

# 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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# Church Planting in Madagascar

W. KENDALL GALE

## CHAPTER I

### ACHIEVING THE 'IMPOSSIBLE' UNDER CONDITIONS INCREDIBLE

I HAD given a short, informal address on the above subject at Mildmay, when a gentleman approached me and requested that my methods of work might be put on paper. I do not flatter myself that I have anything original to contribute, but if there be but one thing in my methods which may be of assistance to others, or even suggest some profitable mode of attack, then I have no right to keep it to myself.

My work in Madagascar, during my twenty-six years of service, has been essentially that of Church-planting, often among unknown and always among unevangelized tribes.

I was appointed in 1908 to a fairly wide district, with sixty-one Churches already founded, more than sufficient to engage all my time and energy. I speedily ran round the district to spy out the land, with the result that I felt that the station was not central enough for the efficient working of those sixty-one Churches. With the consent of the committee, my wife and I, and our three small children, trekked two days' journey farther north to the village of Anjozorobe, at that time literally at 'the back of beyond.' I had already accepted it as a fact that my work was defined for me and that my sole responsibility was limited to the organizing, visitation, and advancement of those sixty-one Churches. When the mission house had been built and occupied, however, how often did I mount to our upper veranda and gaze round the wide horizon, wondering, wondering what there was behind those northern mountains, what beyond the low-lying land east of the great forest, what beyond that sweeping, undulating plain to the west! The south I knew, for we had come from that direction, but of the rest I knew nothing. And yet I knew too much for my peace of mind—the people were all in darkness.

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Beyond me, to the north, east and west at that time, there was a stretch of country nearly 500 miles by 300, without a Protestant missionary of any denomination, and, though there were a few Churches in the larger villages on the coast, and a few widely-scattered messengers of the Malagasy Native Missionary Society in the interior, apart from these the whole area was utterly without the Gospel of Christ. I knew that gross darkness must cover the land, and gross, untellable wickedness prevail everywhere. I was not under orders, either from the local committee or the Home Board, to attempt the evangelization of that wide area. The missionary, however, is always subject to other and more imperative orders: the call of God and human need. There was my duty to those sixty-one Churches, but had I no responsibility for those other peoples 'in heathen darkness lying'?

No man could possibly cover an area 500 miles by 300 and live; no missionary could refuse all responsibility for any part of that area and 'live'. What beat upon my brain was, not what would happen to them if they died without Christ, but what would happen to me if I let them, if, with my own lamp lighted I allowed them to wander and die in darkness; not, would they be saved, but could I; not, would they be lost, but should not I? 'Inasmuch as ye did it not' has very disturbing implications for every Christian, and the missionary is supposed to be a Christian. A cry as of pain came up from those far lands, ringing, echoing, beating upon my ear-drums. Surging emotional storms were generated by those cries. Tragic human need, though as yet unknown by experience or personal contact, tore at one's heart strings. I knew, too, what alone could minister to and meet that need. I had it in my power, under God, to 'heal' their 'diseases'. I was not pathetically helpless in the face of those needs, like a man in a rowing boat in a tidal wave, or like an ignorant Malagasy peasant utterly without knowledge or medicines, when plague is slaughtering people all around him by the hundred. I knew what could be done, and that I ought to attempt it.

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*Bezanozano*.—In that low-lying, unhealthy land east of the forest, 100 miles by 60, lives the Bezanozano tribe, numbering about 80,000 people, shy, lazy, filthy in person and morals. Brutal, cunning, superstitious, they were creatures of fear and the elemental passions, haunted night and day by dread of malignant and vindictive spirits, each person loaded with charms, either to protect himself from evil or to strike with evil, each distrustful even of his own wife and children, much more so of his neighbours, and thus ready to slay on the spot ; all of them bound by sin and Satan. A little, however (tragically little), had been done for the Bezanozano tribe ; Peake in the south, and Milledge, my predecessor, in the north, had founded eleven Churches.

‘ The business of the King requireth haste.’ Not even waiting, therefore, until I had built a habitable dwelling for my wife and children, I paid a visit to this tribe. And I saw things which ‘ stabbed my spirit broad awake.’

