetrated through. That, he said, was *ho dima,* and Modimo was He who penetrated, permeated all things. I notice now that the Rev. W. C. Willoughby says that old people who are experts in their own tongue have always told him that the verb *ho dima* bears the meaning " to permeate " or " pervade," or " to be exceedingly

skilful." [1] Whether this be the actual derivation of the word, or not, it clearly shows what the people think of *Modimo*, and I gathered that He, or It, was not an immanent power, but a personal being. The native pastor related an ancient story of an old woman, who had been abandoned in the waterless desert and who in her extremity prayed to Modimo for help. The prayer, as recited, was in poetical form and struck me as being one of the most beautiful things I had ever heard. At the end of each stanza came the refrain: *Mma Modimo we!* which Mr Brown translated as "Dear Mother God." [2] I heard from this very intelligent and well-informed pastor many other traditions which increased my astonishment that Robert Moffat (in whose house the interview took place) should have spoken so positively of Satan having erased every vestige of religious impression from the mind of the Bechuana.

In the chapter of his book devoted to Modimo, Mr Brown relates that the descendant of a long line of medicine-men once told him of having frequently seen his aged grandmother, the widow of an eminent medicine-man, bowing with covered head to the ground and praying: *Modimo, mme, ke bone banyana ba me ba cohetse yaka nna, me ba sa gope ka mpa ba shotlega,* "O God, grant that I may see my children grown old like me, but not crawling on their stomach objects of scorn." He produces other evidence for his statement that "Modimo is

[1] *Race Problems in the New Africa* (1923), p. 77.

[2] In his book, Mr Brown gives a fuller form of what evidently was the prayer offered on this occasion: "*Modimo we, mme, u dihe gore diyo tse di nne le aona metse,* Dear God, grant that this food may also be water." She had gathered roots for food. When rescued she said she had not felt thirsty.

much revered by the Bechuana, whenever and wherever he is thought of at all. He is looked up to as the giver of all good things, and to say that Modimo is among them and that their possessions are His is counted a great blessing, and they rejoice in the thought that it is He who is their adviser." "To the older Bechuana the only Creator, Originator and Cause of all things is Modimo." The praise-titles given to him, viz., *Montshi, Modihi, Mothei, Motlhodi,* describe him as "Giver, Maker, Founder, Creator."

Mr Brown tells us one thing which may go a long way to explain how it is that Moffat and some other writers never realized how deeply-rooted and widespread the belief in God is among the Bechuana. We know that Africans do not readily reveal their religious convictions to foreigners; they close up like an oyster in the presence of one who they think may ridicule their beliefs. And the Bechuana have gone a step further in their reverence for sacred things: they prohibit the name Modimo being mentioned in ordinary conversation; should anyone speak it "the people will gaze at the profaner of the name, struck dumb with dread, expecting speedy death as the punishment for such profanity." The prohibition does not apply to chiefs, doctors, mourners, the sorrow-stricken and the lost. These may use the name in prayer, or otherwise. Ordinary people may refer to Him by means of a pronoun and, indeed, children are frequently given a name in which this pronoun is used—e.g. *Goitseona*: "He (*i.e.* Modimo) knows."

As with other Bantu, this belief in a Supreme Being does not constitute a religion which has a real effective influence over daily conduct. Modimo

is a remote and rather otiose being, but the belief is there, ready to serve as a basis for Christian teaching. The everyday religious faith of the Bechuana centres in, firstly, their charms (*i.e.* amulets and talismans) and, secondly, the ancestral spirits. They have, as Moffat truly said, no temples and no idols, but altars are there, though not recognizable as such to everybody, upon which sacrifices are offered.

The family and tribal divinities, or ancestral spirits, are known as *badimo* and *medimo*; both words, like *sedimo* (a ghost) and *ledimo* (a fierce wind), being closely related to the word *Modimo* (God). *Badimo* and *medimo* are plural in form, while *Modimo* is singular. The *badimo* are the spirits of men who are greatly dreaded; the *medimo* are demi-gods. Among the latter are such personages as Nape, the god of soothsaying; Cosa, the god of destiny; Tintibane, the god of oaths. These are probably the names of ancient chiefs among the Bechuana now elevated into demi-gods.

The word *Modimo* might refer to one of these ancestral spirits, *badimo* or *medimo*. But this is not to say that the Bechuana regard the Supreme Being as no more than one of the ancestral spirits. At one time He may have had a personal name, such as He is given by many of the Central African tribes; but without being a personal name, Modimo, expressed as it were in capital letters, stands for the one greatest Spirit, the Supreme Being.

In all this, I am, in the main, following Mr Brown's researches. Even if we make allowance for the already mentioned considerations, namely, that even when Africans do not accept Christianity their own beliefs are modified and strengthened by contact

with Christian teaching, so that it becomes extremely difficult to determine the precise character of their beliefs in pre-missionary days, we may surely conclude that there was much more in the Bechuana religion than Robert Moffat allowed.

Indeed, if his book be read attentively in view of modern researches, it is not difficult to recognize religious beliefs and practices where Moffat denied their existence. When describing the ceremony of interment, for example, he tells how the man's weapons, with grain and garden-seeds, are brought to the grave and the corpse (Moffat says "the grave") is addressed: "There are all your articles." I have witnessed this scene and heard similar words many times in Central Africa and have always regarded it as proof of what the natives never denied—their belief in survival after death. Yet, apparently because the Bechuana did not believe precisely as he did in the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, Moffat could not see in this any evidence of religious belief. In this connexion it is pertinent to remember that the missionaries used the word *moea* ("breath") for "soul," and that the Bechuana had no word exactly corresponding to our word "soul." In their pagan state, they did not conceive of a soul surviving death, but of a person living on in a transformed condition. We may suppose Moffat, when he began preaching, to have spoken in Sechuana of "breath which never, never dies." That is to say, he had one thing *in mind*—the immortality of the soul—and *said* another, it being quite impossible really to translate his idea literally into Sechuana words. Later on, through long continued teaching, the

word *moea* acquired the meaning of "soul." But if our supposition is correct as regards the early days of the mission, then we can understand why the unsophisticated Bechuana were amused, as Moffat indicates, by his teaching. All of which is very suggestive of the tremendous difficulty missionaries experience in "getting across" Christian teaching to the minds of Africans.

Finally, we may ask, how came it about that, if all Moffat said was true, the word Modimo ever came to be used at all? The missionaries did not manufacture it, nor did they introduce it. The word, as Lichtenstein testifies, was in actual use long before they arrived. In the early days the missionaries preached in Dutch and their discourses were interpreted into Sechuana, either by Griqua or by Bechuana who knew both languages. These men, after hearing all that the teachers had to say about the Heavenly Father, agreed in rendering "Gott" by "Modimo." Could they, would they, have done so, if Modimo had meant no more to the Bechuana than a malignant thing? And when men and women became Christians, able to read the Bible for themselves, would they have accepted without protest the word Modimo to describe the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if they knew all the time that it merely meant what Moffat says it did? I doubt it very much.

V

I have given my reasons for believing that Moffat was unconsciously led by his preconceptions into misrepresenting the Bechuana beliefs. I do not

wish to convey an impression that their religion was of a lofty character. But that they had a religion of their own is, I think, clear.

Happily, missionaries have learnt to look with more sympathetic eyes upon the imperfect faith of the pagans to whom they minister: they have learnt,

> *To see a good in evil, and a hope*
> *In ill-success; to sympathise, be proud*
> *Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim*
> *Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,*
> *Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;*
> *All with a touch of nobleness, despite*
> *Their error, upward tending all though weak,*
> *Like plants in mines, which never saw the sun,*
> *But dream of him, and guess where he may be*
> *And do their best to climb and get to him.*[1]

And having learnt this, they are not less anxious than their predecessors were, to lead these errant seekers to Him who is the Truth.

[1] Robert Browning, *Paracelsus*.

CHAPTER VII

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

Like sunny waves upon an iron-bound coast,
The Light beats up against the close-barred doors,
And seeks vain entrance, yet beats on and on,
In hopeful faith which all defeat ignores.

But—time shall come when, like a swelling tide,
The Word shall leap the barriers, and the Light
Shall sweep the land; and Faith and Love and Hope
Shall win for Christ this stronghold of the night.

JOHN OXENHAM.

I

THE history of African tribes is for the most part a closed book to us. So far as we know anything about it, the story appears to be one of alternate stagnation and wild commotion. The commotion usually centres in some powerful personality. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the cauldron boiled over with a vengeance. In 1810 Chaka became chieftain of the Zulu peoples and carried on a policy of aggression inaugurated by his predecessor, Dingiswayo. It was he who armed his warriors with the short stabbing-spear and enormous shield, and drilled them in the crescent formation that we afterwards learned to regard as characteristic of these valiant armies. He subdued or exterminated the tribes lying to the east of the Drakensberg mountains.

A vassal of Chaka's, named Umsiligazi ("Mosilikatse" the Basuto and Bechuana pronounced the

name) incurred the tyrant's wrath by keeping back part of the booty won during an expedition, and to escape execution fled in 1820 with his army across the mountains into the country which is now the Orange Free State. Here he fell upon the Bechuana and Basuto tribes inhabiting the wide plains and mountainous districts—peaceful peoples, occupied in cultivating the soil and in hunting the vast herds of game which then swarmed where now scarcely an antelope is to be seen. Only one man was found strong enough to withstand these Matebele (as Umsiligazi's people were afterwards called) and that was Moshesh, "the Shaver," who in that troublous time amalgamated some of the tribes into the Basuto nation. The other tribes found no such leader: disunited among themselves they fell an easy prey to the invaders. Those who submitted were incorporated into Umsiligazi's bands; all others were exterminated or driven westward. One of these hordes of refugees was named the Mantati after their chieftainess, who, as is the custom among these tribes, assumed the name of her son: Mantatisi, "the mother of Ntatisi."

In 1823 rumours of these maddened refugees began to reach the Batlhapi among whom Robert Moffat had recently settled at Lattakoo.

> It was said [writes Moffat] that a mighty woman was at the head of an invincible army, numerous as the locusts, marching onward among the interior nations, carrying devastation and ruin wherever she went; that she nourished the army with her own milk, sent out hornets before it, and, in one word, was laying the world desolate.

The rumours were so extravagant that the missionaries treated them as the reveries of a madman.

About this time Moffat set out upon a journey which he had been contemplating for some months past. He wished to visit the Bangwaketse living about two hundred miles to the north-east of Lattakoo. These people were constantly quarrelling with the Batlhapi and Moffat desired to bring about a better state of feeling. Mothibi, the chief of the Batlhapi, tried to induce him to surrender his intention and when all warnings of disaster failed positively forbade any of his people to accompany him. Moffat, however, was not to be deterred and set out with some of his own men. On the road he heard repeatedly of the Mantati but pressed on till he reached Mosite, a fine valley with some pools of water. Here, having slain three rhinoceroses, the party halted for two or three days to make the meat into biltong. They received indubitable tidings of the advance of the Mantati—who in fact had occupied a town fifteen miles away—and immediately retraced their steps to Lattakoo, warning all the people *en route* of the oncoming enemy.

Moffat and the principal men of the Batlhapi met to discuss what should be done. Mothibi, the chief, said that he was glad Moffat had been *tlogo e thata*, hard-headed, obstinate, for by pursuing his journey he had brought them this timely warning of their danger. Some of the people were for fleeing into the Kalahari desert, but from this plan Moffat dissuaded them and advised them rather to seek the assistance of the Griqua and to resist the enemy. Moffat himself set off in his wagon to Griqua Town where the chief, Andries Waterboer, readily promised succour to his friend the missionary and his people.

Moffat returned accompanied by the traveller George Thompson,[1] whom he found at Griqua Town, while Waterboer set briskly to work, calling in his men and making preparations for the expedition.

Moffat has preserved a lively picture of the *pitso*, or Public Assembly, held on his return to Lattakoo. About a thousand men, representative of five Bechuana tribes, were present, many of them adorned with tiger-skins and with plumes on their heads. Every warrior was armed with a shield, a number of spears, a battle-axe, a bow and quiverful of poisoned arrows.

There were some great speeches. Moffat and Thompson have left them on record. Mothibi opened the proceedings and at the conclusion of his rousing oration pointed his spear to the sky while the warriors shouted *Pula!*—"rain," that is, "may a blessing from above be upon us!" The discussion was thrown open and any man—such is the Bechuana custom—was perfectly free to say what he pleased without fear. Indeed the sage, Tesho, rounded on the chief, saying: "You are too careless about the safety of your people. You are indolent and unconcerned." At the close Mothibi addressed them again: "Prepare for battle, O warriors! Let your shields be strong, your quivers full of arrows, and your battle-axes as sharp as hunger." Turning to the old men and addressing them as kidney-eaters, because only the aged are allowed to taste those morsels, he bade them be silent and not dissuade any young man from

[1] His book, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* (1827), is one of the most graphic accounts we have of South Africa in early days. He left Kuruman before the battle presently described.

battle. At the conclusion of this oration, says Moffat, the air was rent with acclamations. But, in spite of all the frothy speech, he knew that but for the promised help of the friendly Griqua the Batlhapi would never dare to stand before the invading Mantati.

Eleven days elapsed before the Griqua could reach Lattakoo—days of great excitement and of not a little trepidation. News came that the Mantati had arrived at a town of the Barolong and that the chief of Nokuning, a town eighteen miles from Old Lattakoo, was preparing for flight. The invaders were reported to be an innumerable multitude—countless as the spikes of grass that wave on the illimitable veld.

On 16th June Mr George Thompson and Robert Moffat rode out towards Old Lattakoo to reconnoitre, but they had to return without any definite information. Two days later, in the evening, one of Mothibi's captains thundered at the Moffats' door and rushed in, the very picture of dismay, calling out "The Mantati! The Mantati!" One would have imagined from his demeanour that the enemy was at the gate. Actually the news he had to tell was that the invaders had occupied Nokuning, some eighty miles away—perhaps, at the rapid rate at which they moved, three days' march. Mr Thompson and a native guide rode out to Old Lattakoo and found the town deserted: the inhabitants had fled so precipitately that they had left their food in the cooking pots. A solitary white vulture, perched like the genius of desolation upon a tall tree, was the only living thing to be seen. A few miles farther on the scouts came upon

the immense black mass of the Mantati moving on swiftly towards Lattakoo. They had some difficulty in escaping. Galloping back to the mission station they arrived at midnight, having ridden a hundred miles that day, to find that the Griqua had not yet arrived. It was determined to evacuate the town, and early next morning hundreds of pack-oxen moved off laden with household goods. The lowing of cattle, the wailing of women and children, the tottering gait of the aged and infirm—all made up a picture that filled the missionaries' hearts with distress.

About nine o'clock the sudden detonation of a musket gave the signal of the approach of the Griqua reinforcement. But only two horsemen appeared: the others had tarried forty miles away to refresh their horses. One of them was immediately sent back with an urgent entreaty to Waterboer to press on without delay: but night came and the force had not yet arrived. At dawn next day the missionaries gave orders to inspan their wagons, for they despaired of the Griqua. The Bechuana warriors also prepared for flight, but a cloud of dust on the horizon arrested their departure and presently the Griqua entered the town at full gallop. They did not exceed a hundred in number; they knew no discipline; they were dressed in motley and ragged garb, but with their horses and guns they were a formidable foe. They were under the command of their chiefs, Adam and Cornelius Kok, Barends and Waterboer.

Mothibi ordered six oxen to be slaughtered for the refreshment of the hungry Griqua. News of their arrival was conveyed to the people who had

fled from the town and these began to reappear before the day closed. Moffat and Hamilton occupied themselves with repairing muskets, the Griqua with feasting and with casting bullets, while the Batlhapi warriors furbished their arms anew. Another *pitso* was held in the afternoon, the Griqua marching thither in regular order and with shouldered arms. Adam Kok borrowed Mr Thompson's double-barrelled gun to cut a dash with. The most notable incident of the meeting was that a woman of heroic mien rushed, contrary to all custom, into the midst of the assembly and loudly called upon the Griqua to slay without mercy any of the Batlhapi who turned their backs in the battle: "Such cowards deserve not to live."

News having arrived that the Mantati were feasting at Old Lattakoo, the allied Griqua and Batlhapi gave themselves up to an orgy of indulgence. Moffat and Hamilton invited the people to repair to the church to implore the divine protection but only a few of the more sober Griqua attended.

After some days, and having been reinforced still further from Griqua Town, the little army marched out under the supreme command of Andries Waterboer. Mothibi joined the commando with five hundred warriors. Moffat accompanied a party of ten scouts, under the leadership of Waterboer, who went forward to reconnoitre. They discovered the Mantati partly encamped outside Old Lattakoo and partly in the town itself. The scouts approached within a couple of musket-shots of the enemy and attempted to parley, but the invaders charged them and hurled their spears, so that they made their escape with some difficulty.

As seen and described by Moffat the Mantati were a tall, robust people, resembling the Bechuana in features. Their language was a dialect of Sechuana.

Next day the battle was fought. We need not describe it in detail. The hundred Griqua horsemen, supported by the Bechuana, advanced to attack an enemy estimated to number at least fifteen thousand.[1] The Griqua carried only fifteen rounds of ammunition apiece. Moffat says that it was confidently expected that the invaders would be cowed when they saw their warriors fall by an invisible weapon, for this was their first experience of firearms, and it was hoped that they would give up the fight; but this expectation was not fulfilled. The Mantati fought bravely against the remorsely accurate aim of the Griqua. The deadly firearm, however, prevailed at last. But it was not until their two principal chiefs and bravest leaders had fallen, and every effort to close with their assailants had failed, that the Mantati retreated. By half-past three in the afternoon the conflict was over. Of the invaders between four and five hundred were killed; of the Griqua not one was killed and only one wounded; of the Bechuana one man lost his life while too eagerly seeking for plunder.

That this immense army should have been defeated so easily must be ascribed to the guns of the Griqua rather than to lack of valour on the part of the Mantati. These numbered in the ranks some of the bravest warriors South Africa has ever produced. Moffat reports several instances of wounded

[1] Including those in the town the number was computed at fifty thousand.

men being surrounded by fifty Bechuana, but it was not till life was almost extinct that a single one would allow himself to be conquered. He saw more than one instance of a man fighting boldly, with ten or twelve spears and arrows fixed in his body.

Moffat describes as follows the part he played that day:

As fighting was not my province, of course I avoided discharging a single shot, though, at the request of Mr Melville[1] and the chiefs, I remained with the commando, as the only means of safety. Seeing the savage ferocity of the Bechuana, in killing the inoffensive women and children, for the sake of a few paltry rings, or of being able to boast that they had killed some of the Mantati, I turned my attention to these objects of pity, who were flying in consternation in all directions. By my galloping in among them, many of the Bechuana were deterred from their barbarous purposes. It was distressing to see mothers and infants rolled in blood, and the living babe in the arms of a dead mother. All ages and both sexes lay prostrate on the ground. Shortly after they began to retreat, the women, seeing that mercy was shown them, instead of flying, generally sat down, and, baring their bosoms, exclaimed, "I am a woman, I am a woman. . . ." Several times I narrowly escaped the spears and war-axes of the wounded, while busy in rescuing the women and children.[2]

II

The struggle we have described was not a mere squabble between rival savage tribes. It was an

[1] Mr Melvill, a friend of the Moffats, had been in high Government employ in the Colony, but wishing to serve the natives had applied for and obtained the position of Government Agent among the Griqua, at a very much smaller salary. He had come up from Griqua Town to witness the conflict with the Mantati.

[2] *Missionary Labours*, pp. 361, 362. He spells the name, Mantatees.

event of considerable importance in the history of South Africa. The undoubted intention of the Mantati was, after destroying the Batlhapi, to proceed to an attack upon the Griqua. But for the valour of the latter they would in all probability have crossed the Orange River and fallen upon the colonists. That many of them would have perished in Bushman country before reaching the colonial border is only too certain, but when we reflect upon the subsequent march of the Makololo to the Zambezi it is impossible to doubt that they would have overcome the smaller obstacle of the wilderness south of the Orange River They would, of course, have been met by the determined resistance of the Boers, and could not have proceeded far beyond the border, but they could, and would, have wrought immense havoc. From this the Colony was saved by the valour of a few Griqua and by the alertness of Moffat.

Repulsed in the south the Mantati turned north again, falling upon tribe after tribe; no fewer than twenty-five have been enumerated as suffering at their hands. Later on they divided. We hear of one section which invaded Kaffraria under the name of Ficani. Another section, led by their adventurous and heroic chief, Sebitwane, fought their way north and ultimately crossed the Zambezi, where under the name Makololo, they figured largely in subsequent years.[1] The salvation of the Colony was only achieved at the cost of the ruin of many a native tribe in the interior.

For Moffat and his mission also, the event was

[1] For their history north of the Zambezi, see Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, Vol. I pp. 28 *et sqq.*

of very considerable importance. It may with good reason be regarded as marking the turning-point in the story. Hitherto the missionaries had remained on sufferance. They were regarded partly as madmen and partly as amiable milch-cows to be exploited on all occasions by everybody who wanted anything. Now all the people, from the chief downwards, recognized that Moffat had rendered the tribe a very great service—had, indeed, saved them from extinction. It was he who had warned them of the approach of the marauding host, it was he who had secured the aid of the valiant Griqua, without whose assistance the Batlhapi would have been scattered to the winds. Henceforth the people, even if they did not accept his teaching, looked up to Moffat as their father. He knew well how to turn to highest uses the enormous influence he had won.

III

But they were not yet out of the wood. For several years the Batlhapi and the mission were disturbed by wars and rumours of wars. More than once Moffat had to inspan his wagon and carry his wife and children out of danger to the friendly harbour of Griqua Town.

Towards the end of 1823 the Moffats travelled to Cape Town to obtain supplies and to seek medical advice. They took with them Peclo, who was the son and heir-apparent of Mothibi, and Tesho, whom we have already heard at the famous *pitso*. That these important men should entrust themselves to Moffat on such a journey spoke well for the influence

the mission was gaining in the tribe. Returning to the mission station in May, Moffat set off in July to visit Makaba, the chief of the Bangwaketse. He was escorted by a number of armed Griqua who were going on a hunting expedition. With eleven wagons they made up a formidable caravan. They were royally entertained by Makaba and set out on their return, the Griqua abandoning their proposed expedition in order to protect the missionary from the marauders who were spreading alarm on every side. They had not long left Makaba's town when urgent messages arrived from another chief, Tauane of the Barolong, asking for their assistance to repel an onslaught of the Mantati. The presence of twenty men armed with guns was the means of repelling an attack which must otherwise have resulted in the utter destruction of the great Barolong town. Once again the missionary and Griqua had rendered great service to the sorely harassed Bechuana.

