

WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

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Apolo of the Pygmy Forest

ALBERT B. LLOYD

THE romance of missions has often been written about and truly the romantic has entered very largely into all work done for God from the time of the apostles until now. 'Exciting adventure' is the other meaning of the word romance as given in the dictionary.

Could anything be more romantic than the preaching of the Gospel to a people, who, to all intents and purposes, might be described as relics of prehistoric men? And yet that is literally true about the work carried on amongst the Pygmies of Central Africa. Here, in the great, dark forest of Central Africa, dwell these strange little people, who, for countless centuries, have been living in the shades of one of the world's greatest jungles. They are a people whose ideas of God and whose customs and traditions, have hardly altered at all for thousands of years, and who to-day have access to the wonderful message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

Many years ago the writer was brought face to face with this tribe of aborigines of Central Africa during a journey he took across the continent. Alone, he faced these people in their natural surroundings, and they beheld the face of a white man for the first time. The early impression was that here were men and women hardly removed from wild animals, but upon closer acquaintance they proved to be a people of intelligence and knowledge. It was impossible to believe that they were other than God's own children who, in the depths of spiritual darkness, had a knowledge of Him only as their great Creator.

A little temple in the middle of one of their villages made this clear. 'Whose is that house in the middle of your village?' was the question asked. 'That is our temple to God,' was the startling reply. 'What do you know about God?' was the next question. 'He is the great Creator.' Who do you suppose made the great

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trees in the forest? Who made the wild beasts in the jungle? And who made you, white man, and who made me? God, the great Creator!

The question 'Why do you build a temple to God?' met with this significant reply, 'We build a temple to God because we make our offerings and sacrifices to Him. He is great and eternal, we are afraid of Him, and we put our offerings here to appease Him. We hope He will have pity upon us as we make our sacrifice to Him, for it is God Who sends our enemies, He sends death and destruction and we are afraid of Him.'

Hearing this, and seeing their need, an effort was made to get the blessed news of the Gospel made known amongst so wonderful a people.

'Apolo,' the converted drunkard from Uganda, the opium smoker, the witch doctor's assistant, was the man God used to this marvellous end. He gave himself to this work, and for thirty years lived amongst the Pygmies, learning their difficult language, and, by a life of unceasing devotion, of Christ-likeness, revealed the living message that has brought joy into their hearts.

And so to-day in that vast jungle there are many of this strange tribe who worship God in Christ Jesus and into whose lives has come the unspeakable joy of fellowship with Him. The last time the writer visited the Pygmies (1928) he had the joy of seeing a marvellous change, not so much in their natural surroundings, for our civilization, in spite of its very rapid strides, has not yet touched Pygmyland, but in the spiritual outlook of the people. Instead of fear and dread of the Eternal God, vindictive and cruel in His nature, there is the knowledge of Him as the loving Father. On approaching the village where the temple to the unknown God had been seen many years before, the writer was welcomed by many glad and happy souls who had learned the love of God, and who worshipped Him in a little church built in the midst of the village on the exact spot where the temple had been. All of them were shouting and clapping their hands, and saying in their own tongue, 'Welcome, welcome

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white man, it was you who first told us of the love of God ; welcome to our village !'

On the roof of the little church was a rough wooden cross dominating the whole village and seen by all. ' Who put the cross on the roof of this building ? ' was the question asked. ' Matu put it there. ' ' Tell Matu I wish to speak to him ' ; and in a short while a remarkable little being confronted the visitor. He was barely four feet high, seemed as strong as a lion, and had a beaming and radiant face. ' Did you put the cross there Matu ? ' ' Yes, I did. ' ' Why did you put a cross there ? ' and the reply rang out in wondrous beauty, thrilling the heart of the listener, and bringing tears to the eyes, ' I put a cross there because the Cross of Jesus teaches us how much God loves us ! ' The Gospel in a sentence ; all its glorious beauty expressed ; Jesus teaches us what God is like in all His love and wonderful compassion.

To-day, there are hundreds of those strange denizens of the forest who are rejoicing in the love of Jesus, and who are worshipping Him in their very simple way as a result of thirty years' self-denying work of that great Uganda Christian, Canon Apolo.

An old, old man who had spent himself and given of his very best, came back to Pygmyland broken in health, and very near the end. He had been taken into Uganda, his own country, to see the doctor who told him that he had better stop amongst his own people as the end was near, but no, the good man said he would go back to the children God had given him in the forest.

One seems to see the grey-bearded old warrior walking into the Pygmy village for the last time, greeting his dear children with his cheery word and happy smile, telling them that the call has come to him to lay down his work ; then praying for the blessing of God upon them as he bids them good-bye. Finally he goes quietly to his little hut of mud and wattle, and very soon passes into the presence of the King. A glorious life well spent, gladly offered without a single regret.

But what of the work that remains to be done ? What

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of that little Church of three thousand baptized Christians from many different tribes, including a number of Pygmies? Shall it suffer for the lack of prayerful support from the home Church? Money is needed, but most of all, dedicated lives are needed. What is to be the response to this great call?

A Tribute from the Rev. R. Kilgour, D.D.

May the former Superintendent of the Translating Department of the Bible Society add a word in memory of the Apostle to the Pygmies? As the foregoing article of his friend discloses, Apolo was a true pioneer evangelist. Most Africans are so attached to their own tribe that even if they leave in search of employment, they always hope sometime to return to their own folk. Impressed by the stories of the early martyrs of Uganda, Apolo left his kindred, his home, his own land, to take the Gospel into the regions beyond. Had he remained in Uganda after his conversion and training, he would doubtless have become an ideal pastor: and the world would never have heard of him. He preferred the more dangerous task of preaching among tribes he had never seen, and to whom he was an utter stranger and foreigner. His journeyings were far, and often dangerous.

His first long stay was at Mboga, the capital of Toro. There he preached and there he suffered persecution only equalled in the earliest days of Christianity. Cursed by the priests, hounded by the mob, his house burned about him, stripped and beaten by order of Tabelo, the king—twenty lashes with a hippopotamus hide, he carried their scars to his dying day—left as dead, nursed back to life by a kindly old African woman, he lived to see that very monarch welcomed into the Christian Church. Apolo's next venture was across the Ruwenzori mountain, into the forests of the pygmies in Belgian Congo.

Well Done, Faithful Servant!

Canon Apolo, a truly great man, was also in his faithful ministry, truly humble. Ruskin says, 'I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. All great men usually know their business, *only they do not think much of themselves on that account* . . . They feel that the greatness is not in them, but through them—that they could not do or be anything else than God made them.'