I found that the people only worked two days a week, all the rest being *taboo*, otherwise, as they supposed, the spirits would have a ‘ down ’ on them. So fertile is the land that they could exist by toiling two days a week. For the most part they only ate one meal a day. So incorrigible was their laziness that this they put off until the very end of the day, when the aching void and hunger’s pangs gripped their vitals, compelling them to bestir themselves to cut firewood, pound rice, fetch water, and cook a meal. It was not that their appetites were so sluggish that food nauseated them, for eating and sexual intercourse were their supreme pleasures, but that they were too bone-lazy to prepare for and cook meals until driven to it by insufferable hunger. Then, when the meal was ready they gorged like swine, and, full with a dangerous repletion, they rolled over where they were and slept until morning, or more probably, until the following evening.

I also found to my horror and disgust, village after village where every man had been ‘ married ’ to every woman and every woman to every man. A man would first kick out his wife and then coerce another man’s wife to

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live with him. The same thing happened in other huts, and, as though it were a game of 'Family Coach' or 'Paul Jones,' each found a partner immediately. And, such was the immoral character of these people that none of them ever thought of sexual self-restraint, but 'married' or not, would indulge a burning passion freely and indiscriminately; in fact, the moral law as we understand it did not obtain among them. It was an appalling situation, but there it was.

One of the favourite 'prescriptions' of the witch-doctor, when called in to 'prescribe' for a person critically ill, is that he must be taken to a certain dark, cold, forest pool and be completely immersed, with the almost inevitable result that the shock kills him. How often have I saved life by becoming dictator and ordering people to return home with someone desperately ill! Never moving without a box of medicines, I have prescribed for the sick, given directions as to food and nursing, and thus saved lives from being uselessly sacrificed. In other cases I have found people when ill abandoned absolutely and left to die. My predecessor's widow joined us in Madagascar. On one occasion she was in the Bezanozano country, and, in visiting, caught some people in the act of smothering a boy who was ill, the nursing of the lad being a toil and thus a nuisance. She tore the murderers away from the boy, but, alas she was too late for the lad was dead. Murder, carefully plotted and brutally carried out, was, of course, common. And yet the people are intelligent and teachable, and with human feelings of a kind.

I was travelling along a veldt track when I was startled by shrieks and moaning among the long grass to my right. I instantly told the men to put down the chair and rushed to investigate. I found a woman rolling over and over, writhing as in mortal agony, groaning and sighing and sobbing and shrieking as though she were being torn to pieces on the rack. I lifted her up and asked what was the matter. She was terrified at the sight of me. Now the Bezanozano refuse to be quieted or calmed unless you actually wipe away their tears. This I proceeded to do,

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whereupon the woman was assured that I did not intend to murder her, and ceased her sobs. Her story was that she had lost her child, dear to her though a savage heathen woman, so she had come out on to the far veldt to wail the death-wail, the Malagasy death-wail, the most harrowing sound it has ever been my misfortune to hear. Two things distressed her : she was missing so tragically those baby fingers, wailing because a beloved little thing she had nourished had been snatched from her breast. And the other thing ? According to Bezanozano belief, that baby spirit had now become an evil spirit, bent only on either striking the mother who bore it with terrifying disease, or more terrifying death, there being no such thing as death from natural causes.

Those were the people and the conditions which the missionary had to meet. And a perfectly glorious task ! Once having realized the condition of the people, do you wonder that the missionary could neither sit nor stand, much less take his ease, but must be on the road, destroying ruthlessly, but also building on Christ, that sure foundation ? Baker, Peake's successor, working in the south, and I in the north, we were able to make the eleven Churches which we found in the Bezanozano on our arrival into seventy-nine, and at the present time there is not a single inhabitant of that tribe into whose village the Gospel has not penetrated, or at least who is not within sound of the Gospel of Christ.