Meanwhile Mary Moffat was left alone on the station with her two infant children, for Hamilton was engaged in building the new station eight miles away, of which we shall hear again presently. One evening a young Hottentot woman came wringing her hands and stating that the Mantati had returned and were on their way to attack the station. At midnight Mothibi himself entered the house and announced that the dreaded marauders were at hand. The town was in an uproar. Mr Hamilton, hastily summoned, arrived early and preparations were made for a rapid flight. Messenger succeeded messenger bearing ill tidings, but about noon the news came that the Mantati had sheered off in the

direction of the Barolong. This only brought Mrs Moffat fresh anxiety, for she knew her husband was somewhere on that road and was not aware that the faithful Griqua had turned back with him. For three weeks she dwelt in a state of dreadful foreboding. People brought her false news of Moffat's death—one had picked up fragments of his linen stained with blood, another had found part of his saddle, and so on.

On 28th July Mrs Moffat wrote to her husband:

> Our covenant God has graciously protected us and all about us ever since you left; and I have strong confidence that He has also been with you. But oh, my dear, I find it requires the exercise of some fortitude to be calm and serene under such a separation, in such circumstances and at such a time in a land of barbarians. . . . You know I dreaded your departure exceedingly. I had many fears about your health from that ugly cough. I had also fears on account of the tumultuous state of the land. I expected also to suffer a good deal myself from low spirits in my great solitude, but in this I was mistaken, having been remarkably composed and very seldom in a melancholy mood. When I feel it coming on I make great efforts to dispel it, and have been successful. I feel very thankful for the support I have had, and derive encouragement from it that all is well with you, and that your journey is under the smiles of our Heavenly Father. I have also great liberty at the throne of grace, for you and the cause of Christ.[1]

After Moffat's return there was quiet, but not for long. Many bad characters, runaways from justice in the Colony, Namaquas, Korannas, Bushmen, with renegade Griqua, had settled along the Orange River, and went pillaging among the more settled

[1] J. S. M., p. 84.

native communities. They raided the Batlharo, a Bechuana tribe living to the south-west of the Batlhapi. As too often happens among the Africans, instead of uniting with their fellow Bechuana against the common enemy, the Batlhapi, so far from aiding the Batlharo, carried off their cattle. This increased the confusion, for the Batlharo next joined the marauders in an attack upon the Batlhapi.

At this time a spirit of madness seems to have seized upon all the tribes of the interior. Terror and devastation reigned on every side. Makaba—the chief whom Moffat had visited a few months previously and who had seemed to be invincible—had been slain and his people scattered to the winds. The banditti even attacked Griqua Town, and though they failed, they for a time put Waterboer and his braves out of action, for these had expended all their ammunition and lost most of their horses in the fight. Other marauders drove many of the Bechuana to seek refuge on the mission station, which for a time presented the appearance of a fortified camp.

Finally, in August 1828 a party of freebooters from Namaqualand arrived before the station, which was crowded with refugees and with their flocks and herds. Moffat spread his few men out so as to give the impression that the place was defended by a large force, but actually they did not possess more than a dozen guns. The enemy sent forward a flag of truce, and since it would have been foolish to allow the messenger to see the weakness of the defence, Moffat went to meet him halfway. A renegade Christian Griqua, named Jantje Goeman, desired, said the flag-bearer, to have an

interview with the missionary. Moffat refused to go to the camp but agreed to meet Goeman in the veld. The man approached with his hat drawn over his eyes and held out his hand. "Jantje," said Moffat, "let me see your face; you may blush that your old friend should find you in so horrible a position, among a people determined on the destruction of a missionary station." Moffat learned that the leader of the marauding commando was one Paul, a Koranna chief, whom he had known in Namaqualand. This man refused at first to see him but eventually came, says Moffat, "slowly and sadly, as if following a friend to execution, or going himself to be slain." Moffat took his hand, as that of an old friend, and expressed his surprise that one who had listened in the past to the message of salvation from his lips should now come to root out the mission. The chieftain appeared obdurate, but Moffat wrestled with him, and ultimately he gave orders that the cattle taken from the Batlhapi should be restored, and promised to return without doing further mischief. The marauders even begged Moffat not to allow his people to attack them during the night. They finally took their departure. Moffat tells us that most of these freebooters came to a bad end. Many perished in an ambuscade laid by men of another tribe whom they attacked later on in the north: pestilence and famine did the rest.

This was the last of the missionaries' troubles from warlike tribes. From that time the land had peace for fifty years.

CHAPTER VIII

KURUMAN

Even with so soft a surge and an increasing,
  Drunk of the sand and thwarted of the clod,
Stilled and astir and checked and never-ceasing
  Spreadeth the great wave of the grace of God ;
Bears to the marishes and bitter places
  Healing for hurt and for their poisons balm,
Isle after isle in infinite embraces
  Floods and enfolds and fringes with the palm.

F. W. H. Myers, *St Paul.*

I

We have somewhat anticipated the course of events, and must retrace our steps.

Moffat had not resided long at Lattakoo before he realized the unsuitability of the site. As he looked into the future he could see there was every probability of its becoming a sandy and waterless waste. The buildings erected were only temporary. He determined to move to a site some eight miles up the Kuruman river, where, from its proximity to the wonderful fountain from which the stream emerged, they might hope to derive an unfailing supply of water. Arrangements were made for removal before the Moffats travelled to Cape Town at the end of 1823. An agreement was come to with the Batlhapi chiefs by which about five hundred English acres should become the property of the London Missionary Society on payment of "sundry useful articles

to the value of £50 sterling," and the price was paid after Moffat had consulted Dr Philip during his visit to Cape Town. So soon as this matter was settled Mr Hamilton began the task, no light one, of taking possession and putting up the buildings.

The mission station of Kuruman lies about a hundred miles to the west of Vryberg, which is situated on the railway running north from Kimberley to Bulawayo, and on to the Zambezi and beyond—the " Cape to Cairo " line. The name " Kuruman " is derived from that of the river, but what it means is not certain. According to some writers, it is the name of a Bushman who made his home in the cave of the weeping fountain. This fountain—the Eye of Kuruman—from which the stream takes its rise, is probably the most remarkable spring in South Africa. One wonders why the Batlhapi had not made a permanent home there; but no explanation is forthcoming. The spring has been described by an eminent authority as one of the purest in the world. " When all other springs in the district fail, farmers come from afar with their flocks and herds to the Kuruman river. Morning, noon and night, cattle, horses, sheep, and goats splash contentedly in these cool, sweet waters." Dr William Macdonald, the distinguished agricultural expert, from whom we quote these sentences, declares that were Kuruman in Canada it would be easy to forecast its progress —" in five years it would surpass Saskatoon, in fifteen Calgary, and in thirty Winnipeg." But, he deplores, " we live in a land where men look for gold only in the mile-deep mines, and are blind to the richness of our ten-inch levels. Nevertheless, this gem of the desert is destined to have a great

future."[1] This prediction may yet be fulfilled if the projected railway is built from Vryberg, via Kuruman, to Prieska.

The fountain issues from caverns in a hill, some thirty feet high, which is composed of blue and grey limestone.

From the appearance of the caves, and irregularity of the strata [said Moffat], one might be led to suppose they have been the results of internal convulsions. The water, which is pure and wholesome, is rather calcareous. It is evident that its source must be at a very great distance, as all the rains which fall on the hills and plains in one year, for forty miles round, could not possibly supply such a stream for one month.[2]

Mrs Moffat, in one of her early letters, described it as follows:

It is a vast rock, which appears to have been terribly convulsed some time or other, forming curious caves, and on every side the most beautiful water that ever I saw (except at Greenfield) gushing out. I went into the principal cave that is accessible and went nearly knee-deep in water as clear as crystal. The top of the cave is lined with bats and in some directions we heard waters rushing like a torrent. The sound came along the subterraneous passages. I should have imagined that a mighty river would have flowed from such a spring, but it is very small.[3]

There seems to be no doubt that this part of Africa has been gradually drying up in late years. According to the measurements taken by officials of the Geological Survey and Irrigation Department, from four to five million gallons of water spring from the

[1] *The Conquest of the Desert* (1913), by William Macdonald, D.Sc.
[2] *Missionary Labours*, pp. 440–2.
[3] J. S. M., p. 57.

rocks every twenty-four hours. It used to be more. Moffat noticed later that the fountain did not send forth the torrents it once did. Formerly the river was a considerable stream and flowed into the Molopo River, which entered the Orange River below King George's Falls. Judging from the deep valley which it cut in the hard quartzite rock, the Molopo must at one time have been a river of considerable size. It is said not to have had flowing water in its bed since 1894: in that year its course was diverted by sand dunes which were blown across it, and the water became lost in the sands. By evaporation and absorption the Kuruman in Moffat's time had disappeared about ten miles from its source. Tradition declares it to have been a great river formerly—sometimes it rose so high, and continued high so long, that women who happened to be on the other side at the time frequently lost all hope of being able to recross it and gain their homes, and in their despair married other husbands.

It is a dry country. In 1825 the missionaries told Dr Philip that for five years they had not seen a drop of rain running on the surface of the ground. Yet water is obtainable below the surface. Methods of dry-farming render agriculture possible throughout Bechuanaland. The dryness has been caused by a progressive destruction of the forests which at one time existed, and were afforestation to be taken in hand on a large scale, there is little doubt that the desert could be made to blossom as a rose. The river-silt found in the dry bed of the Kuruman, Molopo and Nosop rivers is a rich soil and could be made to produce almost any crop. The whole district presents fine possi-

bilities for ranching. Far from being destitute of vegetation, the region between the Orange River and Lake Ngami (as Livingstone recorded long ago) is covered with grass and creeping plants—the quantity of grass is astonishing. And it is as true to-day as it was in the days of the great traveller that the whole of the country adjacent to the desert is remarkable for the salubrity of its climate. The winter, which begins in May and ends in August, is perfectly dry. Not a drop of rain falls during that period, and damp and cold are never combined. "Nothing," said Livingstone, "can exceed the balminess of the evenings and mornings throughout the year. You wish for an increase neither of cold nor heat."

Such is the country in which Kuruman is situated.

Dr Philip speaks of the station in the following terms at the time of his visit in 1825—a very short period after the building had begun:

> The place chosen for the site of the institution was selected because the breadth of the valley at that spot affords the greatest quantity of land capable of irrigation and it is not more than three miles below the spring. The first object of the missionaries was to cut a channel for the water; and they have now finished a ditch two miles in length, two feet in depth and from three to five feet in breadth. This has been a very arduous, and certainly a great work for their strength. . . . With very great labour, the missionaries have succeeded in erecting a neat row of houses in the bottom of the valley; to each house is attached a large garden, enclosed with a neat fence. The gardens have been laid out, by Mr Moffat, with much taste; and, from his knowledge of horticulture, they have been stocked with a variety of seeds and edible roots. In front of the houses, and at a distance of, perhaps, forty feet, is the canal by which the water has been led out from the river. Across this

water-channel is a wooden bridge, leading to each house. Within ten feet of the house is the garden, from which it is entered by a gate; and along the whole line of the fence, the space between it and the watercourse is planted with willows and poplars. After the journey we had from Griqua Town, there was something very refreshing to us in the appearance of this sequestered and pleasing spot. Mr Gleig and Captain Warren, who had visited it only a few days before, were quite delighted with the mission-families, with their labours, and with the rising beauty of the place. Should the mission continue to prosper in this place, and the same spirit of improvement which Mr Moffat discovers continue to manifest itself, it will, in the course of a few years, when the plantation is a little further advanced, present a very pleasing object to the African traveller.[1]

This prediction was abundantly fulfilled. In later years many a traveller came to Kuruman and spoke of its beauty. To-day it is still a charming station.

Few people who have visited Kuruman and enjoyed the beauty and serenity of the place, think of the troublous days when it was building. Some of the events recorded in the previous chapter happened while the missionaries had but recently taken possession of the new site. On one occasion they had to barricade the reed walls of Mr Hamilton's temporary dwelling with chests and sacks in order that, during an anticipated attack by bands of marauders, they might be in some measure shielded from the bullets. They had engaged men from a distance to assist them in their arduous labours, but found the greatest difficulty in feeding them. "A hunter," writes Moffat, "was employed to obtain game, while everything, animate and inanimate, calculated in any measure to appease

[1] *Researches in South Africa* (1828), Vol. II pp. 113-115.

hunger, was ravenously seized for that purpose." Such was the liability to attack that the men engaged in digging the ditch, though working not half a mile from the station, had to take their guns with them. Mr Hamilton was assisted by Mr Hughes, a fellow missionary, recently arrived, and by a mason named Millen. Moffat took his full share in erecting first the temporary reed houses and then the substantial stone buildings: Mrs Moffat, in one of her letters, speaks of him as standing every day for a fortnight up to the middle in water, cutting thatch for the house. The Batlhapi were not of much assistance in all this work.

Unfortunately, one of the results of the repeated attacks by marauders was that the Batlhapi were driven from their home on the Kuruman river and the majority would not be persuaded to return when peaceable days came again. The main part of the tribe settled on the Hart River, some distance to the east. The missionaries found themselves for a time surrounded by a much reduced population. But refugees from the greatly harassed tribes of the interior came in to take their place, and these proved more amenable to the influence of the mission. The Batlharo still occupied their old location to the north-west of the station.

II

One day the native town near the mission station was throbbing with excitement. For months not a drop of rain had fallen: not a cloud had passed over the sky. That in itself was not unusual, for in these latitudes the year is divided into a wet and

a dry season, and all these months nobody had wanted or expected rain to fall. But now the time of the early rains had come, and there was no sign of a shower. The women had hoed their fields, working from early morning till near sunset every day: they had even planted their seed and it was dying in the soil for want of moisture. Overhead, the pitiless sun in the brazen skies—in the future, a prospect of famine. For these people depended for their food upon the produce of their fields: if it failed, starvation and death must follow. And now on this day everybody, from the chief to the smallest child, was agog, for a famous rain-doctor (*moroka*) was presently to arrive and he would save them. He was coming from a far-off land among the mountains where, thanks to his sorceries, rain was never lacking. The Batlhapi chief had summoned him to the help of his people, promising that if he would but come he should be made the richest man that ever lived; his flocks and herds should cover the hills and plains, he should wash his hands in milk, mothers and their children would call him blessed. At last he was seen approaching in the distance. His messengers arrived first with orders that all were to wash their feet before he stepped into the village and every one, from the least even to the greatest, ran as he or she had never run before, down to the river. Even the girl stooping over the missionary's kitchen-fire heard the summons, started up, and ran as if life depended upon it.

The great man entered the village and was received with the shouts of the assembled clean-footed villagers. He harangued them with no false modesty in his tones. Yes, he was the cloud-

compeller, the maker of rain, the flood-bringer: soon they should see the corn waving in the breeze: there should be so much rain that the valley would be flooded!

The charlatan got to work after an interval for refreshment. Then he sent men and women, north, south, east and west, to fetch certain roots and herbs which he burnt, while capering about with weird incantations. But the dense clouds of smoke brought no answering clouds. He demanded black sheep and black goats and killed them with solemn ritual, but their blackness failed to draw black clouds—black to black. "Give me black oxen—fat and sleek," he cried, "then the rain shall fall in fatness." And after they were slaughtered he retired to rest, and to the joy of all a shower fell. A headman entered the hut to convey the congratulations of the village and found the doctor asleep. "But, my father," said he with astonishment, "you are asleep when I thought you were making rain!" The doctor was only half awake but, aware of the suspicion in the man's voice, he pointed to his wife shaking the milk-sack to churn the butter and asked, "Don't you see my wife churning rain as fast as she can?" The news quickly spread that the blessed rain which had fallen had been churned by the great doctor out of a milk-sack. But, alas! it was only a shower and when the sun came out the ground was soon as dry as ever.

The people believed implicitly in the wonder-worker: the African reposes great faith in those who cozen him. However, they cannot fool all the people all the time, and some doubt began to assail the villagers that the rain-maker was not so clever

as he made himself out to be. He was ready with an explanation—the excuse that all sorcerers give when things go wrong: some one with stronger medicine than he had hitherto used was thwarting his efforts. But his magic was not yet exhausted. "Send out for a baboon—one without blemish, without a single hair missing!" he commanded. Chosen hunters went out into the mountains and after a long chase returned with a young baboon. The face of the rain-maker showed his disappointment: "My heart is rent asunder, oh my masters!" said he. "See here, this baboon has a scratch on the ear, and some hairs are lacking from its tail! Did I not tell you that it must be perfect—*perfect*?" They tried again and again, but alackaday! there seemed to be no perfect baboons in the neighbourhood. "Well, then," shouted the magician, "fetch me the heart of a lion. Then shall the clouds gather and the rains descend!" A lion was killed: the heart was brought. The doctor prepared his rain-compelling brew; ascended a hill, lighted his fire, sprinkled it with his drugs, called aloud, shook his spear. The people looked for rain to fall instantly: but the skies remained as brass.

Why was it? There must be some hidden reason, if they could only find it out, for the hard-heartedness of the clouds! Then somebody had an inspiration. The missionary's ox-wagon arrived some while ago bringing a sack of salt—and everybody knows that salt shuts up the heavens! The chief and his headmen repaired to the mission house and solemnly put it to the missionary that he ought not to rob them of rain by importing salt at such a critical season. Robert Moffat listened to them

with the utmost gravity; believing these men, at any rate, to be sincere and deeply sympathizing with their needs, he asked them to accompany him to the store-house. "Ah, there is the bag!" said Mothibi, but when they examined it closely they found it to contain—not salt, but white clay for white-washing purposes, and everybody knows that white clay does not hinder the clouds!

Yet the people persisted: it must be the white man who had stopped the rain. Is not black, they argued, the colour of rain-clouds and do we not slaughter black goats and black oxen to draw like to like? And this man has a fine long black beard, such as neither we nor our fathers ever saw the like, and it ought of itself to attract the clouds; but then, you see, his face and presumably all his body are *white* and that counteracts the power of the black beard! Furthermore, that weeping iron they call a bell—rung every morning to call us to a worship that has no meaning for us; why, yes, that is enough to drive away all the clouds that ever were! And then we have looked through the window sometimes at the white folk around their table and we have watched them bow down and talk to something in the ground! Rain comes from above and when we want rain we look upwards and shout *Pula! Pula!* These people, forsooth, talk to the ground and counteract our magic!

Such were the murmurings, but there were some who had strong reasons for believing in the missionary's good-will: the rain-maker's wife herself had been successfully doctored by him. And it was really difficult to believe that the gentle lady in the mission house, mother of such sweet babes, was

really their enemy. The women, however, were angry: and when African women get angry their men-folk must do something. Their threatenings struck terror into the heart of the rain-maker himself. "Our fields are burned up—our children will die; if this doctor does not produce rain quickly we shall kill him"—so they threatened. As Southern Europeans will carry the image of a saint through their fields, calling upon him to give them rain, and when no rain falls, will curse and batter the image and throw it finally upon the dungheap, so presently these folks would turn upon their rain-maker. He confided his fears to the missionary himself: "I cannot manage the women," he said, "they will kill me." So the storm worked up, and the rain-maker proclaimed in the public assembly that no rain could be expected so long as the white man stayed in the country. It was a critical moment for Moffat and his companions and when the tempest broke they were in a position of grave peril, but they did not blanch.

A few days later Moffat came to know that the patience of the people had failed and that now the rain-maker was in danger. He marched, unsummoned, into the midst of the council, where the principal men, thirty in number, were devising means of ridding the earth of the impostor. He spoke to them sternly, directly charging them with murderous intentions, and warning them of the wrath of God: then, changing tone, pleaded for the rain-maker's life. An old man sprang to his feet in a rage, and, brandishing his spear, said violently that he himself would plunge his spear into the rain-maker's heart. "Who will hinder me?" he asked. "I will,"

replied the missionary. "Why," they said, "the man is your enemy! He would have killed you before this if he could have had his way." "Nevertheless, I pray you, spare him and if it is necessary, kill me in his place." So saying, Moffat threw his coat open and beating his hand on his chest faced the angry old man. "Plant thy spear here, oh my father: but let this rain-maker go free to his own land."

The missionary gained the day. The rain-maker was conducted safely to his own land—to be murdered by other people later on. Meanwhile the Bechuana asked: "What manner of man is this, who would give his own life to save his enemy?" And others said: "Surely these men have ten lives. Their fearlessness convinces us that their words must be true!"

III

Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote a letter to a lady who had determined to become a missionary. "You will like it in a way," he said, "but remember it is dreary long." He told her the story of an American tramp who was offered meals and a day's wage to chop with the back of an axe on a fallen trunk. "Damned if I can go on chopping when I can't see the chips fly," said he, after a time.

The missionaries had now been at work among the Bechuana for ten years without seeing any chips fly. At least there were none they regarded as real chips. Mr Thompson when he visited Lattakoo in 1828, found but a small attendance of the natives at the Sunday service: "At no time, the missionaries

told me, has the attendance been considerable." It must be, he thought, a work of no common difficulty, to impress the importance of religious truths on the minds of such people: "much time and patience will doubtless be required from the pious labourers among them to effect their ultimate conversion." Yet he saw that though "few or no Christian converts" (in truth, there was not one) "had been made, real progress had been registered." But the Moffats looked with other eyes than did this sympathetic observer. General effects, such as material improvement and the winning of confidence, could not satisfy them. Their daily prayer was:

Quick in a moment, infinite for ever,
Send an arousal better than I pray,
Give me a grace upon the faint endeavour,
Souls for my hire and Pentecost to-day!

Their hearts came near to bursting at times as they saw the indifference of the Bechuana to the message of the Evangel. In September 1826 Mary Moffat wrote to her father, "As to the Bechuanas, I am sorry to say that they are much as usual, equally careless about spiritual things, and evidently as much attached to their old superstitions."

Meanwhile preparation for a brighter future was carried on. Moffat was giving time, in the midst of strenuous toil, to the study of the language. In 1825 he had progressed so far as to be able to prepare sundry school-books. He sent the manuscripts to Cape Town to be printed, but by some mistake they were forwarded to England, and such were the delays in transport that two years elapsed before the printed books reached Kuruman. Towards the end of 1826 Moffat went for a sojourn of two months

among the Barolong to perfect himself in the language, Mr Hamilton cheerfully undertaking the entire labours on the station during his absence. On his return he was able to speak without the aid of an interpreter, and astonished Mothibi and his councillors by preaching in such fluent and correct Sechuana that the only criticism they could make was that it smacked too much of the Serolong dialect. This was a distinct step in advance. In February 1828 Moffat was able to announce in a letter to his father that the long-looked-for books had arrived, and that he had begun to conduct a school in Sechuana for about fifty pupils. There were already four Bechuana who could read his catechism. He had also opened an evening school, chiefly for adults, and the attendance was about forty. Some of the people, he said, had begun to pray. The Rev. Richard Miles, who visited the station about that time, suggested the very great importance of preparing " something like hymns in the native language, which being constantly sung, the great truths of salvation would become imperceptibly written on the minds of the people." Hitherto only Dutch hymns had been used. Moffat thought it was premature to attempt this task, seeing that his knowledge of the language was even yet not perfect, but he made the attempt, and the people took readily to the three hymns which he prepared.

The opening of the school was regarded by Moffat as " the dawning of a new era on our mission."

At this period there were about fifty families gathered on the station. They belonged to seven different tribes. One of the temporary buildings was turned into a chapel, and though they found a

cobra in it when they were about to enter for the first service, this was not an evil omen. The attendance at worship improved. Gradually, says Moffat, "an unremitted and riveted attention marked the sable audience." He catechized the children and adults on the Sabbath forenoon, reading a chapter from St Luke's Gospel, which he had in manuscript. It was at this juncture, when everything was full of promise, that, in August 1828, the last of the marauding incursions took place as recorded in the preceding chapter. The fate of the banditti made a deep impression upon the people—"the atheistical Bechuanas were wonderfully impressed with the truth of an over-ruling Providence; which doctrine they had, as a nation, hitherto treated as visionary and false." Indifference began to give way to conviction.

At length, in 1829, a veritable change in the whole aspect of the work took place. The Bechuana, like other Africans, habitually restrain their emotions, but on occasion give them full play. In their pagan state such outbreaks may be witnessed on the occasion of a funeral—when men, women and children abandon themselves to demonstrative wailing. When the Gospel touches their hearts similar emotional floodgates are opened. A whole congregation may break down suddenly into uncontrollable weeping.

This is what the missionaries now experienced at Kuruman. As Moffat said:

> Sable cheeks bedewed with tears attracted our observation. . . . The simple Gospel now melted their flinty hearts; and eyes now wept, which never before shed the tear of hallowed sorrow. Notwithstanding our earnest

desires and fervent prayers we were taken by surprise. We had so long been accustomed to indifference, that we felt unprepared to look on a scene which perfectly overwhelmed our minds. Our temporary little chapel became a Bochim—a place of weeping; and the sympathy of feeling spread from heart to heart, so that even infants wept. Some, after gazing with extreme intensity of feeling on the preacher, would fall down in hysterics, and others were carried out in a state of great exhaustion.[1]

Such movements demand wise and careful handling on the part of missionaries. Moffat and his colleagues, Hamilton and Hughes, were not men to allow this to evaporate in mere emotion. They were overjoyed at the change, it is needless to say, but they looked for evidences of conversion more substantial than tears. Such fruit was forthcoming. The sounds predominant throughout the village, Moffat says, were those of singing and prayer. Prayer-meetings were held from house to house in the evening, and early in the morning, before going to work, people would assemble again for worship. But that was not all. Three of the men spontaneously offered to take upon themselves the labour and expense of erecting a school-house which would serve for worship until the great church could be built. All they asked was that Mr Hamilton should prepare the plans and provide the joinery, which they had not the skill to make. Women and children joined in the work, carrying clay and poles and grass for thatching. The building was completed with the same zeal with which it was begun, and was opened in May 1829.

As time went on other signs were forthcoming of the change that was taking place in the life of the

[1] *Missionary Labours*, p. 496.

people on and around the station. Moffat believed profoundly that evangelization must precede civilization, that to make the fruit good the tree must first be made good, that once divine grace has reformed the hearts of savages their mind becomes susceptible to "those instructions which teach them to adorn the Gospel they profess, in their attire as well as in their spirit and actions." Moffat has by some writers been represented as no more than an itinerating evangelist and a translator. In fact, he was thoroughly convinced that (to quote Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's well-known maxim) it is the Bible *and* the plough, with all they represent, that will regenerate Africa.

By precept and example he taught his converts to labour. He knew full well that neither God nor man can do anything with idle folk. Day by day he worked under a burning sun, in the saw pit, at the anvil, in the garden. He taught the Bechuana how to make use of their wonderful spring to irrigate their fields and how to use the manure of their cattle-kraals to fertilize the soil. He taught them to use the plough. At a much later period he could say, "When I went out there was but one plough in the country, now there are thousands." He introduced, and taught the natives to cultivate, various kinds of grain and fruit—wheat, barley, peas, potatoes, and so on. He encouraged them to substitute spades and mattocks for their old tools. He encouraged commerce. In the early days the nearest shop was six hundred miles from Kuruman, and visits of itinerating traders were rare occurrences. But even then Mrs Moffat taught the women to make decent garments out of the scanty materials

procurable. Later on Moffat encouraged traders to open stores on the station.

Moffat, then, had his eye upon the building up of an industrious, clean-living Christian community. But he put first things first, and looked before anything else for a change of heart in his people.

IV

"Send us a set of Communion vessels, we shall want it some day." So Mary Moffat had written to a friend in England who had asked whether she could send out anything of use. That was in 1827, when the missionaries were living in the midst of danger and were almost in despair of seeing any change in the people. But whoever might be inclined to lose hope Mary Moffat never did. Weak in body, but strong in faith, she never faltered. "We may not live to see it," she said, "but the awakening will come as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow." So she asked for Communion vessels at a time when there was no immediate prospect of more than the missionaries themselves using them.

Communications were difficult in those days: nearly a year elapsed before her friend, Mrs Greaves, received the letter, and another year passed before the things arrived. In June 1829 the missionaries selected from the many inquirers six candidates for baptism, and they were to be publicly received into the Church on the first Sunday in July. On the previous Friday a wagon brought some goods from the south and one case was found to contain the Communion vessels. The converts were baptized, and with feelings that cannot be described, the

missionaries knelt down with them in the evening to commemorate the death of our Lord.

So there was established among the Bechuana the Church of Christ that in years to come was to gather many thousands into its fold.

CHAPTER IX

JOURNEYINGS OFT

There are who roam
To scatter seeds of life on barbarous shores.
WORDSWORTH.

I

TOWARDS the end of 1829 two messengers arrived at Kuruman from Umsiligazi, the formidable chief of the Abaka-Zulu (or Matebele as they were afterwards named), whose history we touched upon in a previous chapter. At that time he was living in what is now the Transvaal, on the high veld east of the present site of Pretoria. To that remote region the fame of the Kuruman missionaries had penetrated and the chief was curious to know how much of what he heard was true. Hence this embassage. Moffat showed the two *indunas* every attention, and when they saw the water-courses, stone houses, gardens, and smithy, the disciplined warriors could hardly restrain their feelings of astonishment. When the time came for their departure Moffat was seriously puzzled to know what to do. They had travelled down in the company of two white traders who had ventured to visit Umsiligazi, but to return alone through country devastated by their chief's armies meant certain death for them at the hands of the enraged survivors—death for them, followed by reprisals swift and sure. Moffat decided

to accompany them part of the way. In-spanning his own wagon and assigning a second to his guests, he left Kuruman in November 1829.

A trek of ten days brought the party to Mosega,[1] the abode of Mokhatla the chief of the Bahurutse, or what was left of them. Here Moffat proposed to leave the Matebele *indunas* but they prevailed upon him to go farther. They now entered a country very different from the sandy wastes through which they had come. The well-wooded mountains and fertile valleys often reminded Moffat of Scotland. The whole country had until recent years been densely populated, but now everywhere the sides of the Magaliesburg were covered with ruined towns. The Matebele invaders had effectually swept away what the Mantati had spared. Here and there they came upon scattered remnants of once flourishing tribes. Five days after leaving Mosega they reached the first outposts of the Matebele. Here Moffat again proposed to return to Kuruman but the *indunas* persuaded him to continue, saying it was the only way to save their lives for Umsiligazi would certainly slay them were they now to arrive without him. So they went on through country which grew finer and finer as they advanced. But the evidences of devastation still surrounded them. Moffat saw ruins of houses of finer architecture than he had seen among the Bechuana, and encircled by stone fences. Of the former handsome, teeming villages "nothing now remained but dilapidated walls,

[1] Mosega, now known as Zendelingspost (missionary station), is situated ten miles west of Zeerust, on the railway line between Johannesburg and Mafeking. On the map in Moffat's book it is inaccurately placed farther east.

heaps of stones, and rubbish, mingled with human skulls, which to a contemplative mind told their ghastly tale,"—the tale of Matebele ruthlessness.

One Sunday morning while Moffat was meditating upon a hill-top he was joined by a native who, in reply to a question, burst out into a dithyrambic lament over the vanished glories of his tribe, the Bakone.

There lived the great captain of multitudes,
He reigned among them like a king,
He was the Chief, the chief of the blue-coloured cattle.
They were numerous as the dense mist on the mountain's brow;
His flocks covered the plain;
He thought the number of his warriors would awe his enemies,
His people boasted in their javelins.
Thus they sang and thus they danced,
Till they beheld on yonder heights the approaching foe.
They saw the clouds ascend from the plains,
It was the smoke of burning towns.
The men seized their arms,
And rushed out as if to chase the antelope.
The onset was as the voice of lightning,
And their javelins as the shaking of the forest in the autumn-storm.
The Matebele lions raised the shout of death,
And flew upon their victims.
It was the shout of Victory!
The Matebele entered the town with the roar of the lion:
They pillaged and fired the houses,
Speared the mothers, and cast their infants in the flames.
The sun went down;
The victors emerged from the smoking plain and pursued their course,
Surrounding the base of yonder hill.
They slaughtered cattle,
They danced and sang till the dawn of day,
They ascended and killed until their hands were weary of the spear.

Then stooping to the ground the man took up a little dust in his hand, blew it off, and said: "That is all that remains of the great chief of the blue-coloured cattle!"

It was no fabled song, says Moffat. The singer had been there. Other travellers of the time (Captain Harris and Mr William M'Luckie) tell of the ruined towns and bleaching bones. It is computed that at least a million of human beings of all ages were sacrificed in the Matebele wars.[1]

Travelling still eastwards, they came at last within sight of their destination. "There," said one of the *indunas*, pointing to the town, "there dwells the great king Pezulu,[2] the Elephant, the Lion's paw." Moffat was greeted tempestuously by the assembled warriors, dressed in their war-kit. Then there was a pause, and the chief, followed by a number of men bearing baskets and bowls of food, came forward and grasped his hand. He then politely turned to the food and invited his guests to refresh themselves. "The land is before you, you are come to your son," he said to Moffat.

Umsiligazi exerted himself to the utmost to show respect to the missionary. All his warriors from neighbouring towns were summoned, and on the following day what Moffat calls "a public ball" was given in his honour. During the ten days that Moffat remained he had many conversations with the chief. One day Umsiligazi placed his left hand on Moffat's shoulder and his right on his own breast and said, "Machobane, I call you such because you have been my father.[3] You have made my heart

[1] Stow. *Op. cit.*, p. 555.

[2] "Heaven"—one of Umsiligazi's numerous praise-titles.

[3] Machobane was the name of Umsiligazi's father.

as white as milk.[1] I cease not to wonder at the love of a stranger. You fed me when I was hungry, you clothed me when I was naked; you carried me in your bosom." Moffat replied that he had never been conscious of serving the chief in any such way, but Umsiligazi pointed to the two ambassadors and said: "These are great men: Umbate is my right hand. What they heard I heard, what they saw I saw, and what they said, it was Umsiligazi who said it. You fed them and clothed them, and when they were to be slain, you were their shield. You did it unto me. You did it unto Umsiligazi, the son of Machobane."

Moffat had many opportunities of studying this renowned warrior—this Napoleon of the desert, as he calls him—and of seeing with what ruthless vigour he ruled his people. One day a fine noble-looking officer was charged and found guilty of a crime. "You are a dead man," said Umsiligazi to him, "but I shall do to-day what I never did before, and spare your life for the sake of my friend and father. I know his heart weeps at the shedding of blood. I spare you for his sake, for I love him. But you must be degraded for life. Go to the poor of the field and let your companions be the inhabitants of the desert." The man, who had not made a single plea for his life, now pleaded for death: "How can I live among the dogs of the chief and disgrace these badges of honour which I won among the spears and shields of the mighty? No, I cannot live! Let me die, O Pezulu!" Without more ado the officer's request was granted—a magnanimous heathen, Moffat calls him.

[1] "White" in Bantu idiom signifies "happy," not "pure."

Here was proof, however, of Moffat's influence over the chief. The people were astounded beyond measure that for one moment Umsiligazi should show mercy, and that for the sake of a stranger. There was something in this white man they had never encountered before. As he had won the heart of the savage Africaner, so now he had stolen his way into the affection of the blood-boltered Umsiligazi, to whom Moffat applied the text: "He dipped his sword in blood, and wrote his name on land and cities desolate." He could, Moffat states, be exceedingly affable and cheerful in manner, and he was not wanting in consideration and kindness, but to sympathy and compassion his heart appeared a stranger.

Among Moffat's native companions was one man who had come with a definite but apparently hopeless purpose. A year before, his two sons had been carried off and he now thought to redeem them. Moffat happened to be present when the interview took place between the afflicted parent and the ravisher of his home, who turned out to be Umsiligazi's own brother. The suppliant laid at this *induna's* feet everything he possessed; it was not much—a few strings of beads, a few copper armlets, an old worn knife—and the chief did not deign even to glance at them. Moffat besought him to have pity upon a man who had brought his little all to ransom his boys, but with a sneer he replied: "One of them died of cold last winter. For the other I want oxen, not these paltry things." The father turned sadly away, and when Moffat said to him: "Be of good cheer, I will do what I can," kissed his hand. Moffat eagerly took a favourable moment to intercede with Umsiligazi, who instantly ordered his

brother to accede to Moffat's wishes. The boy was produced, the *induna* accepted several pounds of a valuable kind of beads, and the transaction was complete. Later when Moffat was on his way back to Kuruman, he saw a woman come rushing towards him over the veld; "frantic with joy," he says, "she ran breathless towards me." To prevent her coming in contact with the wagon wheels, Moffat sprang to the ground, when she seized his hands, kissed them and bathed them with her tears. She spoke not one word, but wept aloud for joy. Her son drew near, and she instantly ran forward and clasped him in her arms. By some means the glad tidings of her son's release had reached her before the wagons arrived and she had spent the day in watchfulness on the top of a neighbouring hill. Here was the universal craving of the heart of woman, which is one of the best allies of the Gospel of Christ.

To return to Umsiligazi. Moffat dealt faithfully with him, spoke to him as no human being had ever before ventured to speak to him. Yet he did it so tactfully that the chief never took offence. He delighted in saluting Moffat with loud-sounding praise-titles such as he himself was greeted with by the warriors who adored him. Moffat remonstrated. "Then," asked Umsiligazi, "shall I call you my father?" "Yes," replied Moffat with ready wit, "but only on condition that you be an obedient son." The sally provoked the chief and his *indunas* to hearty laughter. Whoever had talked before like that to the King of Kings, King of the Heavens, the son of Machobane, mighty in battle? Then and later Moffat took advantage of the privileged position

accorded him and, as a wise father talking to his son, solemnly warned Umsiligazi of the terrible consequences that must inevitably befall him and his people if they persisted in their career of bloodshed. Umsiligazi professed to desire missionaries who should teach his tribe better ways, but Moffat came away convinced that the Gospel could never be successful among them while the sovereign's autocratic sway held firm.

Umsiligazi would have kept Moffat with him much longer. His attachment seemed to increase as the time of parting drew near, so much so that some of his people thought the white man must have given their chief some kind of love-philtre to win his heart. He accompanied Moffat some distance and said: "Ra-Mary,[1] your visit to me seems like a dream. My heart will follow you. Go in peace and when you come again bring Ma-Mary with you. Let the road to the Kuruman for ever remain open! At so-and-so you will find a couple of horns."

The "horns" turned out to be some cattle—his parting gift.

II

Umsiligazi received another visitor about this time —Barend Barends, one of the restless Griqua chieftains who wandered far and wide in search of ivory. What he saw of the devastation wrought by the Matebele inspired him with a desire for vengeance. Like another Peter the Hermit, he returned to preach a crusade to the willing ears of his brethren,

[1] The Bechuana name parents after their eldest child: thus, Ra-Mary, Ma-Mary—"Father" and "Mother" of Mary. Umsiligazi evidently was talking Sechuana.

who, all except Waterboer, entered heartily into the design. In 1831 a heterogeneous multitude of Griqua, Korannas and other tribesmen moved up along the course of the Vaal to attack Umsiligazi. They halted and sent out spies, who returned with the news that all the warriors were absent on a distant expedition, and that the immense herds of cattle were guarded only by old men and boys. A thousand mounted Griqua and Korannas dashed across the Vaal (leaving the leader, Barend Barends, ill in camp), fell upon the unsuspecting Matebele, and drove off an enormous herd of cattle. For three days the crusaders marched with as great speed as their slow-moving beasts allowed and then, thinking themselves safe from pursuit, gave themselves over to feasting. In the night, as they slept the profound sleep of repletion, a chosen band of veteran Matebele fell upon them and slaughtered them, all but three who managed to escape. A conical mountain near the Makakokan River marks the spot. Captain Harris, who visited it five years later, described it as "a perfect Golgotha thickly strewn with the whitened bones of men and horses, broken guns and tattered clothing." This disastrous failure of the Griqua crusade produced far-reaching effects, into which we need not here enter. The Matebele extended their forays far and wide and their reign of terror grew, rather than diminished, in consequence of Barends' fatal emprise.

III

Early in 1885 an expedition reached Kuruman with the purpose of exploring "Central Africa"—

to wit, the region where Johannesburg now stands. The leader, Dr Andrew Smith, was accompanied by several English assistants, and by an officer and a few men of the 98th Regiment. Their arrival was opportune. Both Moffat and his wife were ill—Mrs Moffat seriously so. Dr Andrew Smith was able to help them with his medical skill.

The day that Mrs Moffat was able to rise from her bed, her husband set out to accompany the expedition as far as Umsiligazi's kraal. Ever since his previous journey Moffat had maintained a friendly correspondence with the chief by means of messengers who passed to and fro, and Umsiligazi was ever insistent upon receiving another visit from him. Dr Andrew Smith by his friendly attention had well earned the right to ask Moffat to pilot his party to the Matebele country.

They passed with twelve wagons over the same ground that Moffat had traversed before. But it must have been strange to him that military precautions should be carried out by placing sentries round the camp every night. Perhaps it was impossible for a large party to travel in the frank, trustful manner that he did; Moffat thought otherwise and strongly objected to the wagons being drawn up into laager formation every night, as the military thought necessary. Out of regard for the missionary the soldiers signed a written agreement not to swear—any defaulter to pay a fine of half-a-stick of tobacco per oath. On the first day seventeen and a half sticks (denoting thirty-five oaths) were paid in; but tobacco becoming scarce, the oaths declined in frequency until the treasurer lost his employment; the record telleth not what he did with the tobacco he held

Moffat rode ahead when they approached Umsiligazi's camp on the Tolane River. The chief was bathing when he arrived, but soon appeared, hastened to Moffat, and took his hand. "Now my eyes see you," he said, after a few moments of silence, "my heart is white as milk." He showed Moffat every sign of affection. The wagons duly arrived and Moffat introduced Dr Smith's party to the chief, who readily gave permission for them to travel where they would in his dominions. They went on, accordingly, to the neighbourhood of the present sites of Rustenburg and Pretoria. This first contact of a considerable party of white men with the Matebele (there had been contacts with individuals before) was entirely peaceful; not a single case of misunderstanding or unpleasantness is reported.

Moffat remained with Umsiligazi two months. He kept a full journal during the time, but only a few extracts from it have ever been published. We can, in imagination, see the missionary travelling from place to place with the chief, looking upon the warriors in the war-dance, noting their manner of life and observing with keen, indignant eyes the devastation they had everywhere wrought. We can hear him earnestly trying to bring some of the light of the Gospel into Umsiligazi's mind and urging him to pursue a more peaceful course. The chief, perhaps with truth, alleged the ignorance and disobedience of his principal men as the cause of the deplorable condition of the tribal remnants whom they had enslaved. Whether he was ever ready to accept Moffat's admonitions, it were impossible to say; but it is extremely probable that the day he

had made the wish known that day would have been his last on earth: the warriors would have assassinated him. Umsiligazi did go so far as to consent to the coming of missionaries into his country.

IV

After Moffat's return to Kuruman, a party of American missionaries who had been staying there some time went on to Mosega, where they established a mission. Umsiligazi fulfilled his promise to Moffat and protected them, but this first mission to the Matebele came to an untimely end.

The Great Trek had begun, opening a new epoch in South African history. Hundreds of Boers, discontented for various reasons with the British Government, were packing their wagons and driving off with their flocks and herds across the Orange River, to build new homes and then to found new states in the unknown lands of the north.

In 1837—the year that Queen Victoria came to the throne—one party of *voortrekkers* crossed the Vaal. Umsiligazi regarded these pioneers as trespassers, and attacked them. The Boers formed laager with their wagons and beat off the attack, but lost all their oxen. When rescued from their precarious situation by another party of farmers, they planned to avenge themselves. They marched against the Matebele at Mosega where, unfortunately, the American Mission was located. The Matebele were defeated, the station destroyed, and the missionaries, fearing perhaps that Umsiligazi would regard them as in league with the invaders, did precisely what would confirm his suspicions if ever

he entertained any: they retreated with the Boers across the Vaal. Thus the mission came to an end.

Umsiligazi was now threatened with invasion from two quarters at once: from the east by Dingaan's Zulus, from the south by the Boers. He knew, also, that once these began to prevail, all the western tribes whom he had harassed would rise against him. So he gathered his warriors, their families and herds, and began the retreat northwards that took him beyond the Limpopo river into the country now known as Southern Rhodesia. There we may leave him until Moffat visited him for the third time in 1854.

V

Once back at Kuruman Moffat pursued his labours with renewed ardour. The work was now growing beyond the capabilities of himself and his colleagues, Hamilton and Edwards, to manage. A printing press had been set up, Moffat was busy translating the New Testament and preparing other books, there was the school to attend to and a growing Christian community that needed all his care. Mr Edwards took his share of the printing and all the school work, and with Mr Hamilton relieved Moffat of much of the manual labour. In particular, at this time they were able to complete the church. The walls had been erected for some time, but around Kuruman not a tree was to be found that could provide spars long and stout enough to roof such a large edifice. During his visit to the Matebele, Moffat had found large timber in the Bahurutse country, and on his return, Messrs Hamilton and Edwards set off with all the wagons, cut what was

necessary, and brought it two hundred miles to Kuruman. The setting up of this roof was a gigantic undertaking for the small number of white men, unequipped with tackle, but these were men not be overcome by difficulties, and they did their work; did it so well that the church still stands as they finished it. In November 1838 it was opened for worship. Between eight and nine hundred people were present at the first service. The following Sunday one hundred and fifty members united in the Lord's Supper. Thus the Word grew and multiplied.

In addition to his labours on the station, Moffat had before this begun itinerating. The local population around Kuruman was never large. The Batlhapi and Batlharo were scattered over a considerable area. A French Mission, under the leadership of M. Lemue, had, with the cordial consent of the London Missionary Society, established itself at Motito, near the site of Old Lattakoo, thirty-six miles north-east of Kuruman, but all the rest of the country had to be evangelized by Moffat. For weeks together he lived in his wagon, trekking from village to village, preaching the Gospel.

VI

Robert Moffat was not the only traveller in the family, and this record would be sadly incomplete without some reference to the solitary journeyings of his wife. For any woman to travel months on end alone with natives in those years of unrest would have meant much; for Mary Moffat with her constitutional depression of nerves and her

physical frailty, it meant more than anyone can possibly know. Yet, when occasion demanded it, she undertook the long wagon journeys alone with her native attendants. In 1830 she accompanied her husband on the long trek to the coast that was undertaken in order to put the two elder children to school and to get portions of the Scriptures printed. Early in 1833 she set off again to the Colony, this time alone with natives, for the purpose of seeing her children. She was five months away. On her return she wrote to a friend :—

> My journey was exceedingly prosperous, nothing worthy the name of an accident having taken place, though the wagons had extraordinary weight upon them. My travelling company of servants consisted of five Bechuana men and one Hottentot as drivers, leaders, and loose cattle-drivers, and a girl to nurse my baby. . . . I am a poor, weak creature, mentally and bodily but He has graciously supported me through the whole of it. I found it particularly pleasant to be constantly feeling my dependence on Him, having no earthly protector near me, and in numerous instances had occasion to admire His providential care over us. He was indeed to me better than all my fears, for I am too ready to suspect that the rod of correction is about to be used.[1]

On her return journey to Kuruman Mrs Moffat convoyed a wagon-load of type and paper for the new printing press of which her husband and Mr Edwards were making such good use at this time.

In 1836 Mrs Moffat again visited the coast. This time it was owing to her enfeebled health, Dr Andrew Smith, on his return from the north, having insisted that she should seek a change of air. On 19th November she left Kuruman with Moffat who accom-

[1] J. S. M., p. 123, letter to Mrs Roby of Manchester.

panied her as far as the Vaal River. That stream was so low that they could walk over dryshod, but the Orange River was in such high flood that they had to wait on the bank a whole month before they could cross, and even then the flood had not abated much. Such were the joys of South African travelling in the good old days! Mrs Moffat was in an extremely delicate state of health and suffered much from the heat and exposure, but this time she was fortunate to have Mr Hume, the trader at Kuruman, to watch over her all the way to Grahamstown. At last a large company of Boers arrived at the river. They were in a hurry to cross and undertook to ferry the mission wagon over with their own. They constructed a large raft, by laying the trunks of willow trees side by side and others across, and then lashing all together with bark of the river thorn-tree. A narrow place, eighty yards wide, was chosen for the crossing. The wagons were taken to pieces before being ferried over. There were eighteen of them, and three hard days were occupied in the business. The oxen swam over. Then, the wagons having been rebuilt, they resumed the long trek, after bidding farewell to the kindly Boers. It was the 4th of January when they left the Orange River and by the end of the month they reached Grahamstown. Picking up her two daughters there Mrs Moffat went on to the coast to recuperate for three weeks and then returned to Grahamstown.

On this latter portion of the journey an accident happened which might well have been serious. The wagon capsized. Mrs Moffat and two of the children were able to scramble out, but two others could not be found—Mary and John. John was the baby

born a few months before they left Kuruman. Everybody set to work to unpack the wagon, dreading what they might find under the heavy boxes and other lumber. They discovered Mary, with the baby in her arms, mixed up with the mattresses and pillows, which had protected them from injury. Sensible and placid, the future Mrs Livingstone had quietly remained buried with her precious burden until help should come. The baby lived to be the Rev. J. S. Moffat, C.M.G., missionary and Government servant.[1]

Mrs Moffat went on to Port Elizabeth to send the three elder children by ship to school in Cape Town. The letter in which she describes her experiences at the port is worth reading as a picture of the delays people had to suffer in those days; but it is too long to quote here.[2] In June Mrs Moffat met her husband at the Orange River, and together they returned to Kuruman.

In one of his letters, written nearly two years later (April 1838), we get a glimpse of Moffat and his two sons, James and John, in their home, while Mrs Moffat was away at Motito nursing Mrs Lemue.

> The bell has just been rung, and I am alone with Jim and Jack, the one on my right hand, and the other on my left, talking and questioning with no little volubility, so that my attention is divided, for I do not like to command silence. . . . [Yesterday] Brother Hamilton left for the Batlaros at noon, so I was alone in the evening, but not in solitude, for who could be in the company of Jim and Jack? Jim let me see that he could put his foot into either end of his shoes. I took the hint and repaired them. I had scarcely finished this work when

[1] *John Smith Moffat, C.M.G.*, by his son Robert U. Moffat (1921). The incident quoted above is related on pp. 8 and 9.

[2] J. S. M., pp. 142-144.

he perched himself at the end of the table and stood in the attitude of a Grecian orator, and questioned me about the resurrection from the dead. The conversation, or rather the contention, lasted for more than half an hour, whilst Jack stood with his hands crossed behind his back wondering and sometimes repeating Jim's enquiries. Never in my life was I so delighted with the questions of a child. . . . "How can that which has decayed become alive again?" "I know mamma says that God is a very, very great God; will He make the dead come out of their graves?" I gave a few simple hints about the coming of Christ. When I asked where he had heard of Christ coming in flames of fire, he said, "Do you not teach the people that He will come in that way?" Enough of this subject. People are coming for medicine, and I must get the lads to bed. They have put twenty or more questions while I have been writing.[1]

[1] J. S. M., p. 151.

CHAPTER X

THE TRANSLATOR

"Missionaries pluck the flowerets of savage speech and weave them into chaplets for the brows of Christ."

I

In February 1828 we find Robert Moffat writing to his father: "It is my object now to get something translated to put into the hands of those who learn to read." As a matter of fact he had already, as we saw in Chapter VIII, prepared sundry school books two years previous to this. Before us, as we write, lies a little volume of thirty-five pages containing a Catechism, in the form of one hundred and thirty-six questions and answers, and some portions of Scripture, which (except perhaps for a primer or two) was the first book published in the Chuana language. It was printed in England in 1826.[1]

This booklet was of great service in the early days, but Moffat was ambitious to give the Bechuana the entire Bible in their own tongue.

As we have already seen, Moffat appears to have been slow in the beginning to realize the cardinal importance of learning the language. But we must

[1] The title page reads: "Bechuana Catechism, with translations of the third chapter of the Gospel by John, the Lord's Prayer, and other passages of Scripture, etc., in that language. By Mr Robert Moffat, Missionary at Lattakoo. Printed for the London Missionary Society by J. Dennett, Leather Lane, Holborn. 1826."

make allowance for his difficulties. He had never been trained as a linguist; perhaps he had never received half a dozen language lessons in his life, apart from the Dutch he had learnt at the Cape. Now he was faced with the problem of learning a language which had never been reduced to writing. For, excepting a few words recorded very inaccurately by early travellers, no attempt had been made to put it into written form. Moreover it was a tongue entirely different in structure and vocabulary from the Dutch and English which Moffat knew. Sechuana [1] belongs to the family of African languages to which the name Bantu has been given. Differing much in vocabulary and in details of grammatical structure, these languages, like the European tongues that have sprung from Latin, are very uniform in general principles, so much so that anyone who has learnt one of them can easily learn another. But in Moffat's early days, while the existence of this family of languages had already been suspected, their principles had not yet been formulated. It was not till 1834 that the Wesleyan missionary, Boyce, explained the characteristic euphonic concord in his Xosa grammar. The great philologist, Bleek, who was the first to lay the scientific foundation of Bantu philology, was not born till 1827—the year that Moffat buried himself for two months in order to learn Chuana more thoroughly.

In view of these facts, we are not to wonder that Moffat was slow in learning the language, nor that

[1] "Bechuana" means "the Chuana people"; "Sechuana" the language and ways of the Bechuana. When speaking of the language we may write Sechuana, or, dropping the prefix, simply Chuana.

he made many errors. We should rather wonder that he did so much and did it so well, that what is substantially his translation of the Bible is still in use to-day.

Moffat enjoyed, of course, one advantage. He did not come among the Bechuana totally incapable of communicating with them. He knew Dutch, and Dutch was the language mainly used by the neighbouring Griqua. Among these people Moffat could find men who knew at least some Sechuana and could act as his interpreters. That they were very unsatisfactory interpreters, and that their presence beguiled him into preaching in Dutch for some years, we have already learnt. But, though they were a rotten reed to lean upon, they did act as a medium of communication, and put him into a more favourable position than if he had had to begin, as some missionaries have had to begin, by talking in gestures.

Even with such assistance Moffat did not find it easy to acquire the language.

> It was something like groping in the dark [he wrote], and many were the ludicrous blunders I made. The more waggish of those from whom I occasionally obtained sentences and forms of speech, would richly enjoy the fun, if they succeeded in leading me into egregious mistakes and shameful blunders, but though I had to pay dear for my credulity, I learned something. After being compelled to attend to every species of manual, and frequently menial, labour, for the whole day, working under a burning sun, standing on the saw pit, labouring at the anvil, treading clay, or employed in cleaning a water ditch, it may be imagined that I was in no very fit condition for study, even when a quiet hour could be obtained in the evening for that purpose. And this was not all; an efficient interpreter could not be found in the country; and when everything was ready for

inquiry, the native mind, unaccustomed to analyse abstract terms, would, after a few questions, be completely bewildered.[1]

From this last observation we may suppose that Moffat did not adopt the methods that later experience has shown to be the best in this kind of study. In writing the grammar of an hitherto illiterate tongue, we seek first of all to accumulate a mass of texts. The Africans possess no literature as we understand the term, but they have handed down from generation to generation a vast number of folk-tales. When one has written down a large number of these it is comparatively easy to analyse the sentences and determine the rules of grammar. Moffat seems never to have followed this plan. From what he says it would appear that he tried to get his interpreters to answer such questions as "What are the rules for the formation of the plural? How do you express the conditional mood?" If that were the case no wonder the men soon became "completely bewildered."

Whether Moffat ever attempted to write a grammar and dictionary of the language, we do not know. The first grammar (a very remarkable first effort) was prepared by a Wesleyan missionary, James Archbell, and published in 1837. It was not till 1895 that a dictionary was produced by the Rev. John Brown.

Early in 1827, as we have already mentioned, Moffat took a very wise step. On the station he had fallen into the habit of talking Dutch and found it difficult to break away from it and to learn Sechuana thoroughly. He therefore absented himself from

[1] *Missionary Labours*, p. 292.

Kuruman for two months, and lived among natives where he could hear nothing but Sechuana, since they knew no other tongue than their own.

There was certainly neither personal comfort nor pleasure to be had during my stay [he wrote][1] being compelled to live a semi-savage life among heathenish dance and song and immeasurable heaps of dirt and filth. . . . My object being to obtain as much native society as possible to which they had not the shadow of an objection, I was necessarily, while sitting with them at their work in their folds and inclosures, exposed to myriads of very unpleasant company, which made the night worse than the day. The people were kind, and my blundering in the language gave rise to many bursts of laughter. Never in one instance, would an individual correct a word or sentence, till he or she had mimicked the original so effectively, as to give great merriment to others. . . . My situation was not very well suited for study among a noisy rabble and a constant influx of beggars. Writing was a work of great difficulty, owing to the flies crowding into the inkhorn or clustering round the point of the pen, and pursuing it on the paper, drinking the ink as fast as it flowed. The night brought little relief, for as soon as the candle was lighted, innumerable insects swarmed around so as to put it out. . . .

An uncomfortable time, in short, but a most profitable one. He returned to the station and rather startled the people by preaching to them in excellent Sechuana. His colleague Hamilton consented to his withdrawing largely, and for a time, from the manual work of the station in order to devote attention to literary work. Moffat began to translate St Luke, and during 1828 was able to read the chapters in the public services and to profit by the criticisms made by his hearers.

In June 1830 he and Mrs Moffat travelled to the

[1] *Missionary Labours*, pp. 458-460.

Colony, in order to put their elder children to school and to get the Gospel of St Luke printed. As there were no printing facilities in or around Grahamstown, where a school was found, Moffat put the manuscript in his pocket and rode four hundred miles to Cape Town, in search of a press. Difficulty was met there too, owing to what Moffat calls "the infant state of typography in that place." He was forced at last to ask the assistance of the Government, and both from Sir Lowry Cole, the Governor, and from Colonel Bird, the Government Secretary, he received a ready response to his request for the use of the official printing office. The press was small, and the staff consisted, it seems, of one printer, Mr Van de Zandt. There was nothing for it but to learn printing, and to this Moffat and Edwards (a new recruit for the Bechuana mission who had now joined Moffat in Cape Town) set themselves with ardour. The paper, with a grant of £50 towards incidental expenses, was given by the British and Foreign Bible Society, "a precursor of the boon since conferred by that noble institution on the Bechuana mission" as Moffat gratefully acknowledged. It was under these circumstances that the first complete Gospel for the Bechuana was produced. The little paper-covered volume lies before us as we write, and, everything considered, is astonishingly well printed.

In June 1831 the Moffats, with Mr and Mrs Edwards, reached Kuruman after these experiences in Cape Town. They not only brought the edition of St Luke but also a small hymn book and a printing press, with type, paper and ink complete. The press was at once erected and put to use in printing lessons for the school.

It was absolutely a new thing to the natives, and caused immense astonishment.

Although [writes Moffat] many of the natives had been informed how books were printed, nothing could exceed their surprise when they saw a white sheet, after disappearing for a moment, emerge spangled with letters. After a few noisy exclamations, one obtained a sheet with which he bounded into the village, showing it to everyone he met, and asserting that Mr Edwards and I had made it in a moment, with a round black hammer (a printer's ball) and a shake of the arm. The description of such a juggling process soon brought a crowd to see the *segatisho* (press) which has since proved an auxiliary of vast importance to our cause.[1]

Henceforth that press, and the preparation of material for it, bulked large in Moffat's life. With the awakening of the Bechuana, the opening of schools, and the subsequent extension of the Mission into other districts, there came a demand for reading matter so insistent that it taxed the utmost energies of the two missionaries to supply. Moffat wrote the books, and assisted Mr Edwards in printing. For many years to come the strain upon him was to be almost unbearable; more than once he collapsed under it; for he had not only this work to do, which was enough for one man, but, while Mr Hamilton gave great assistance in the industrial side of the work, the general oversight of the Mission devolved upon Moffat, as well as the regular services, the evangelization of the outlying villages, and the thousand and one small details that, as every pioneer missionary knows, fill up every spare moment of the day.

The Rev. J. S. Moffat, recalling his boyhood at

[1] *Missionary Labours*, p. 564.

Kuruman and speaking of how his mother taught him, says:

My father led too busy and arduous a life to spare time for matters of this kind. Most of his time was spent in his study, wrestling with the difficulties attendant on the translation of the Scriptures and other books into a language which was in its literary infancy, which he himself had for the most part had the task of reducing to writing. When out of his study, he had to be doctoring the sick, and then the garden or the workshop claimed his energies. In those days everyone had to be his own farmer, blacksmith, carpenter and builder. It was often my lot to take such a part as was possible in these activities for a youngster of my age. Many is the time that I had to blow the blacksmith's bellows, while my father made the sparks fly from the red or the white hot iron.[1]

In 1883, after his wife had brought up from the coast a fresh supply of paper, Moffat was able to print the largest book he had yet attempted. This was a volume of four hundred and thirty-one pages containing extracts of Scripture—such extracts as would serve his people till the whole Bible was completed. In its neat paper covers, and remarkably good printing, this book was a credit to the two men whose names appeared on the title page as the printers—R. Moffat and R. Edwards.

For this purpose and for the printing of various booklets, the Religious Tract Society had voted sixteen reams of paper, and followed this by other generous grants in succeeding years. Nowadays, perhaps, missionaries would produce reading books on hygiene and general knowledge; in those days they were content to translate tracts which had proved their utility in spiritual conversion and

[1] *James Smith Moffat*, by R. U. Moffat, p. 14.

edification at home, such as "Poor Joseph," "The Sinner's Help," "Old James," "Do you want a friend?" "Peace in death," and so on. These and others were put into Sechuana by Mr Lemue of Motito, Edwards and Moffat, and were printed mainly by Edwards.

II

On 20th November 1836 Robert Moffat wrote to the Bible Society about the effect of St Luke's Gospel upon the Bechuana:

On this station [he wrote] as well as at other places I lately visited in the course of an itinerating journey, I was delighted to hear that the attention of the people was first aroused to a sense of the importance of Divine Truth, and a concern for their souls, by hearing that Gospel read in their own language. I have frequently listened with surprise to hear how minutely some, who were unable to read, could repeat the story of the Woman who was a sinner; the parable of the Great Supper, the Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus; and date their change of views to these simple but all important truths, delivered by the great Master Teacher. Thus, you have not laboured in vain, or spent a portion of your funds for nought. You will also be cheered to hear, that at this and other stations among the Bechuana, the cause of our Redeemer is advancing with no small rapidity. The present anxiety to learn to read throws the past into the shade. On a late itinerating tour among the Bechuana living on the Orange and Hart Rivers, it was with indescribable pleasure and surprise that I met with great numbers most anxious to obtain spelling books and instruction. I took about two hundred with me; but these were lost in the multitude of applications. It will afford us delight thus to have again to prepare new editions of those little pioneers of the Sacred Volume. A new era has commenced; and we hope, even in our

days, to witness a moral revolution effected in this country, by the blessing of God on the exertions of the Bible, Missionary and Tract Societies.

A correspondence was kept up between Moffat and the scholarly officials at the Bible House in London, for these were as ready to give as Moffat was anxious to ask advice upon the difficult labour of translation.

Writing from Kuruman, 3rd July 1838, Moffat was able to report that he had completed the first draft of the New Testament, and that he was then engaged in copying and revising it.

I have laboured hard at the work [he wrote] but much still remains to be done, for it was not until the translation was made that I finally settled in my mind the appropriate use of numerous words of importance which I had left undecided until I should thoroughly discover their meaning and their parallels in the Scriptures. Of course this obliges me to re-examine the whole very closely, in order to obtain something like uniformity.

The following particulars of the work, contained in the same letter, will be found interesting:

"The Sechuana language, though exceedingly copious, is of course deficient in theological terms; being according to the character and genius of the people, who know nothing of God or immortality. This at first occasioned considerable difficulty; but research has convinced me, that the language itself possesses an ample source of suitable words to convey with wonderful clearness, the language and meaning of the Scriptures. In some instances I have compounded, employed circumlocution in a few, and a few foreign words have been introduced, many of which are perfectly familiar to the natives;

as also the numerals of the English language. The latter I deemed necessary, to avoid the perplexity of Sechuana counting, which at most only reaches one hundred, and that by tens; for instance, eight is expressed *Goshume go choa go hera menuana me beri*, i.e. literally, 'ten except the hindering (withholding, or holding down) two fingers.' This, however, is an exception to the general neatness and perspicuity of the language. The numerous forms or conjugations of the verb varied by prefixing or adding one or two letters at most, is a great beauty in the language, whereby much can be expressed with the greatest brevity and clearness. Terms relating to a pastoral and migratory life abound; and I think many parts of the Old Testament could be translated into it with an almost original simplicity.

"The Gospels I found comparatively easy, as well as some of the minor Epistles; the Acts, and most of St Paul's Epistles, and, I may add, part of St Peter's gave me much trouble. This did not arise so much from want of understanding what was written, as from the difficulty of finding suitable words to convey the original with all its force into the language. To understand the Scriptures well is absolutely necessary; for if the antecedent be law, love, judgment, righteousness, offence, etc., each of these has its own particular pronoun, as *o*, *lo*, *li*, *e*, *se*, etc., neither has the language those genders which characterize almost every other, nor articles, the definite being unexpressed, as in Latin. Yet there seems no difficulty in conveying ideas with the utmost precision.

"In introducing new words into the language, I have made it a rule to borrow from the language

most contiguous, namely the English; which, though not exactly contiguous, soon will be, and is already spreading in our infant schools. The original words in Greek for weights, measures, and coins, I have retained. I have also written all the proper names of persons and places as they stand in the original, only in accordance with the orthography of the Sechuana. When I commenced translating, I felt inclined to make what would be termed a free translation; but I had not proceeded far, before it appeared destitute of that simple and original beauty of more literal translation, which is found even in those portions which had already been printed in the language. I am aware that a middle path is recommended, which I have attempted to imitate—perhaps more literal than free. I have sometimes had occasion to introduce words, where the sense could not possibly be understood without them. I had our venerable English translation ever before me, and also the Dutch, besides other translations; and made occasional references to the German. If I have deviated in some few instances from the English, it was because I preferred the Dutch rendering. I have availed myself of every help within my reach, such as Poole, Calmet, Horne, Campbell, Scott, Henry A. Clarke, Stuart; besides other works on Biblical criticism.

"In the course of translation I have used two different terms, to distinguish between Hades and Gehenna. I have also endeavoured to distinguish the two verbs, *metanoein* [to change one's mind, to repent] and *metamelesthai*; and for Christos, I have used ***Messiah***. It was once recommended to me to adopt the original word *baptizo*; but finding a word

in the language exhibiting nearly all the meanings of the original, I preferred it. As it means not only to sprinkle, but also to saturate, to make wet, either by pouring or immersion, I feel sure that a Baptist brother would have adopted the same. I have studiously avoided giving the slightest tinge to any rendering in favour of any creed. If I have, in any of the above points, deviated from that which would be more agreeable to your Committee, I shall esteem it a particular favour to be made acquainted with the same. The kind strain of your letters encourages me to solicit every hint for my guidance, for such I need. The deep sense of the awful responsibility which I have taken upon me, increased in the course of the work; and I have often wished I could push it on to the shoulders of some one else more competent. From the work, I have, through the Divine blessing, derived much benefit; and were it even never to be printed, I should feel that I had received a rich, yea, an abundant reward for all my labour. Before closing the subject, I would just add, that as some of my brethren appear anxious that the contents of the chapters be also translated this has been done, as they stand in your English Bibles, but I am not sure if your Committee will approve of their being printed.

"As stated before, I hope to have the work completed in the course of this summer; but the printing of it is a matter of serious consideration. It would be a very long time before we could accomplish the work here, in the absence of a proper printer, and it would necessarily take much of our time, which can be ill spared in the present prosperous state of the Mission. As I shall be under the necessity

of visiting Cape Town on account of my family, it has been recommended by my brethren that the work be printed there. Should this be practicable, it will not only be more expeditious, but, in the end, a great saving to the cause. I wrote some time ago to the Cape to know the probable expense of such a work, and the practicability of its execution there; but I have not yet received an answer. On account of Mrs Moffat's health, it will be proper for her to escape the summer heat, and to be at Cape Town in the month of December. Thus, if it seem good to your Committee to give any aid in paper, it would be well were it to be done at the Cape in that month. As to the number which ought to be printed, all with whom I have conversed are of opinion that at least four thousand copies will be necessary. In order to hasten the work and ensure correctness, I have an intelligent native youth at my elbow reading the manuscript, in order to detect any faults in the idiom or spelling. To the latter great attention must be paid; for the absence of a single aspirate (h) in some words would change the meaning of the whole sentence, and perhaps make virtue vice. I shall also submit the translation to the perusal of my learned, holy and devoted brother, the Rev. P. Lemue of Motito."

In the same letter, Moffat was able to announce that within the last twelve months they had received seventy-one adults into the Church. The natives on all sides were learning to read. About four thousand spelling books had been circulated, and the demand was still increasing. The hymns had been increased to one hundred, and two thousand copies had been printed. Very few copies remained of the Gospel of St Luke.

The immediate response to Moffat's letter was a grant by the Bible Society of two hundred and fifty reams of paper, sufficient to print four thousand New Testaments.

III

Towards the end of 1838 the Moffats set out for Cape Town with the double intention of recruiting their health and of seeing the New Testament through the press. The mission press was not adequate to such a big task. On arrival at Cape Town it was found that no office there was in a position to undertake such a large order, and there was nothing for it but to sail for England.

The Moffats with two of their children embarked on a small sailing-ship homeward-bound from China with troops on board. It was a sadly eventful voyage of nearly three months. A terrible epidemic of measles—until lately still remembered by old people in Cape Town—was raging, and it broke out on board, followed by a scourge of dysentery. Before the ship left Table Bay Mrs Moffat bore a daughter —afterwards the wife of the Rev. Roger Price, the sole survivor of the expedition to the Makololo in 1860. Three days later their son James, aged six, died. They were all ill—for some days John's life also trembled in the balance. In the Channel the ship grounded on a sandbank, but was hauled off by a passing steamer.

Twenty-three years had elapsed since Robert Moffat had sailed from England. It is a strange experience to arrive home after such a long interval. Death had made many inroads upon the relatives and

friends of Mr and Mrs Moffat. The young unknown stripling who had left England in 1816 returned in 1839 an experienced and a famous man.

According to that strange custom which demands that the missionary who comes back to England almost exhausted physically and mentally, and in great need of rest, should be whirled about north, south, east and west, in all weathers, cold, wet and dry, to face public audiences and to give addresses in a language with whose use he has become unfamiliar, Robert Moffat was now embarked upon a nerve-racking campaign. There were few railways at that date, and most of the incessant journeys had to be accomplished by coach. The inevitable result followed: exposure to unwonted damp and cold late at night, after the vitiated atmosphere of crowded meetings, brought on a severe illness and the doctors forbade any further public speaking for a time. Thus he gained an opportunity of completing the work he had so much at heart, the final correction and printing of the New Testament.

It was suggested by a member of the Bible Society's Committee that Moffat should translate the Psalms to be bound up with the Testament. This suggestion, he wrote to the Bible Society in October 1839,

> brought to my recollection a remark I once heard from the mouth of a Mochuana while conversing on the awful importance and beauty of the Word of God, of which he knew only a part, and that a small part. He remarked that the *motu oa Morimo* (Man of God) who wrote the Psalms must have been a man of wide heart and exalted views of the *Boago yoa Yehova* (dwelling or presence of Jehovah) for (said he) I feel when I read the Psalms as if *I* prayed and praised, and praised and prayed, and I

feel a *boithumelo yo bo gorisicoeng* (exalted joy) which I cannot describe.

Fifty of the Psalms translated by Moffat had already been printed in the book of Scripture Lessons, and he now corrected them and added the remainder.

In the meantime the printing of the New Testament by the Bible Society was proceeding apace, and Moffat was correcting the proofs. He also revised the Scripture Lessons for reprinting and, by the generous assistance of members of the Society of Friends, an edition of six thousand copies was carried through the press. Furthermore, he prepared a new edition of the Hymn Book, of which the Religious Tract Society printed ten thousand copies for him. As if all this were not enough labour for a man, in addition to the public meetings which he soon resumed, he wrote the inevitable book demanded by the public: *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa.*

Moffat had hoped to stay only a few months in England, but it was now well on into 1842 and he was still there. No wonder Mrs Moffat had written (25th November 1840) to their old colleague at Kuruman, Robert Hamilton: "I long to get home. I long to see the spot again where we have so long toiled and suffered, to see our beloved companions in the toil and suffering, and to behold our swarthy brethren and sisters again, and I long for my own home, for though loaded with the kindness of friends, and welcome everywhere, still home is homely." [1] As time went on this longing intensified.

[1] J. S. M., p. 157.

IV

One event above all others marked this period of Robert Moffat's life. One day he had occasion to call at a boarding house in Aldersgate Street, London, where missionary candidates lodged. There he met a young man named David Livingstone. He noticed that Livingstone was interested in the story he had to tell. In subsequent weeks Livingstone sought him out quietly and asked a question or two, and whenever Moffat was addressing a meeting in London he was there. At this time Livingstone was completing his medical studies, and was still hoping against hope that the way would open for him to go to China.

" By and by," says Moffat, " he asked me whether I thought he would do for Africa. I said I believed he would, if he would not go to an old station, but would advance to unoccupied ground, specifying the vast plain to the north, where I had sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been! At last Livingstone said, 'What is the use of my waiting for the end of this abominable opium war? I will go at once to Africa.' " [1]

On 8th December 1840 David Livingstone set sail for Africa. He took with him the first five hundred copies of the Sechuana New Testament.

[1] *Personal Life of David Livingstone*, W. G. Blaikie, p. 28.

CHAPTER XI

KURUMAN AGAIN

Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need
Till the Soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.
As the deer breaks—as the steer breaks—from the herd where they graze,
In the faith of little children we went on our ways.

RUDYARD KIPLING, *The Song of the Dead.*

I

ROBERT AND MARY MOFFAT sailed from Gravesend on 30th January, and arrived at Cape Town 10th April 1843. After staying there six weeks they re-embarked for Algoa Bay and during ten stormy days tossed about before reaching their destination. There they had to wait months for goods which were following in a slower ship, and it was not till 13th December that the wagons rolled into Kuruman. The crossing of the Orange River had this time been effected easily—a pont, or floating bridge, had ferried the wagons over. David Livingstone had met them at the Vaal, having ridden, clad in a suit of his own making, the 150 miles from Kuruman on horseback. The warmth of their reception cheered the Moffats' hearts and bore testimony to the change that had taken place. People came from long distances to greet their beloved missionaries. Among others came the chief, Mothibi, and his

wife, both of them now old; he had been baptized during Moffat's absence. "For many successive weeks the station," wrote Moffat, "continued to be a scene of bustle from the influx of strangers and believers from the different out-stations, so that we felt somewhat as we had done among the exciting scenes we had witnessed in England." This excitement soon passed off and the Moffats settled down to work again. A fresh colleague, the Rev. W. Ashton, took charge of the day school, Moffat's eldest daughter, Mary, assisting in the infants' department.

II

The five hundred New Testaments taken out by David Livingstone had soon been distributed. Mr Edwards wrote to the Bible Society that, while believing it not to be wise to give the books free to people who could pay, they had presented copies to the really poor and to children in the school; others paid at the rate of three shillings for a copy, most of the payments being made in sheep or goats.

Other consignments had followed and Moffat himself brought out two thousand copies. He also brought ten thousand hymn books printed for the Mission by the Religious Tract Society, as well as other books.

If the great body of Bechuana were able to read, [Moffat wrote in 1843 to the Bible Society] the whole edition would not be sufficient for them; but this is not the case, and years may elapse ere another impression will be required. I am not able to state what number of readers there may be at present, but suppose they cannot be more than one thousand, if so many. This is including children in the different schools. However, the

future prospect is cheering, readers will increase yearly twofold; and thus the next edition of the Sechuana New Testament will be at least ten thousand instead of five thousand. We have within 140 miles around us, probably twelve thousand Bechuanas; and admitting half of that number to become readers in the course of a few years, it is not at all improbable this amount of copies will be required; and the certainty is greater if we can succeed in establishing missions in the interior, although the inhabitants are there, likewise, few and widely separated. Lately, when a number of missionaries were together, an estimate was made of what might be the number of inhabitants, including the Griquas on the Orange River, to the Bamangwato in the north occupying a space of 500 by 100 miles, and it was believed there might be from twenty-five to thirty thousand people.

Moffat wrote of the effect the printed Word had upon the minds of the Bechuana. One of the converts had been placed in trying circumstances which were calculated to shake a stronger faith than his. "But for the New Testament," this man said to Moffat, "you would not have found me among the faithful, nor even an inhabitant of a missionary station; and but for the written Word of God I should have parted with my faith and become as a dead man."

This convert was sent as a teacher to one of the new stations in the interior. During his last address to the Kuruman people before leaving, he lifted a New Testament in his hand and spoke thus: "What did we think of this book before we were taught to read? We imagined it to be a charm of the white people to keep off sickness; a *thing* only, like other things; or that it was a trap to catch us. We had never heard of such a thing; our fathers, who have all died in darkness, could not tell us about it.

It was a new thing in our nation, and it was a *selo hela*, a trifle nobody cared for, but now we not only hear with our ears, we see with our eyes, we read it, our children read it. We can find nothing bad in it, it is all good ; it is a charm, for it preserves us from the second death in hell. It is a thing, it is true ; but it is a thing compared to which all other things are nothing. We thought it was a thing to be spoken to but now we know it has a tongue. It speaks and will speak to the whole world."

In a later letter to the Bible Society, after telling other incidents, Moffat said :

I never see a Testament pass from my hands into those of a native without feeling that I am sowing seed which will be wafted by the Divine Spirit into no one knows how many hearts, there to bring forth fruit unto eternal life. It is to the circulation and reading of the Scriptures that we look for permanency of effect ; for, alas ! how soon would all our oral instructions vanish away, or become corrupted through a treacherous memory and a more treacherous heart, were there neither written law nor testimony to appeal to.

Years later (1879) at the annual meeting of the Bible Society he told this story which may as well find a place at this point :

Some time after the Gospel had been preached among the Bechuana and converts had been made, I met an elderly man who looked very downcast. I said to him, "My friend, what is the matter, who is dead ?" "Oh," said he, "there is no one dead." "Well ; what is the matter ? You seem to be mourning." The man then scratched his head and said, "My son tells me that my dog has eaten a leaf of the Bible." "Well, what of that," I said, "perhaps I can replace it." "Oh," says the man, "the dog will never do any good, he will never bite anybody, he will never catch any jackals, he will be as

tame as I see the people become who believe in that book. All our warriors become as gentle as women, and my dog is done for."

III

Hitherto Kuruman had been the only station of the London Missionary Society among the Bechuana. Now a forward movement was to take place. Other missionaries had arrived, and it was arranged for the Rev. William Ross to open a station at Taungs, a hundred miles east of Kuruman, and for the Rev. Holloway Helmore to go to Lekhatlong, on the Vaal River, south-east of Kuruman. These were the first of the new stations which, as time went on, were to include Kanye, Molepelole, and Phalapye.

A certain restless young man named David Livingstone had, since his arrival in 1841, been pressing for the adoption of a bold policy of advance into the interior. He, with Mr Edwards, was now appointed to open a station among the Bakhatla at a place named Mabotsa. Livingstone began building but it was never his intention to settle down there for the rest of his life. His conception of missionary work differed in certain respects from that held by some of his colleagues. He believed in utilizing the services of the natives, by training them as teachers and evangelists and then planting them out in all directions. The mission had now been established over a quarter of a century, but no attempt had been made to train native assistants. Livingstone urged, and at first vainly, that an institution for the purpose should be commenced at once, but not till 1849 did Mr Ashton, who was now Moffat's colleague at Kuruman, begin,

in a tentative fashion, to do this all-important work.

Meanwhile Livingstone had that famous encounter with a lion at Mabotsa which left him with a weak arm for the rest of his life. He went to Kuruman to recuperate under the motherly care of Mrs Moffat, and while there saw reason to change certain views he had nourished. Mrs Moffat had urged him to get married before he left England, but he had scorned the idea. Even his experience as a pioneer had not altered his opinion; we find him writing to a friend at the end of 1843, "I am too busy to think of anything of the kind." Now at Kuruman he met Moffat's daughter Mary, mistress of the Infants' School. Under an almond tree in the mission garden [1] they plighted their troth. When his wound was healed, Livingstone returned to Mabotsa to prepare a house for his bride, and before long they were married. They began their work happily together. In 1846, however, they left Mabotsa and began anew at Chonuane, some forty miles distant, among the Bakwena, whose chief was Sechele.

Chonuane was some 250 miles distant from Kuruman and it was not easy for Mrs Moffat to keep in touch with her daughter. In 1846 Ann Moffat trekked north to visit her sister, travelling with a native maid and three wagon boys. One evening two of the men went back along the road to search for something lost from the wagon. As Miss Moffat was sitting by the fire waiting for the kettle to boil a lion crept up unseen and sprang upon one of the oxen grazing close by. Miss Moffat and her maid

[1] The tree still stands; I gathered some leaves from it in 1912.

climbed hastily into the wagon; the only man with them was helpless since the rifle had been taken by the other two men. All night they heard the lion at its feast—purring like a great cat (once heard it is a sound never forgotten) as it licked the meat preparatory to swallowing it. The rest of the wagon-team had stampeded, and in the morning there was nothing for it but to walk back to the nearest native village. On the way they met the other two men who had spent the night in a tree, for they had encountered another lion.[1]

A few months later Mrs Moffat herself set out with her three younger children under the escort of a native to visit the Livingstones. The children (as one of them has recorded) enjoyed the privilege of seeing what no man will ever see again in that district. Herds of game—dainty little steinboks, lordly elands, fantastic gnus, huge buffaloes, giraffes in procession: some thousands they watched as their wagon trekked slowly over the plains. Every day they saw the spoor of lions but encountered none. They reached Chonuane without other incident than the smashing of their escort's *diselboom* (wagon-pole), and after a short stay, retraced their steps to Kuruman.

Next year, 1847, the question of educating the children came urgently to the front again. It was impossible to teach them properly on the station; even had it been possible it is not good for boys and girls to live all their early years in intimate contact with natives. Moffat's other children had been educated partly at schools in the Colony. It was determined now to send the three youngest to

[1] *John Smith Moffat*, p. 15.

England, and, since Moffat could not spare the time from his work, Mrs Moffat had once again to face the peril and anxiety of a long journey alone. She set out in the usual way, with native servants, a wagon and oxen. Cape Town lies at a distance of 750 miles from Kuruman; the journey occupied two months.

We may cull one paragraph from the description of the trek written in later life by one of the three children, John Smith Moffat. After passing through the Karroo they approached the Hex River mountains on the brow of the Great Tableland. The pass over the mountain and down to the lower level of the coast region is familiar to present-day travellers who see it through the railway carriage windows; it was another thing to negotiate it in a wagon.

> The farmers along the road had given our inexperienced servants elaborate and somewhat alarming cautions, and had described graphically the difficulties and dangers of the rough wagon track by which we were to descend; so that it was with quaking hearts that we inspanned early one afternoon and started. None of us, old or young, had much time or thought to give to the grand and stern mountain scenery around, our one thought was to watch the wagon jolting round the sharp turns, slipping over rocky edges, and at times over hanging, dizzy precipices. It was dusk before we reached the bottom of the mountain road, and found some level ground suitable for our night's bivouac, and we were thankful to be able to settle in, tired but happy; none more so than the mother, who, after all, had been the mainstay of the party; for our servants were, in work of this kind, little better than ourselves, the children.

Mrs Moffat had to remain five months at the Cape before the necessary arrangements could be made. The two girls went off to England in the care of a

good friend; the boy, John, was put to school in Cape Town for a time, and then followed his sisters. Mrs Moffat did not see him again till ten years later when he returned as a missionary. This parting from her children was felt deeply by her. She set out on her solitary trek back to Kuruman. Her husband went as far as the Orange River to meet her. The stream was in flood; Moffat had a severe cold, so did not venture to swim over. They saluted each other across the water and waited for a boat to be brought. "It was trying," wrote Mrs Moffat to one of her children, "for Papa to see me alone, with not one little prattler." Eventually the wagon was ferried over and Kuruman regained in safety.

IV

There is not much to chronicle of Moffat's activities during these years. A pioneer missionary's life is not all made up of journeyings and other exciting experiences. It is for the most part a matter of steady plodding; one day passes much as another; and the years go by leaving no record but that of faithful attention to a round of duties that would seem monotonous if not performed in a high spirit. Moffat was giving all the time available to his translation of the Old Testament.

Meanwhile events were happening all around which were changing the whole aspect of South Africa. For long years Kuruman had been an isolated outpost of civilization, but every year had shown the tide approaching nearer and nearer and now the time had come for it to sweep onwards, ultimately leaving Kuruman stranded in a backwater.

At this time Kuruman was well known as the starting point, the jumping-off place, for the interior. Many hunters and travellers became familiar with it as the last station where they tasted of the comforts of civilization. It was a home in the wilderness to them. They have left unforgettable pictures of the station as it was at that period, and of the kindly hospitality of the missionaries.

As early as 1834 we find Mr A. G. Bain writing as follows in an account of the explorations he had carried on in the immediately preceding years :

To the excellent and intelligent Missionary the Rev. Mr Moffat of Kuruman and his lady, I am also under the greatest obligations for a repetition of the hospitalities that I received at Mateto [*i.e.* Motito] and also for sending their wagon along with me to Campbell, a distance of four long days' journey. The improvements at Kuruman since my last visit are truly astonishing! There I found a printing press in full activity, with a *native* compositor, taught by Mr Moffat, who, you know, is an adept at everything. The mission houses are extremely neat, comfortable, and unassuming; but the new church is a stupendous work for the means which they had of building it, and would do honour to any Christian community of much longer standing than the missionary town of Kuruman. What pleased me much, both here and at Mateto, was to see large fields of yellow wheat belonging to the natives, vying with the crops of the missionaries, having been well cultivated and irrigated. This is one grand step towards civilization, and, would time permit, I could tell you of many more.[1]

In 1845 that very gallant gentleman, William Cotton Oswell (who afterwards, in 1849, accompanied Livingstone to Lake Ngami) reached Kuruman. He

[1] Appendix to Volume II of *Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa*, by Andrew Steedman, 1835.

became deeply attached to Robert Moffat, whom he called "that grand old Patriarch of Missionaries." "He and Mrs Moffat," Oswell wrote, "are verily the two best friends travellers ever came across. I shall never forget their affectionate courtesy, their beautifully ordered household, and their earnest desire to help us on in every way."

In 1849 came the adventurous youth, Alfred Dolman, who was fated two years later to perish mysteriously near Kolobeng, after having followed in Livingstone's footsteps to Lake Ngami.

In his diary we read:

Thursday. (June 7th) . . . at 10 a.m. I reached Kuruman and was heartily welcomed by the missionaries, the Rev. Mr Moffat, Mr Hamilton and Mr Ashton. Mr Moffat pressed me to take meals regularly with him, and in every respect treated my whole party with the greatest hospitality. Kuruman must be a very pretty spot in summer when everything is in leaf; but now, in the absence of rain, the country appears much parched. The large watercourse is a delightful object with its deep clear stream flowing past the missionaries' garden.

Sunday 10*th.* I attended the chapel where service was performed by Mr Moffat in the Sechuana language. The chapel is built of stone, thatched, and would contain four or five hundred people comfortably. The congregation was not numerous owing to most of the inhabitants being absent on a shooting expedition, but they were very orderly. The singing was good, both time and tune being well kept. The weather being cold, people chiefly appeared in the native *kaross* thrown over their European garments. Mr Hamilton, now of great age, read service in Dutch at a separate house.

Monday 11*th.* . . . I took leave of the kind and hospitable missionaries, who overloaded my wagon with all sorts of provisions and vegetables for the journey, so that there was barely room for stowage. Indeed, such kindness was shown to our whole party, that the

remembrance of our visit to this spot of civilization in a vast wilderness will ever be delightful.[1]

At the end of 1852 came James Chapman, one of the greatest of South African explorers. This is his record:

Here I was introduced to the worthy missionaries, Messrs Moffat and Ashton and their families, the memory of whose uniform kindness I shall ever cherish. Milk, new bread, and fresh butter, we were never in want of while near these good people, and of grapes, apples, peaches, and all other products of the garden, there was never any lack at our wagons. Everyone is struck with the beauty of Kuruman, although the site cannot boast of any natural charm. All we see is the result of well-directed labours. . . . The natives here are the most enlightened and civilized I have seen, the greater portion wearing clothes and being able to read and write. It was pleasant on Sunday to see them neatly and cleanly clad, going to Church three times a day. In their village they are also making rapid progress, and, having adopted European practices, instead of the hoe, they use the plough.[2]

These and many others found a cheery welcome and generous hospitality at Kuruman. What it meant to them can only be realized by those who have enjoyed a like happy experience. To come upon such an oasis after travelling for months in an ox-wagon over barren country, to sit in a room, with a real white tablecloth on the table, to have fruit and vegetables, and butter, and a lady graciously pouring out the tea—to have as well the wise counsel and good companionship of a man like Moffat, who had himself been through all, and more than

[1] *In the footsteps of Livingstone, being the diary and travel notes made by Alfred Dolman*, edited by John Irving (1924), pp. 165-7.

[2] *Travel in the Interior of South Africa*, by James Chapman (1868) Vol. I pp. 131 *et seq.*

all, his guests had experienced of rough times—all this left indelible impressions. The genuine, unaffected piety of the missionaries, and their utter devotion to their work in this isolated region, also appealed to these path-finders of civilization.

CHAPTER XII

A TROUBLOUS TIME

Not for delectations sweet;
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious;
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

WALT WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass.*

I

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the events related in the previous chapter, the whole of the history of South Africa was being thrown into the melting-pot. It is strange to look back upon those years from our present vantage ground. To-day British Africa south of the Zambezi is composed of two Dominions, enjoying responsible government, viz., the Union of South Africa (comprising the Cape Province, Natal, the Orange Free State and Transvaal) and Southern Rhodesia; and of three Protectorates—Swaziland, Basutoland, Bechuanaland. The southern part of Bechuanaland, where Kuruman stands, has for many years formed an integral part of Cape Province. But in the 'forties and 'fifties of last century everything was in a state of flux.

The migration of the Boers, known as the Great Trek, had altered the whole aspect of affairs. Between the years 1836 and 1840 seven thousand Dutch farmers crossed the Orange River and began

to occupy the wide open plains of what came later to be named the Orange Free State. Some of the more adventurous crossed the Vaal, and after Umsiligazi had been driven north, other companies followed and eventually another state was formed which was called the Transvaal. The colony of Natal had already been established in 1843 and remained predominantly British. The great question which occupied the minds of statesmen for many subsequent years, and was only settled by the establishment of the Union after the Boer War of 1899-1902, was the question of the relation between these emigrant Boers and the British authorities. Another question —the question indeed which more than anything else caused the cleavage between Boer and Briton—was that as to the position of the native peoples.

We saw, in a previous chapter, the extent of Cape Colony when Moffat first arrived in South Africa. In subsequent years the boundary was pushed forward to the Orange River, and in 1836 the authority of the British Government was declared to extend to the twenty-fifth degree of latitude south—a line which cuts through the middle of the Transvaal. This act brought all Southern Bechuanaland under British control. But for years the British Government pursued a policy of vacillation that offended its best friends in South Africa, reduced the prestige of the British name among the natives, and kept the whole country in a state of turmoil.

How were the Boers to be dealt with ? At first it was thought to create a series of native buffer states between them and the old Colony. Griqualand was declared an independent state under Waterboer, and alongside of it a second state was

created under Adam Kok, another Griqua captain, and farther east Basutoland, under its able chief, Moshesh, was recognized as the third. Of these only Basutoland remains to-day: the others created by this policy became absorbed into neighbouring states. In 1842 a magistrate had taken it upon himself to proclaim part of the (now) Orange Free State as British, but his action was promptly repudiated by the Governor at the Cape. In 1845 there was a skirmish between the Boers and Adam Kok's Griqua (assisted by British) arising out of the Boers' refusal to recognize the natives' right to that district. Three years later the Governor, Sir Harry Smith, proclaimed British sovereignty over the Orange Free State and when some of the Boers resisted, defeated them at Boomplaats. British authority was abandoned in 1854 and a Dutch republic was set up. In 1852 the Sand River Convention recognized the independence of the Transvaal. In this way came two Dutch republics into existence. But even this did not settle the political problems of South Africa. For long the western boundaries of these republics were not defined. Wedged in between the Kalahari desert on the west, and the Transvaal and Orange Free State on the east, was the country of the Bechuana. This narrow strip of land became a bone of contention. The Boers claimed it. But their claim was strongly disputed by two parties of British—by those who could not calmly contemplate the wiping-out, or virtual enslavement, of the native tribes, and by those who wished to preserve a corridor for British expansion into the far interior. Some men were inspired by both motives. By these parties Bechuanaland was preserved to the British Empire.

One does not willingly rake up old controversies in these days when the desire of all who love South Africa is to see the three peoples—British, Boers, and Bantu—grow to a better comprehension and appreciation of each other. Looking back over the years we can see that both Boers and Britons made great mistakes, and it is not our province to judge between them. But we cannot write Moffat's life without some reference to these questions—they played too great a part in his life at this time for us to pass them over entirely.

II

Historically it is true that more than anything else it is because of their different attitude towards the natives that Boers and Britons have quarrelled in South Africa. In the eighteenth century there was perhaps not much to choose between them: if the Boers held slaves in South Africa the British held them in the West Indies and elsewhere. But the humanitarian sentiment, growing out of the Evangelical revival in England, touched the British as it did not touch the Boers. When Great Britain emancipated the slaves, the South African Dutch did not willingly acquiesce. The Great Trek was very largely due to the freedom granted to the slaves, and to the resentment caused in the minds of the Boers by what they regarded as inadequate compensation for their loss.[1] The *voortrekkers* left the Colony embittered against the British and many

[1] The 39,000 slaves in Cape Colony were valued by their owners at £3,000,000. The compensation amounted to rather less than £1,250,000.

of them were quite prepared to recoup themselves at the expense of the natives living in the regions beyond.

We have seen how missions had begun to spread in Bechuanaland. Livingstone, more than anyone, was eager to open stations everywhere. As the Kalahari desert hemmed him in on the west, he aimed at extending the mission to the east among the natives living in the territories occupied by the emigrant Boers. Frustrated in these attempts he then turned to the north, and in 1849, accompanied by Messrs Oswell and Murray, he crossed the desert to Lake Ngami, 870 miles from Kuruman—the first of the geographical discoveries that marked him as among the world's greatest explorers. The Boers had, that same year, written to insist that Livingstone should be immediately removed from the country, threatening that otherwise they would remove him themselves. Livingstone ignored these menaces. In 1850 he made a second journey to Ngami and in 1851, with Mr Oswell, travelled north to the Zambezi. Returning south he left his family at the coast and set out again with the intention of exploring fully the newly-discovered regions in order to locate healthy positions for mission stations. In August 1852 he reached Kuruman, and while he was there the Boers raided and destroyed his house at Kolobeng,[1] whither he had removed his station some years previously from Chonuane. They were resolved, Livingstone said,

[1] See Blaikie's *Life of Livingstone*, pp. 111-13. Attempts have been made to exonerate the Boers, but despatches written by the Commandant and printed in the Rev. J. du Plessis' *History of Christian Missions in South Africa* leave no doubt that they actually did commit this outrage under the delusion that Livingstone supplied the natives with guns.

to shut up the interior; he vowed to open a path through, or perish.

To appreciate the position of Moffat and the other missionaries at this time, one must recollect that in 1837 when the Boers, assembled at Winburg, drew up a constitution, one article provided that every member of the community, and all who should thereafter join them, must take an oath to have no connection with the London Missionary Society. "That body," says McCall Theal, the historian, "was regarded by them as purely a political institution, advocating and spreading principles of anarchy, and they regarded it as something like blasphemy to speak of its superintendent in Cape Town as a minister of the Gospel." [1]

Moffat's letters at this time make melancholy reading. Thus in November 1852 he wrote:

> The state of the country is such as it has not been since I entered the field. The violent opposition of the tribes to the introduction of the gospel during the early years of the mission, the threatened destruction by the hordes of Mantatees, and the successful and devastating inroads made by the mixed freebooters, Korannas, Griquas and Bushmen, appear now in our eyes as mere gusts compared to the storm which threatens to sweep away all the labours of missionaries and philanthropists to save the aborigines from annihilation. This is a time when all the wisdom, caution and firmness that can be called into action are required.

In the same letter he gives some particulars of what had happened. The mission among the Bakwena

[1] *South Africa*, p. 200. While Dr Philip (the superintendent) was thus regarded with intense enmity, it is fair to say that in the present day more justice is being done to his advocacy of a righteous policy in regard to the natives. It is now seen that he was not so wrong as certain writers alleged him to be.

at Kolobeng was a scene of solitude, the chief Sechele and his people were starving in the mountains where they had taken refuge; the Bakhatla of Mabotsa, Livingstone's first station, had been attacked—the survivors scattered. The Bahurutse, among whom a third station had been planted, were prostrate under their oppressors. The two native teachers who had been sent to the Bangwaketse had been compelled to retire. "Every act of rapine and bloodshed is carried on with the excuse that the country is theirs by authority of the Queen of England"—since the independence of the Transvaal Boers had been officially recognized. "This strange note jars horribly on the ears of the natives whose estimation of the English had once been very high." [1]

III

Robert Moffat did not always see eye to eye with his colleagues in the South African mission. Between him and the superintendent, Dr Philip, who lived in Cape Town, there were grave differences on questions of policy. Moffat did not always approve of Dr Philip's political activities, and Dr Philip did not share Moffat's desire to see the mission extend into the interior. Between Moffat and his colleagues in Bechuanaland dissension often arose, and it is idle to imagine that all the faults were on one side. Never since the days of Paul and Barnabas have missionaries succeeded in working together without friction. Strong, devoted men do not always have the same views of what should

[1] J. S. M., p. 197.

be done. Moffat, at any rate, was not a quarrelsome person. We find him writing in 1857: "I have been now for many years as tame as any old wife's cat in my intercourse with men, and will lie down and let any one walk over me, rather than say a word, either directly or indirectly, calculated to give offence."

Perhaps Livingstone and Moffat agreed better than any other two men in the field. Livingstone's ardent desires to push forward found a strong sympathizer in his father-in-law. Between the two men there was more than accordance on such matters: there was a warm personal affection. Needless to say Livingstone was always received affectionately whenever he could visit Kuruman. He found there the repose and the refreshing intimacies of home life which his heart always craved in the course of his wanderings. His wife, Mary, turned to her mother in her loneliness—a tragic figure, made for affection, loving her husband as he loved her, and yet separated for long years and kept in continual suspense while he pursued his God-given task of opening up Africa.

When after their return from Lake Ngami in 1850, Mrs Livingstone fell ill, Livingstone took his family to Kuruman. Livingstone himself was troubled with his uvula and was only prevented by his wife's illness from travelling to Cape Town to have it excised. He tried to persuade Moffat to perform the operation and between them they prepared an instrument for the purpose. But Moffat's courage failed him at the last moment—perhaps the only time in his life when he shrank from doing a painful duty.

IV

Livingstone said farewell to his parents-in-law in 1852 and set out on the long journey that was to take him across Africa from west to east. He pressed Moffat to accompany him—pressed him so hard that he could not have resisted but for the claims of his translation work. Moffat was fifty-seven years of age at the time—far too old for the tremendous fatigues of an explorer's life under the conditions then prevailing. He would in all probability never have returned alive: but he would have gone with all his heart had not duty demanded his presence at Kuruman.

Moffat kept on with his translating till May 1854. By that time it was evident that his health was suffering seriously through his intense application to the work. A change was necessary. The Directors in London invited him to take a rest at the coast, but Moffat had two overpowering preoccupations and if he were unable to continue his beloved translations all his heart turned with passionate longing towards the north. His friend Umsiligazi had for a long time been sending him pressing invitations to visit him in his new and distant home. He was anxious, too, to see and encourage some of the Christian Bechuana scattered by late events and deprived of their missionaries. And, further, great uneasiness was caused in the home at Kuruman because no news had come for a long time from Livingstone, since he had been swallowed up by the unknown interior, and Moffat hoped that he might gain some tidings of him.

In May, 1854, Moffat started on his third journey

to Umsiligazi. It was a much longer trek than the previous ones, for, it will be remembered, the Matebele had been driven north towards the Zambezi —into the country which afterwards was called after them, Matebeleland, and is now incorporated into Southern Rhodesia. Moffat was accompanied by two young traders—James Chapman and Samuel Edwards, the latter being a son of his former colleague at Kuruman.

The wagons slowly ploughed their way through the sands of the Kalahari, for a route had to be taken far west in order to avoid the Boers who, if they had known of the expedition, would certainly have attempted to stop it. Moffat planned the course so as to call at Kanye to visit the Bangwaketse, and farther north the remnants of the Bakwena, who with their Christian chief, Sechele, Livingstone's friend, were living in the mountains at Lithubaruba. From there the party crossed over a hundred miles of desert to Shoshong, the headquarters of the Bamangwato whose chief was Sekhome. This man was unwilling that Moffat should open up a road to the Matebele and would not provide guides through the untravelled region to the north. For eighteen days the party directed their course by compass, receiving occasional help from wandering Bushmen. They were now out of the desert and were frequently compelled to make a way for the wagons by cutting down trees and rolling away boulders. They saw few people. Writing on July 9th Moffat said, "We could see nothing human in the hills and vales around. It is ten days since we saw an abode or hut." They came at last to the first of Umsiligazi's outposts

where one of the *indunas* was in charge. Messengers were sent forward and in due time brought word from the chief that the party was to proceed. Here is an extract from Moffat's journal.

July 22nd, Saturday. Last night, after we were all fast asleep men arrived from Mosilikatse [*i.e.* Umsiligazi] with an ox to be slaughtered, and an injunction to hasten forward, as his heart longed exceedingly to see me. We set off again early next morning. We passed several towns from which the people rushed out to us; walking alongside of the wagons for miles, staring at me as though they would look their very eyes out. In the forenoon we drew near the royal residence. One after another with shield and spear came running to say that the chief was waiting. Sam [Edwards] and I walked on before the wagons, taking little notice of the fuss around us. We of course expected some such display as I had aforetime seen. We entered an immense large fold, and following a headman were led to the opposite side, where sat some fifty or sixty warriors. The town seemed to be new, or half finished. There was nothing like the order or cleanliness I had seen before. We stood for some minutes at a door or opening in the fence leading to some premises behind. In the meantime Mosilikatse had been moved from his house to this doorway. On turning round, there he sat—how changed! The vigorous, active and nimble chief of the Matebele, now aged, sitting on a skin, lame in the feet, unable to walk or even to stand. I entered, he grasped my hand, gave one earnest look, and drew his mantle over his face. It would have been an awful sight to see the hero of a hundred fights wipe from his eyes the falling tears. He spoke not, except to pronounce my name, Moshete, again and again. He looked at me again, his hand still holding mine, and he again covered his face. My heart yearned with compassion for his soul. Drawing a little nearer to the outside so as to be within sight of Mokumbate, his venerable counsellor, he poured out his joy to him. Meanwhile Sam had come up, but he, like me, had anticipated a very different scene, neither of us having

heard a word of Mosilikatse's indisposition. We sat some time with him, while he would expatiate on my unchanged friendship, on which he said he had always relied.[1]

Moffat stayed with Umsiligazi nearly three months and was able to relieve the dropsy which afflicted him. So much so, that when Moffat proposed to travel farther north towards the Zambezi in order to endeavour to get into touch with Livingstone, or at least to carry him letters and supplies, Umsiligazi determined to accompany him. This gave Moffat a further opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the chief and some of the people, for a retinue of councillors, wives, and hundreds of warriors escorted Umsiligazi. They travelled slowly north-west as far as the most remote of the Matebele outposts in the direction of the Zambezi. But beyond that they could not go.

There was no road, the country was waterless, and belts of forest were infested by the tsetse fly whose bite is fatal to cattle. Had Moffat been alone, he would have left his wagons and pressed forward to the Zambezi on foot, but the presence of the chief, and his unwillingness to sanction this plan, were obstacles not to be overcome. Umsiligazi did, however, consent to sending on some men to carry the goods intended for Livingstone. The messengers reached the Zambezi in due course, and found some people living on an island in the stream. These folk had the best of reasons for hating and fearing the Matebele, and naturally suspected treachery when they saw a small party of them emerge from the forest on to the river bank. They

[1] J. S. M., pp. 204, 205.

refused to have anything to do with men who might be the advance guard, or spies, of a marauding *impi*. Not even the magical name of "Monare" (Livingstone) shouted across the water could induce them to leave their island security. The Matebele placed the packages on the bank, reiterated the message that they were intended for Livingstone, and turned back, hungry and footsore, towards home. When they were sure that their enemies had departed, the men crossed from the island to the southern bank, took up the bundles, placed them on an island and built a hut over them. This was about September, 1854. Livingstone was then far away in the interior coming back from St Paul de Loanda, on the west coast. Twelve months later he arrived at the spot where the goods had been left on the island and found them intact. He was, as he said, "becoming as thin as a lath through the constant perspiration caused by marching day after day in the hot sun"; he was worn out by fever, his clothes were in rags, and for months he had been living on such rough fare as he could obtain from the natives. With what joy must he have discovered that priceless store of good things awaiting him! There were letters, too, one from Mrs Moffat beginning "My dear son Livingstone" and filled with motherly solicitude and injunctions about the white shirts, the blue waistcoat, the woollen socks, lemon juice, quince jam, tea and coffee, and other things, contained in the packages. "Your having got so thoroughly feverised chills my expectations," she wrote, "still prayer, unceasing prayer, is made for you. When I think of you my heart will go upwards. 'Keep him as the apple of Thine eye—Hold him in

the hollow of Thine hand' are the ejaculations of my heart."

Meanwhile, Moffat had turned back on the seven hundred miles trek to Kuruman, after bidding farewell again to his friend Umsiligazi, over whose soul he yearned as over a brother's. The journey was accomplished without notable event, and Moffat settled down once again to his translation and the other labours of the station.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CROWNING ACT

Lord! grant me grace to bend
Until my years I end,
Over the poorest tongues beneath the suns.
Such clay may yet supply
Gems for some liturgy
And God's thoughts clothe themselves from lowly lexicons.
A Translator's Prayer.

I

ONE day, early in 1857, Robert Moffat wrote the last words of his translation of the Bible.[1] We know what were the feelings of Gibbon when he completed the *History* at which he had laboured for upwards of twenty years. "I will not dissemble," he wrote, "the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my *History* the life of the historian must be short and precarious." This is what Moffat wrote at the conclusion of his happy task of thirty years:

I cannot describe to you the feelings of the time, the writing of the last verse. I could hardly believe that I

[1] The exact date is uncertain. Writing on December 6th, 1856, Moffat said that the only portion that remained to be translated was a few chapters of the book of Ezekiel. We may be sure they were finished that month or the next.

was in the world, so difficult was it for me to realize the fact that my labour of years was completed. A feeling came over me that I must die, and I was perfectly resigned. To overcome this I went back to my manuscript still to be printed, read it over and re-examined it, till at length I got back to my right mind. My feelings found vent by my falling down upon my knees, and thanking God for His grace and goodness in giving me strength to accomplish my task.

II

Moffat had translated the Psalms in order that they might be bound up with the New Testament published in 1840; and as soon after that date as was possible he began work on the rest of the Old Testament. Sections were printed at Kuruman as soon as they were ready. Thus in 1847 Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Isaiah were issued from the press; in 1851 Genesis and Exodus; in 1853 the first part of the Old Testament, Genesis to 2 Kings, was sent out in one volume, and then in 1857 the second part, 1 Chronicles to Malachi.

Each volume, as it appeared, was hailed with delight by the people, now rapidly awakening to the joys of reading. They had little other literature, except *The Pilgrim's Progress*, also translated by Moffat and printed for the mission by the Religious Tract Society in 1848, and they eagerly clamoured for more. "Each book," wrote Moffat, "seems to call for another to make it better understood." The volumes were in demand wherever there were Bechuana who could read—and the number of these was increasing every year. Writing to the Bible Society in June 1849 Moffat said:

I lately received a sum for copies purchased at Mr Livingstone's station, among the Bakwena, near the tropic of Capricorn. A goodly number there are learning to read, and some read to good purpose. The chief [Sechele] a very intelligent man, lately received into the Church at that place, has read every thing printed in the language again and again. When one day conversing with some of his chief men respecting the word of God, he said, in answer to some queries, "I have been taught to read, and I have read this book over and over"—pointing to the New Testament—"I have read it with close attention. I understand it—though not all that is written, for I am yet a child—and no man can convince me that it is not the Word of God."

Every year Moffat wrote to the Bible Society, reporting progress, asking for advice on various problems of translation, and requesting supplies of materials needed for the printing and binding—paper, covers, strong tape, thread for sewing the sheets, gauze for pasting the book to the boards. Referring to the covers he wrote once, "A little ornament would be very acceptable. All the Sechuana Testaments which were well bound and a little ornamented went first, though much dearer than the common. The questions are often put by purchasers, Is it strong? Will it wear?" All these repeated requests were willingly complied with: the Bible Society not only sent out the materials but paid the heavy cost of transporting them from England to Kuruman. No wonder he wrote (May 22nd, 1867) to the secretary of the Society: "But for the sanction and countenance so cheerfully afforded by your Society I could never have succeeded as I have done in a work which demands talents far more than I ever possessed."

It is only fair to acknowledge, as Moffat always

acknowledged, the very considerable help rendered by his colleague, Mr Ashton, not so much in translation as in revision and particularly in the printing and binding. With the exception of the Psalms and one sheet of Proverbs, Ashton printed the whole of the Old Testament. The printing was in itself a remarkable achievement seeing that it was all done on a small hand-press and with the assistance of none but locally trained natives. Mr Ashton rightly claimed that while the printing could not be compared with the product of London presses, yet the two volumes of the Old Testament were as well done as most printing in the Colony. Of his experiences Mr Ashton wrote :

> It has often happened that I have no sooner taught a youth to compose and paid him his first wages than he has gone for months on a hunting expedition into the interior ; and sometimes on the very morning when I must print off a sheet, having the paper wet and everything ready, the lad that should roll for me, has not made his appearance, and, when sought for, has sent me word, " He can't come." On one occasion I had to take a lad out of my garden to roll the ink, who had never in his life had a roller in his hand : you will not, therefore, be surprised that my printing is not perfect. Of course I have all my own rollers to make, and in winter, with frost every night, and having no stove, I have had great difficulty in keeping them and the ink sufficiently soft for working. I have burnt loads of charcoal in open fire-grates, which were placed sometimes under the ink-table, and at other times under the press to warm the type, to prevent the ink sticking and tearing the paper. . . .

III

Moffat was never free at Kuruman to devote all his energies without interruption to his translation.

From a letter written to one of his children in August, 1856, we learn something of the conditions under which he toiled :

Here I am, and have been, among a people whose wants are endless, and whose demands on my time are incessant and uncertain as the course of the wind. Many, many are the times I have sat down and got my thoughts somewhat in order, with pen in hand to write a verse, the correct rendering of which I had just arrived at, after wading through other translations and lexicons, when one enters my study with some complaint he has to make, or counsel to ask, or medical advice, and medicine to boot, a tooth to be extracted, a subscription to the auxiliary to be measured or counted ; or one calls (as at the present moment) to say he is going towards the Colony, and wishes something like a passport ; anon strangers from other towns, and visitors from the interior arrive, who all seem to claim a right to my attentions. Here we cannot so easily ring the bell and bow visitors to the front door. More generally they expect entertainment of a tangible character. Repairs want doing or superintending ; the general concerns of the station devolve upon myself. I have to correspond with native teachers, and to see their wants supplied—all these, and twenty other things of a similar kind, leave very little time indeed at my command or that of your mother. Public services and visits to out-stations of course demand their share. The worst is that all or most of these interruptions dart on one with the uncertainty of a shooting star, and render the appropriation of time as devious as the flight of a bat. When I take up a newspaper, it is only to glance at it with a feeling like that of committing sacrilege. I have sometimes been arrested with something interesting, and I have read it with ten or more strokes in the minute added to my pulse, from the anxiety caused by the conviction that I am spending precious time apart from its paramount object, while I feel perfectly composed over anything which I am satisfied has a direct bearing on the true object of the missionary. As I have a small mechanical

bump in some corner of my head, I feel a relief occasionally in mending an article, or it may be a gun-lock for some needy body. . . . Every time I make a halt from such causes in the course of my duties I feel as if I must endeavour to make up in some way for the loss. The moment I have finished any little job I throw down my tools and am back to my work, so that my little workshop would beat any Irishman's garret you ever saw; but it does not incommode me any more than confusion in my study. Your mother has some difficulty at times to get permission to brush out my study, for it is visited by all sorts of people, some of whom are neither brushed nor buttoned, independently of the dusty character of the country.[1]

What Moffat here refers to as "a small mechanical bump" in some corner of his head, was really some nervous disease from which he suffered for many years. Mrs Moffat refers to it in a letter written so long before as 1851.

Robert [she writes] is now more closely engaged at translation than at any former period, and he would fain let everything of a secular kind alone, and purchase for our wants; but this is so precarious in this dry country that it seems a pity not to use our fine garden, besides which it is certainly conducive to his health, however irksome he may feel it at the time, and chiefly on this account I persuade him to go on cultivating the ground. He has for some time past—I think nearly a year—been troubled with a peculiar affection of the head, which I do not like. It is a constant roaring noise like the falling of a cataract, then like buzzing or boiling up of waters; it never ceases night and day, though he does not feel it when entirely absorbed in study, but the moment he gives up there it is again. When preaching it is also absent. He loses much sleep from it. He has wanted to bleed himself, but I have discouraged it, for there is no appearance of fulness about him; he is very

[1] J. S. M., pp. 212-13.

abstemious, and takes sparingly of nourishment. A cup of coffee too much will increase it.[1]

Apart from this, Moffat enjoyed remarkably good health in Africa; and, considering the adventurous life he lived at times, was very free from mishap. One accident befell him in 1845. While engaged in starting a new corn-mill which he had erected he unwarily stretched his arm over two cog-wheels. His shirt-sleeve was caught, and his arm drawn in. The mill was stopped, but his arm was badly torn, and for many weeks he was laid aside.

IV

But amidst all interruptions Moffat doggedly pursued his inflexible purpose, and at length saw his efforts crowned with success.

In a hitherto unpublished letter, addressed to the secretary of the Bible Society from Kuruman, 5th March 1861, Moffat describes his work at some length. It is worth while reproducing the greater part of this letter.

"My dear Friend,

Since the finishing and printing of the Bible I have scarcely known what it has been to have rest for either head or feet. But for the kind of gipsy life I have been leading since that period[2] I should not have allowed so long a silence to intervene. Although now there is but a very short time at command to secure this

[1] J. S. M., pp. 190-1.

[2] The reference is to Moffat's travels in Matebeleland, which will be described in the following chapter.

month's post, I do not feel easy at the idea of allowing another to pass without writing something. It was my intention after the completion of the Bible in the Sechuana language to have given you a sketch of the manner in which the work was translated and carried through the press. I shall endeavour to do so now though very briefly, and if it serve no other purpose, it will at least show that no pains were spared to ensure as far as possible that degree of correctness, which such an awfully responsible work demanded. This I think I never once lost sight of and which at times affected a naturally strong constitution to a degree I never could have dreamed of. Had I been familiar with the originals the work might have been accomplished with greater ease and in a much shorter time. This lack, however, I endeavoured to supply by constant reference to all the exegetical helps within my reach. I may mention the following among the many I consulted."

Here follow the names of many books forgotten by the present generation. Besides commentaries and lexicons Moffat referred to the Dutch, German and French versions of the Bible.

"Surrounded with these helps I translated, preferring in the first instance to be entirely alone, so far as escape was practicable from multitudinous engagements, i.e. I desired no company nor assistance in producing the first draft of translation. This though very slow was by far the most laborious part of the work, having to compare the whole over and over again with

every translation within reach. In the margin I left marks, indicating that in revision with native aid, words were wanted, alterations to be made, or references to be made to other renderings. Having finished one or more integral portions, I called to my assistance a native, generally two, taking care to have at least one of them a stereotype in his own language, and not easily moved by a foreign idiom. To these I read and re-read the translation, during which, words wanting were supplied, dialects investigated by calling in the assistance of others who were not difficult to obtain from the mixed community residing on the station.

"After this process I got Mrs Moffat or one of my family, to read the English slowly and distinctly to see that no word, or rather sense, was left out. I then read the whole over again, alone, consulting lexicons, and with a special view of finding the general application of words about which I still felt some doubts. The MS. was then handed over to Mr Ashton my fellow labourer, to read and note down any alterations required, or omissions which he might think necessary to be added. On receiving back the MS. I again re-read the whole, taking from Mr A.'s notes whatever I thought calculated to improve the translation, as well as by this frequent reading improve the punctuation.

"Afterwards Mr A. and I met for the purpose of re-reading the whole, he reading the English slowly and distinctly, while I looked on the translation to detect anything redundant, or what might still be wanting. The MS. was then ready

for the press, but notwithstanding all the pains already taken, I read over the sheets once more before handing them over to the compositor by twos and threes, and there being only one such, more time was afforded to the work of preparation. In proportion as each sheet of eight pages octavo drew near completion the deeper was the anxiety I felt even when correcting the galleys, proofs and especially the revises. I very frequently got a native to read the revise audibly while I looked on another to see if any thing still required altering. I naturally enough felt a kind of horror at the prospect of finding, after the sheets were printed off, errors.

"Notwithstanding all the trouble which has been taken and individuals consulted, a frequent and careful perusal of the whole, which I have had opportunities of doing, during my journeys and sojourn in the interior, shows that many corrections are required. Improvements may be made in almost every page either in omissions, sentences obscure, typographical errors, or punctuation. These however have been carefully noticed and will be corrected when another edition is to be printed. Some of the incongruities, though not affecting the text in materially altering the sense, have arisen from the time that transpired between printing the 1st and 2nd volume. I suppose such deficiencies are to be expected in almost every translation made by a foreigner, and especially in the Book of books, when one dare not paraphrase, and where the translator is sometimes puzzled to know where italics may be added. Hundreds of times have I

felt that I would give almost any thing to be able to consult some [persons] of Biblical lore and critical acumen, whose learning and judgment would have enabled me to decide on points of translation on which my mind still stands in doubt.

"Before concluding this subject, already too long, allow me to express to your committee the heartfelt gratitude I have felt and will never cease to feel, for the aid so cheerfully afforded by them and the encouraging tone of their communications, in order to supply the sacred volume to the Bechuana in their own tongue. Had it not been so, how little of that precious treasure would have been in their possession at the present day. Past experience, with the divine promise, tell us that our expectations cannot be too sanguine, while looking forward to the day when the efforts and influences of your noble institution shall have reached every tribe and tongue, and when anthems of praise shall ascend from every village and from every home for that boon of boons—the Bible. What late remarkable examples we have had of what the Word of God has done where there was no living voice to explain! It will be sweet to lie down on the bed of death contemplating like conquests among the Bechuana. But time urges me to draw these remarks to a close. For the present I shall only add that with the prospect, if it be the divine will, of being more stationary than I have been for some years, I shall devote all the time I possibly can in carrying on the revision of the New Testament. . . ."

V

From this letter it is clear that Moffat was under no illusion that his translation was perfect. It could not be other than imperfect: there never was yet a perfect rendering of the Holy Scriptures. The Rev. A. J. Wookey who nearly half a century later spent some twelve years in revising Moffat's translation pronounced it "a wonderful work"; but like all other translations ever made, it was criticized—sometimes unreasonably criticized.

The more reasonable criticisms were concerned with three points. Moffat had introduced a good many foreign words which a greater knowledge of the language afterwards showed to be unnecessary. These caused some misunderstanding in the minds of the natives on account of their similarity to other expressions. For example, Moffat introduced the term *epistle* in the form of *episetole.* A native preacher discoursing on the conversion of St Paul once described vividly the party at Jerusalem preparing for the journey to Damascus. When all was ready, he said, Paul the leader ordered them to wait a moment, "I must run up to the chiefs to get the epistles, for we can't go without them." The preacher went on to explain: "You know what those *epistles* are—they are those little guns the white people carry in their jacket pockets." When a missionary told him afterwards that the *epistles* were letters and not *pistols*—the two words are transliterated almost identically in Sechuana — the man said: "*Dikwalo,* letters? Then why didn't they say so in the book, instead of calling them pistols?" Moffat had failed to find a vernacular

word for lilies in the text, "Consider the lilies," and had put the English word into Sechuana dress as *lilelea*. Unfortunately that made the word almost identical with the native word for tarantulas (*dilelea*), a species of spider with long hairy legs and a poisonous bite, and until it was corrected the people naturally read our Lord's words as, "Consider the *tarantulas*, which toil not, neither do they spin."

Other criticisms were levelled against Moffat's orthography. This is a perpetual bone of contention among those who write down African languages, and it always will be so until a more scientific alphabet than our own is adopted. It is impossible to write an African language with exactitude with the characters we employ, because we are compelled to make one letter represent more than a single sound: we ought either to adopt an alphabet like that of the International Phonetic Association, or at least to introduce some new signs. There is, for example, a sound in Sechuana intermediate between *l* and *d*; some write the sacred name *Molimo*, others *Modimo*, while others hear and write it as *Morimo* (as Moffat did); in reality it is a sound which requires a new symbol. This is one of the points upon which the missionaries could not agree. The word for the language exemplifies another subject of disagreement; some wrote *Sechuana*, others *Secwana*. The system adopted finally failed also because it allowed for no distinction of tone. Sechuana is sung rather than spoken. There are six essential tones in the language with musical values, and if a syllable is said on a wrong pitch it may change the meaning of the word. The word

nama, for example, may mean "meat," or "sit with outstretched legs," or "spend more time over something," or "the country of the Namaquas," according to the tone. Moffat made many changes in his orthography, and his successors introduced others—at one time and another a good deal of heat was generated on the matter—but none of them introduced an ideal system into Sechuana literature.

A third criticism was founded upon the opinion that Moffat's translation smacked too much of the local Kuruman dialect. One of Moffat's letters took up this point, either because the criticism had already reached him at the time (1857) or because he anticipated it. He tells us that before beginning to translate he took pains to ascertain where the language was spoken in the greatest purity. He knew that there were variations between the Tlhapi, Rolong, Kuena and other dialects: during thirty-seven years he had enjoyed constant intercourse with nearly all the Bechuana tribes. "It has been very justly remarked by one perfectly competent to judge of the character of the Sechuana, as well as the translations, that it was through a remarkable providence that the Kuruman station had become the asylum of numbers from almost every interior tribe and thus afforded the translator the means of arriving at the correct grammatical system of the language." So wrote Moffat, and he declared that the New Testament contained not a single word from which it could be inferred that the translator ever lived among the Batlhapi, and that it could be read with ease and understood as far north as Lake Ngami, and "even by the Makololo on the banks

of the Zambezi, according to the testimony of Dr Livingstone."

VI

Notwithstanding the deficiencies of the translation, the natives received it joyfully, and Moffat was fond of describing in his letters the effect it had upon their minds. Thus, in writing to the Bible Society on January 16th, 1865, he said:

Let any one who doubts come here, and I shall take him round our station, and from village to village and say, "Look at that man, and look at that woman, and ask them what they were before they were taught to read the Bible." He would see Divine service carried on in one form or other by one whose acquirements have placed him in that position. He would hear the voice of prayer and praise arising from family altars, or, if he entered the dwelling, he would perchance see a boy or a girl reading in the sacred volume to his aged parents. Or were he with me sometimes, he would be ready to ask why such an old man or woman, unable to read, could desire the possession of a Testament. He would receive the answer, that their child could read, and they could pray. He would find some interest, and perhaps instruction, in listening to parties discussing doctrines and duties bearing on their present and eternal welfare. He would see among them those whom I have seen in all their comparative nudity, filth and ignorance, raving in a heathen dance, conversing on themes which fill angels' minds. He would hear some of the more intelligent expressing their regret that their Bibles have not marginal references, such as they sometimes see in English and Dutch copies, in order to the better understanding of the Scriptures. To God be all the praise.

VII

The remainder of Moffat's active life, apart from the highly important events to be narrated in the next chapter, was mainly devoted to a careful revision of his translation. Writing in January, 1865, he reported the completion of a second revision of the new Testament. He had studied to make it "more idiomatic and perspicuous." "The edition, notwithstanding the defects which cleave to human productions, will, I am persuaded, be found improved in simplicity of style, easier to read, and in some places less difficult to understand. If this is not fully borne out, I shall conclude that I must have spent much time to little purpose. It is the work to which I have devoted every spare hour, I may say minute, for the last two years, and have brought to bear on it all helpful resources within reach, and I think also accompanied with a reverential feeling of the fearful responsibility of admitting error into the Holy Book. . . . I have entered my seventieth year, and, of course, cannot expect very long to live. Though still strong, I am not able to bear the fatigue I once did. I begin to think my health is giving way, and hence my increasing anxiety to do all I can to disseminate the precious volume of eternal Truth before I go hence and be seen no more."

The Bible Society sent out to Moffat a supply of type for reprinting the New Testament as revised, and a small edition was produced at Kuruman. In the meantime, before he could complete his revision, so urgent were the demands coming from all the missions now at work among the Bechuana, that a new imprint of the unrevised

text had to be prepared in London; this was sent out in 1867.

By this time the newer generation of missionaries had sufficiently mastered the language to give them the right to be heard on the matter, and a committee was formed to work through both the Old and New Testaments. As soon as this body began to function differences of opinion emerged as to orthography and other matters. The members of the L. M. S. proposed considerable changes in orthography which were not favoured by the German missionaries at work in the Transvaal. The latter even threatened to produce their own version if their wishes were not respected. But better counsels prevailed, and some mutual concessions were made, so that after Moffat returned to England in 1870 he was able to supervise the printing of the whole Bible in an amended orthography. The text was substantially as it had left his hands. Editions of three thousand Bibles and four thousand Testaments were issued by the Bible Society in 1872.

There is no need to follow the history of this very interesting and important version of the Scriptures. We are writing Moffat's life, not the story of the Sechuana Bible. Suffice it to say that in later years several revisions were undertaken, notably that completed in 1907 at which the late Rev. A. J. Wookey, with his colleagues, toiled for twelve years. As is often the case in other lands, the revision did not meet with universal favour: many people still prefer Moffat's version.[1] At the present time (1925) a commission is engaged in preparing a new revision.

[1] During the five years, 1919-23, 8562 copies were sold of Moffat's version, and 6610 of Wookey's revision.

So it ever is. The pioneer translator's work is taken up by others and improved. There can hardly be any end to the possible improvements of our renderings of the Scriptures. It is sufficient reward for the pioneer to have laid the foundation, and to have brought, however inadequately, some glimmerings of the Divine Light to souls in darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

PIONEERING AT SIXTY-FIVE

My album is the savage breast
Where darkness reigns and tempests wrest
Without one ray of light.
To write the name of JESUS there,
And point to worlds both bright and fair,
And see the savage bow in prayer,
Is my supreme delight!
Written by ROBERT MOFFAT *in a Lady's Album.*

I

WHEN Robert Moffat had (1857) reached his sixty-second year—an age when most men may be excused if they shrink from new adventures—the directors of the L. M. S. called him to lead an expedition into the interior, and they found him ready to leave the comparative ease of his home at Kuruman to go pioneering again.

Those were great days in the history of Africa. At the end of 1856 Livingstone had landed in England after his epoch-making journey across the continent from west to east. He had vowed to open up a path into the interior, and had done it. The eyes of the civilized world were fixed upon him and upon the new land he had revealed. Geographers, commercial men, and the Christian Church, were eager to thrust out in the direction to which he pointed.

The directors of the London Missionary Society

determined to establish two new missions: one north of the Zambezi among the Makololo, and the other south of that river among the Matebele. The former commission was to be entrusted to David Livingstone and the second to his father-in-law, Robert Moffat. There was a close connection in thought between these two schemes. The Makololo were a section of the people who under the name of Mantati had been repulsed in the neighbourhood of Lattakoo some years before,[1] and had subsequently, under their renowned chief Sebitwane, fought their way north to the Zambezi, beyond which they had established themselves as the paramount power in the west of the country now known as Northern Rhodesia. Between the Makololo and the Matebele a deadly enmity reigned. Umsiligazi had sent *impis* across the Zambezi to attack Sebitwane and to gain possession, if possible, of his dominions. It was thought that the simultaneous establishment of missions among these two warlike peoples would lead to peace between them.

It is not our business here to tell once again of the disastrous failure of the Makololo mission.[2] We follow the story of Moffat's new adventure.

Two days after receiving the directors' call, Moffat made up his mind to accept it. It meant a prolonged separation from Mrs Moffat, who, while still active to the limits of her frail strength, had to spend many hours a day resting and was quite incapable of enduring the fatigues of the new venture.

[1] See Chap. VII.

[2] The story may be read in John Mackenzie's *Ten Years North of the Orange River* (1871), and the eventual establishment of the Paris Evangelical Society's mission in Mr Shillito's life of *François Coillard* in the same series as the present volume.

Moffat saw that the first thing to be done was to acquaint Umsiligazi with the proposals, so in a few days the wagon was prepared and he set off on the seven-hundred-mile trek to Matebeleland. He reached his destination without noteworthy incident, made all arrangements with Umsiligazi, and retraced his steps to Kuruman.

On arrival at his home Moffat received the news that the Livingstones were to call at Cape Town on their way round to the mouth of the Zambezi where the doctor was to start on another expedition into the interior. To take the opportunity of seeing their daughter and of conferring with their son-in-law as to their plans, Mr and Mrs Moffat hastened to Cape Town. There it was arranged that Mrs Livingstone should accompany her parents to Kuruman and rejoin her husband on the Zambezi; which, as we know, she ultimately did and died soon after at Shupanga. Other missionaries arrived about the same time to man the new missions—Mackenzie, Sykes, Thomas, and John S. Moffat. When Livingstone resigned from the L. M. S. he promised to pay his brother-in-law's salary of £150 a year for five years, and thus support his representative in the work he still loved.

The difficulties in the way of these new enterprises were of an almost overwhelming character. For one thing, during Moffat's absence, some of the Batlhapi living along the lower Vaal river had crossed over into the Orange Free State and with the help of some Koranna freebooters raided a Boer homestead, killing the men and carrying off two women and a herd of cattle. On this occasion, as John Mackenzie justly remarks, the natives were clearly

the aggressors. The Boers took a swift revenge. Unfortunately they imbibed the erroneous idea that the missionaries at Kuruman had instigated the marauders and had supplied them with ammunition. Rumours reached the station that the Boers intended to attack and demolish Kuruman, and after Moffat's return from Cape Town at the end of 1858 he received a curt note, signed by a Commandant, a Field Cornet and a "Prov. Field Cornet," warning him that unless he procured an order from President Pretorius authorizing the expedition to Matebeleland the missionaries would not be allowed to pass. The route they proposed to take lay through tribes which had hitherto preserved their independence, and to apply to the President for permission to proceed would be tantamount to acknowledging the supremacy of the Boers over that region. The whole question of access to the interior was thus raised in a challenging fashion—a question that was to cause much trouble in the future.

Moffat would not yield a single point in such a matter, and promptly sent the letter to Sir George Grey, the Governor. Sir George wrote a despatch which he sent off post-haste to President Pretorius (January 1859), making no mention of the expedition to Matebeleland but referring to the rumours about the attack on Kuruman. To this admirable letter came back a reply (dated May 6th, 1859) alleging that Moffat had brought up a wagon-load of ammunition for the natives, and promising that the Government of the Republic would warmly support and protect Kuruman "when we have the conviction that the seeds of discord are not sown there, nor the heathens are instigated to wage

war with Christians, but that the true gospel of Christ is propagated."[1]

The Governor's despatch had its effect upon the President by showing that the missionaries were not beyond the protection of the British authorities. No more was heard of any attack upon Kuruman, nor of passes for the interior. In June and July 1859, the two expeditions left Kuruman in sections: Mr and Mrs Helmore, Mr and Mrs Price for the Zambezi went first; then Mr Thomas and John S. Moffat, with their wives, started for Matebeleland; and in the rear came Robert Moffat and Mr Sykes.

II

There is no need to describe the trek at any length, seeing that the route taken was that travelled by Moffat in 1854. At Lithubaruba he and Mr Sykes overtook the advance party. The wagons were heavily loaded since provisions for two years, together with a various assortment of tools, had to be carried. Between Lithubaruba and Shoshong, a distance of a hundred and twenty miles, much deep, loose sand was encountered through which the oxen toiled laboriously, and for sixty miles no water was to be found. At Shoshong—then the headquarters of the Bamangwato, afterwards ruled by the well-known Christian chief, Khama—where the road divided, the Zambezi party had already branched off to the left. From Shoshong the country was more or less wooded, and as there was no beaten track they often had to set a course by compass. At times all

[1] The two despatches are printed in the *Life of John S. Moffat*, pp. 74-6.

hands were engaged in cutting down trees to clear a passage for the wagons. Occasionally a wagon would break down, and then the old pioneer, who was equal to all occasions, had to work at repairs. Sometimes they would come to a steep-banked waterless river and be compelled to labour with pick and shovel to make a sloping road down and up again. It took a whole month to reach the Matebele outposts from Shoshong.

A dreaded disease, called lung-sickness, broke out among the oxen. This was serious, for not only did it threaten to leave the party stranded in the wilderness, but it meant also that the plague might be introduced among the hitherto immune Matebele cattle and this would not prove a favourable introduction for the mission. Messengers were sent forward, a hundred and twenty miles, to Umsiligazi, who returned a reply that the party were to advance. Later, as they trekked through the rocky labyrinths of the Matoppos, the chief sent word that their oxen must not come farther and that he was dispatching *men* to pull the wagons, as he had no trek-oxen. Hundreds of armed warriors duly appeared, who set themselves to the impossible task of dragging six heavy wagons across a roadless and difficult country for a hundred miles. Umsiligazi had sent oxen for them to slaughter and had ordered the villages to supply liberal quantities of beer, but even with these stimulants the men could make but slow progress—a few miles a day. At a place only a mile or two from the site of the present town of Bulawayo, three spans of oxen arrived from the chief. They were untrained —or if ever trained had forgotten their education— and were with great difficulty induced to take the

yoke and draw the heavily-weighted wagons. But all things come to an end sooner or later and on 28th October, more than three months after leaving Kuruman, the wagons, some drawn by oxen, the others by men, pulled up before the chief's temporary encampment.

There followed a harassing and disappointing interval before work could be begun on the building of a mission. Umsiligazi received his old friend "Moshete" with rather less than his accustomed cordiality and evaded every attempt to induce him to allow the missionaries to begin their labours. One morning he broke up camp suddenly and departed on a pretext, but really to attend some religious ceremonies which evidently he wished to conceal from the visitors—thinking, no doubt, that they would disapprove. The missionaries soon came to know the reason why the chief had received them with a hesitancy all too unlike what they had been led to expect. Word had been brought from the south of the raids made by the Boers upon the Bechuana. Umsiligazi had his own reasons for disliking the Boers, and rather too readily accepted a suggestion made to him that where missionaries came the Boers were sure to tread upon their heels. Had not the attack upon his people at Mosega followed the advent of missionaries who had immediately afterwards accompanied their friends to the south?[1] With such notions in his mind, we can hardly wonder at the chief's evident reluctance to allow the mission party to settle. Had it not been for the affection with which he still regarded Robert Moffat, he would undoubtedly have ordered them to

[1] See p. 161.

leave his country. Moffat had many interviews with him, and finally his doubts were overcome, and at the end of December the missionaries were conducted to Inyati and told to build.

The next six months were a time of incessant manual toil. Houses had to be built, wagons repaired, land for gardens broken up and laid out. No man of the party, white or black, laboured harder than the veteran of sixty-five. Early and late, as his son testifies, he was to be found at work, always at work—it might be at the sawpit, or the blacksmith's forge, or the carpenter's bench, or aiding the younger men where their knowledge and skill failed them.

In June he felt that his work there was done, that he could safely leave his colleagues to themselves. His object was attained now that he had seen them settled and the chief's suspicions allayed if not entirely dissipated.

On June 17th he went to the chief's kraal to deliver his farewell message. John S. Moffat writing of that day says :

As we followed him [Moffat] along the narrow path from our camp to the town, about a mile distant, winding through fields and around patches of the uncleared, primeval forest, no step was more elastic and no frame more upright than his. In spite of unceasing toil and disappointments, his wonderful energy seemed unabated. The old chief was, as usual, in his large courtyard and gave kindly greeting. They were a strange contrast as they sat side by side—the Matebele tyrant and his friend the messenger of peace. The word of command was given ; the warriors filed in and ranged themselves in a great semicircle, sitting on the ground ; the women crept as near as they could, behind huts and other points of concealment, and all listened in breathless silence to

the last words of "Moshete." He himself knew that they were his last words and that his work in Matebeleland was now given over to younger hands. It was a solemn service, and closed the long series of such in which the friend of Mosilikatse [Umsiligazi] had striven to pierce the dense darkness of soul which covered him and his people.[1]

Next day Moffat left on his return journey to Kuruman. It was his last trek in the interior. He reached home without further adventures and settled down after his absence of a year. Before he left Inyati he rejoiced with his son and daughter-in-law over the birth of their second child—the first white child born in the country which is now Southern Rhodesia.

III

It is no part of our plan to sketch the political and other events which followed. The founding of Rhodesia forms a romantic story, and one that is not entirely creditable to the British name. The mission station still flourishes at Inyati. Of its founders, Mr Sykes spent all his missionary life there, dying in 1887: Mr Thomas laboured there till 1870. Other stations were opened in due course. In these days when Southern Rhodesia enjoys the high status of a self-governing member of the British family of nations, let it not be forgotten that the first white men to settle there permanently were representatives of the London Missionary Society and that the way for them was prepared by Robert Moffat.

[1] J. S. M., p. 233.

CHAPTER XV

THE FINAL YEARS

Heroes of old! I humbly lay
The laurel on your graves again;
Whatever men have done, men may,—
The deeds you wrought are not in vain.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

I

THE ten years of missionary life that remained to Robert Moffat after his final visit to Matebeleland were spent at and around Kuruman and yield little to the chronicler. His days were employed, as already recorded, mainly in a painstaking revision of his translation of the Bible. A large share of the routine work of the station was taken by his colleague, William Ashton, until his removal to Lekhatlong, when for a time Moffat was left alone. Later he was joined by the Rev. John Brown who in after years was to produce the first Sechuana dictionary, and by his son, John S. Moffat, who was compelled through his wife's ill-health to retire from the Matebele mission.

In 1862 Moffat's eldest son, Robert, who, after some years in Government service was engaged in trading, died somewhat suddenly. Not many weeks later came the news of Mary Livingstone's death at Shupanga on the Zambezi. "Do you notice any change?" Dr Stewart had asked of his disconsolate

friend as they watched by the bedside. "Yes," replied Livingstone, without lifting his gaze from his dead wife's face, "the very features and expression of her father." All unconscious of what had happened Mary Moffat continued writing to her daughter long after her passing away: news travelled slowly in those days. The aged parents at Kuruman were not unprepared for this sorrow; they knew full well the risk their daughter was taking when, believing it to be her duty, she joined her husband in his nomadic life in the wilds. Another blow befell them in the tragic death of the husband of another daughter—the missionary Frédoux, who was killed by the accidental explosion of a wagon loaded with gunpowder, belonging to a trader.

These bereavements, though met in a spirit of Christian fortitude, taxed the strength of the parents —especially of Mrs Moffat. Both of them were now failing in vigour. In 1865 Moffat was attacked by a native who had gone out of his mind and who, meeting Moffat in the dark, inflicted terrible blows upon him with a knobkerrie. For months the old man's strong constitution struggled against injuries that might well have been fatal to a younger person; he suffered as much perhaps in mind as in body.

There can be no question, I think, that if it had been left to them to decide, Robert and Mary Moffat would have chosen to spend the rest of their days at Kuruman and to be laid to rest beneath the willows they had planted. And certainly the Bechuana would not have consented, had they been consulted, to the removal of their old friends. But it was urged upon Moffat that now he had completed the revision of the Bible it was most desirable

he should see it through the press in England. To print it upon the small hand-press at Kuruman, where the tentative editions had been produced, would have entailed the labour of years. The time had come for the whole Bible to be printed and bound in the best style in England, and the Bible Society had undertaken to bear the heavy expense of doing so. This consideration conquered Moffat's reluctance to leave his beloved Bechuana. He knew that once he left Kuruman he would never see them again.

On Sunday, 20th March 1870, Robert Moffat addressed his Kuruman congregation for the last time. It is safe to say that nobody in church that day ever forgot the service. As the tall form topped by the leonine head, long white beard and kindly face, mounted the pulpit, a wave of emotion swept over the crowded worshippers. Elderly folk were present who could remember the first arrival of the missionaries. The younger generations had grown up under Moffat's fatherly eye. Many of them had grieved his heart, disappointed him by their fickleness and shallowness of character; many

> *Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,*
> *Sadly contented with the show of things,*

still turned a deaf ear to the Good News of God that he had brought to them. But scores of them owed their souls to him, and all knew him as their father and friend. The hymns they sang had been composed by him; the Scriptures read in their hearing, and followed assiduously in their own copies by those who could read, had been laboriously rendered by him into their tongue. For long years he had

never spared himself in the service of these people. Now with a voice trembling with emotion he uttered his last appeal and commended them to the favour of God. The last word was said and the old apostle descended the steps he was never to mount again.

A few days later Robert and Mary Moffat departed from Kuruman. The wagon, packed for the last time, stood awaiting them. It had stood there, indeed, for many weeks, while Moffat was trying to make up his mind to the parting. Day after day he would come out to the garden gate, and stand there, wrapped in an old brown coat, smoking his pipe and looking round on the scene of his labours —but he did not give the order to pack. Mrs Moffat came to a decision first and by taking down her father's portrait from the wall, gave the signal for dismantling the home. Now the final moment had arrived. The oxen were inspanned, including the two well-trained lusty fellows who had already made many a trek in the position of prime responsibility on either side of the wagon-pole. Then the door opened and the old man and his wife came out of the house and slowly made their way through the crowd that thronged them and pressed eagerly to catch one word more, one final touch of the hands they loved. As they climbed to their places, and the long team started on its way to the coast, a wail arose from over-brimming hearts. For the African, whatever his faults, is loyal to the core, and parting from old friends tears at his heart-strings.

The Vaal and Orange rivers are crossed without hindrance, the wearisome track over the wilderness is traversed; the Colony is reached and everywhere

the hospitable Boers press little gifts upon the missionaries whom they have learnt to respect; the coast is reached at Port Elizabeth; and so to Cape Town and to England at last. Fifty-three years have elapsed since as a raw stripling Robert first embarked for the land where he had now left so deep a mark.

II

Robert Moffat was essentially a pioneer, and it is in this light that all his work must be judged.

Kuruman is still a station of the London Missionary Society but its pristine glory has departed. The region was never densely populated, even according to the low standard of South Africa. The land around Kuruman has now been largely parcelled out among European farmers; part of the mission site has been surrendered, and the majority of the natives have removed to the Reserve some distance from the station—few of them now occupy the mission lands. In Moffat's day the Kuruman Christians did not number more than two hundred. It was not upon this narrow stage alone that Moffat played his part. Kuruman must always have a place in South African history because, as the northernmost settlement, it was for a long period the starting-point for explorations in the interior: the place whence missionaries, travellers and traders plunged into the unknown. Moffat's relations with these layers of the trail would of themselves give him a place in history. And he was himself a path-finder. One of the first Europeans to come into contact with the

Bechuana, he was the first to learn their language and to reduce it to writing. His translation of the Bible remains as a monument to his industry. In the famous library at the Bible House in London there is a memorial window figuring great translators: William Tyndale, Jerome, Cyril and Methodius, Martin Luther, John Eliot, William Carey, Robert Morrison, Henry Martyn, and—Robert Moffat, who takes his place naturally in the far-shining company, most of whom were greater scholars than he, but none of whom surpassed him in single-hearted devotion. By this work, by his travels and widely radiating personal influence he left a very deep impression upon inner South Central Africa. He who lays a foundation expects to see it buried beneath the edifice that is reared upon it. What is built probably excels the foundation in elegance and grandeur, but it stands or falls according to the solidity of what is out of sight. Moffat laid the foundation of Christianity in Bechuanaland. That is his place in history.

And the man himself? What impression does he leave upon our minds after we have studied his life?

He was a man without guile; simple-hearted, with the simplicity of a child, and with a child's love of appreciation. The transparent soul was housed in a body of uncommon strength. Of his physical vigour and mental energy there is no need to speak at length—they have been evident all through our narrative, and they enabled him to survive with little impairment the fatigues of a life in Africa, which, whatever else may be said about it, was not one of ease. Courage, physical

and moral, was his in an eminent degree. Of magnificent presence—"massive and masculine" it was once described—Moffat possessed that indefinable quality which we call personality. In his later years, as during his only visit to England midway in his career, people found themselves irresistibly attracted to him; and we have only to recall the names of Africaner and Umsiligazi to realize that he was able to exercise the same influence over the African barbarian. These were the elements of his strength.

A very experienced missionary, Dr Hine, who as Bishop of three African dioceses in turn had great opportunities of studying character, and the effects of Africa upon character, has rightly said that one effect of life in Africa is to bring to light all the peculiarities and eccentricities and, perhaps, all the weaker parts of a man's character, at the same time that it emphasizes his strong points. "But," he continues, "it is the strong points which are the chief danger. Men may get the better of their weaknesses, but it is on their strong side that they generally fail."[1] Moffat's strong side was his dominant personality. He tended in middle life at least to be masterful. His influence over the Bechuana was, in some respects, too powerful. They fed upon his strength. He did so much for them, exercised such irresistible sway over the minds of those who were attached to him, that their native independence was sapped. It was noticed in his lifetime that the more robust Christians were not to be found at Kuruman, where Moffat's presence was peculiarly felt, but upon the more remote out-

[1] *Days Gone By*, J. E. Hine, Bishop of Grantham, p. 122.

stations where they found greater opportunities for expressing themselves. This was, no doubt, due partially to their being in a position less sheltered from conflicts with the old paganism, but the personality of the missionary was also a large factor in the case. Through relying upon him so much, the Kuruman Christians failed to become self-reliant. The local Church did not become self-supporting and self-governing. Moffat never gave sufficient pains to educating a native pastorate. His ideal of missionary work was patriarchal. On land belonging to the mission, the missionary was to be the teacher, the landlord, the fount of everything. It is true that, as we have already emphasized, he laid great stress upon industry, but, if industrious, his people were industrious children.

Moffat was naturally of a sanguine temperament. He found it difficult not to trust men. He saw sparkling gems where other men could only discern water-worn pebbles. It seemed to many in his lifetime, as it seems to us to-day, that his optimism led him unconsciously to exaggerate things and to raise expectations which were never fulfilled. But, it is needless to say, there was never any intention on his part to deceive; and optimism is a very necessary part of the missionary's equipment.

Of Moffat's disinterestedness there can be no question. He never sought things for himself, was never tainted with a love of money. Many opportunities offered themselves in those days to gather wealth, but Moffat was content to live on the meagre resources of a missionary. When, after his retirement, the generosity of his admirers placed him in a position of independence, he not only refused to

accept another penny from the Society, but declined absolutely to receive some arrears of salary that were due to him.

On the deeper things there is no need to dwell. Moffat's unaffected piety, his profound reverence, his whole-hearted devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ shine out in every act, in every letter. He was not a narrow Christian. He had strong convictions on many matters that divide the followers of Christ, and never shrank from declaring himself when occasion called for it, but always a large-hearted charity marked his dealings with his fellow-Christians.

The British people are eclectic in their choice of the heroes they cannot do without. At one time or another a Florence Nightingale, an Edith Cavell, a Gladstone, a Gordon, a Roberts, a General Booth, a David Livingstone,—always some great-souled man or woman, who has done noble things in a noble way, is elevated to a supreme place in their estimation. Of this radiant band Robert Moffat was a member—was, and is, for his name is still one to conjure with. And not only in England and Scotland; in South Africa, too, where his work was done, where missionaries are closely scrutinized and where some of his confrères, whether rightly or wrongly, are not loved, Robert Moffat occupies a place peculiarly his own. "None greater, none holier than he," declared General Smuts.

After his death *The Times* honoured him in a leading article. "Robert Moffat," it said, "has died in the fullness both of years and of honours. His work has been to lay the foundations of the Church in the central regions of South Africa. As far as

his influence and that of his coadjutors and successors has extended, it has brought with it unmixed good. His name will be remembered while the South African Church endures, and his example will remain with us as a stimulus to others and as an abiding proof of what a Christian missionary can be and can do."

III

Mrs Moffat did not long survive the home-coming, but passed away quietly in her sleep at the end of the year. "Mary, dear, only one word!"—cried her partner. "Thus," said he, "she left me, after labouring lovingly together for fifty years, without saying good-bye!"

Moffat found consolation in hard work. The Bible was soon committed to the printer, and as the proof-sheets reached him he scanned every word with sedulous care to see whether, even at the last moment, he could bring an added clearness into the text he loved so well and had pondered so long a time. By 1872 the great task was at length completed, and three thousand Bibles and five thousand New Testaments were ready for dispatch to South Africa. He had a great affection for the Bible Society which had stood by him from first to last in his endeavours to give the Bechuana the Holy Scriptures in their own tongue.[1] He loved it even as he loved the noble London Missionary Society whose loyal representative he had been for over half a century.

[1] The British and Foreign Bible Society has issued (1924) two hundred and thirty thousand volumes of Moffat's translation and subsequent revisions.

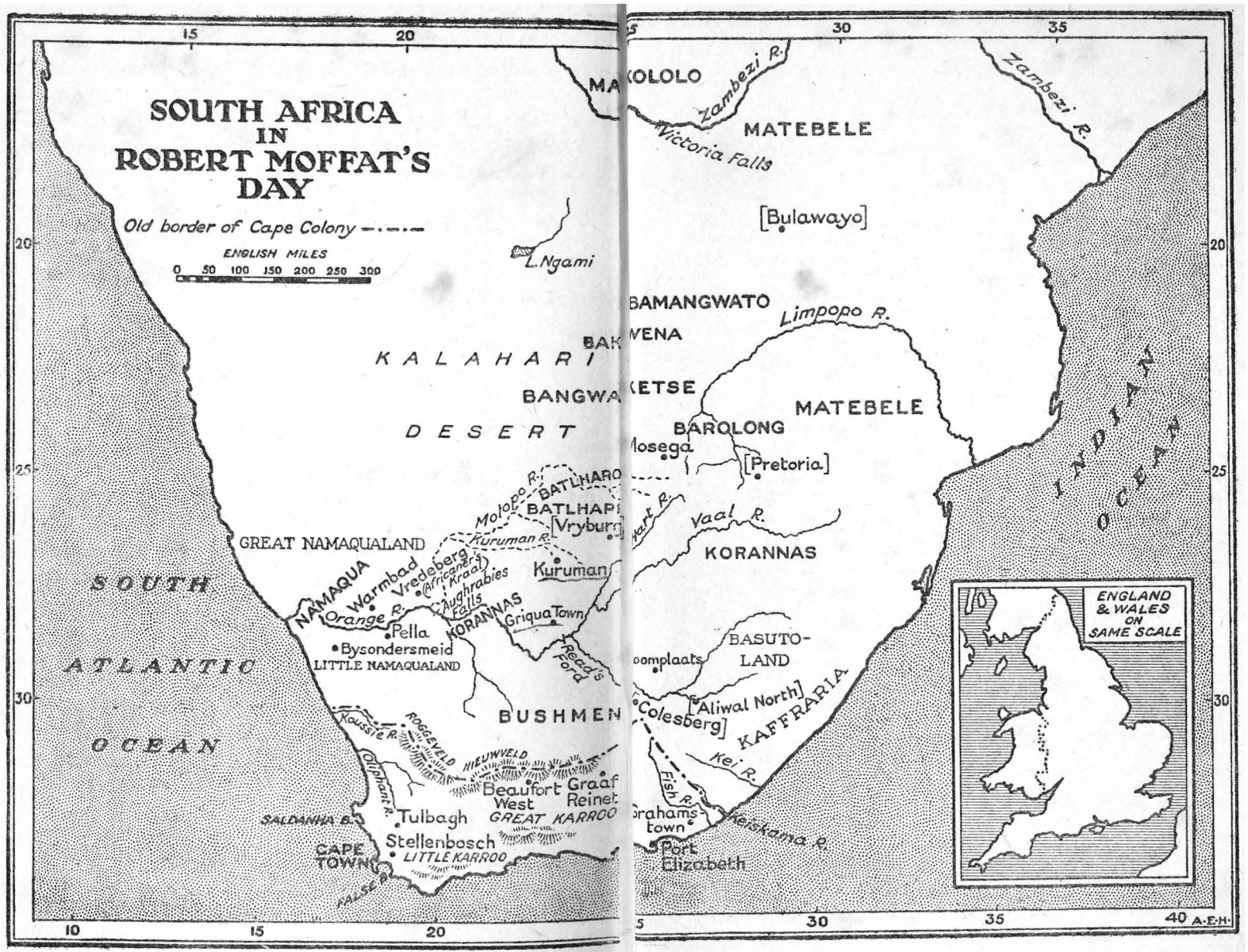
Moffat found little repose during the years of his retirement. Until his strength utterly failed him, he travelled incessantly from place to place and pleaded upon hundreds of platforms for the cause of Christ in Africa. Thousands flocked to hear his moving tale and earnest appeals. He possessed what most missionaries lack, the ability to make his audience see vividly the scenes he described. Nor was it alone in what are called "missionary circles" that Moffat was welcomed. Queen Victoria sent for him; the City of London, in the person of the Lord Mayor, did him honour, as did the Church of England through the Archbishop of Canterbury; the University of Edinburgh conferred on him its doctorate of divinity. Men recognized in him something broader than creeds and institutions.

Of William Carey it is said that his life-work as a translator of the Scriptures and his horticulture were twin expressions of one aim—to enrich men with God's loveliest and best. The same may be said of Robert Moffat. From the days of his apprenticeship on to the end a garden was to him a lovesome thing. "Why you have got back to Kuruman here!" exclaimed his old friend François Coillard when he saw the beautiful garden surrounding Moffat's home at Leigh, in Kent. When all other employment became impossible Moffat was still happy among his trees and plants. On the last full day of his life, he rose after a night of pain and sleeplessness, and though the weather was foul he would go out with the shears to trim a hawthorn bush. It was his last act out-of-doors. His indomitableness carried him through to the end. That evening he became very ill, but insisted upon

climbing the stairs unaided: "I can, because I will," he said to his daughter, Jane.

And so the noble bark, fraught with the labours, triumphs and sorrows of eighty-eight years, entered the haven at last on 9th August 1883.

Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please.


SOUTH AFRICA IN ROBERT MOFFAT'S DAY
Old border of Cape Colony
ENGLISH MILES
0 50 100 150 200 250 300
L. Ngami
KALAHARI DESERT
BANGWA
BAK
MA
KOLOLO
Zambezi R.
Victoria Falls
MATEBELE
[Bulawayo]
BAMANGWATO
Limpopo R.
VENA
KETSE
MATEBELE
BAROLONG
Mosega
[Pretoria]
Molopo R.
BATLHARO
BATLHAPI
[Vryburg]
Harts R.
Vaal R.
KORANNAS
GREAT NAMAQUALAND
Ruruman R.
Kuruman
NAMAQUA
Warmbad
Vredeberg
(Africaner's Kraal)
Aughrabies Falls
Orange R.
Pella
Bysondersmeid
LITTLE NAMAQUALAND
KORANNAS
Griqua Town
Read's Ford
BASUTO-LAND
Boomplaats
Aliwal North]
Colesberg]
KAFFRARIA
Kei R.
Fish R.
Grahams town
Keiskama R.
Port Elizabeth
BUSHMEN
Houssie R.
ROGGEVELD
HIEUWVELD
Olifants R.
Beaufort West
Graaf Reinet
GREAT KARROO
Tulbagh
SALDANHA B.
Stellenbosch
LITTLE KARROO
CAPE TOWN
FALSE B.
SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
ENGLAND & WALES ON SAME SCALE
A.E.H.