*Anativolo.*—To the west of Anjozorobe (our station village) there is a tribe called the Manendy, and their country the Anativolo, or 'The Land of the Long Grass.' The area is smaller and the tribe fewer in number than the Bezanozano. The name Anativolo to us is disgusting, but not to them because of their low mentality and morals. *Anaty* means 'within,' and *voló* 'hair,' that is : the inhabitants are compared to lice buried in their long, uncut, frizzy hair. Their country is an immense hollow among the mountains, chokingly hot, with swamps and lakes everywhere and mosquitoes in clouds. Hence it is almost a death-trap. More industrious than the Bezanozano, their

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industry was turned into channels of personal degradation. Their intelligence and activity were employed much as the British or Continental crook uses them, only in a simpler way.

My predecessor had established four Churches among the Manendy tribe, still 'infants in arms,' and then unable to crawl. I pioneered there and succeeded in making the four Churches into twenty-five, with no possibility or need for further extension, the Anativolo now being churched from end to end. Moreover, I founded thirteen day schools among the Manendy, where previously there existed but two tiny 'dame' schools, with fifty-five scholars all told. It is true to say that the Churches and schools have revolutionized the whole tribe, and if one cannot say that it has been Christianized, or that 'all things have become new,' at least 'old things have passed away'—dreadful things.

Beyond an annual visit and some superintendence by correspondence or interviews with the leaders, I have done absolutely nothing for the tribe, the work being prosecuted and controlled by themselves.

*Northern Imerina.*—Around the Anjozorobe station village there was also much to be done, for we had trekked far inland and northward. Disquieting events were much too common for us to be comfortable either in mind or spirit. Once when I was away on a journey, and my wife alone in the house with the children, some wild folks invaded the garden, running round the house at dead of night, yelling, shrieking, dancing, even endeavouring to climb the veranda pillars. They may have been quite harmless idiots or they may not, for they disappeared as they came. On another occasion a terrifying creature entered the garden (during my absence *en tournée*), climbed a tree, where he remained the whole day, singing, shouting, making hideous faces and still more hideous noises, eyeing the house with furtive and menacing glances, but quietly decamping at nightfall.

Six miles south of the station a man ran amuck. There had been a bitter feud about the ownership of some rice fields. In the end one man sharpened his eighteen-inch

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blade until it was razor-keen, and then sallied forth. The heads of five of his enemies were severed clean. Six others were murdered, and many more slashed about faces and bodies until the brute himself was despatched.

As recently as November, 1934, in a village ten miles from the station, a witch doctor had been doing his incantations, and thought he had discerned something, whereupon he announced to the people that some enemy was proposing to attack them, and that they must make ready and strike quickly and surely when that somebody entered the village. Some months before a son of the village had removed about twenty miles north. That evening, on his way to an administrative centre, this son turned from the high road to find a lodging with and visit his relatives in his home village. Everybody knew him; his parents were living there, but the word of the witch doctor had gone forth—an enemy was coming. The young fellow was seized by nine men and brutally done to death, after which they carried the mutilated corpse to the high road and deposited it there to give the impression that the man had been waylaid or overtaken and attacked at night when journeying south. Farther north villages were raided and then fired.

Unlike those who gain a living by 'taking in each other's washing,' the livelihood of many was obtained by stealing one another's cattle or pigs, they in turn re-stealing them, and with them, more. The making of strong drink, with a poisonous percentage of alcohol, was the livelihood of others, itself inciting people through its deadliness to murderous assault and battery, which again had to be avenged. Witchcraft was rampant, sorcery resorted to on any pretext or none, superstition and fear embedded in the peoples' natures like fossils in rock. These ghastly things repeated themselves with disturbing frequency. What then could the missionary do but tear round on perspiring journeys to preach the destructive, and yet constructive, because redeeming, Gospel? Within the last few months two new Churches have been started, which, in Church-planting, completes all that needs to be done.



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There is now no corner in northern Imerina—where the Anjozorobe mission house stands—where another Church need be founded.

*Marofotsy.*—The writer pioneered in the southern part of the Sihanaka country, but that must be passed over because he is anxious to speak of the Marofotsy tribe, a full account of which would require a volume of a thousand pages. This was a tribe utterly unknown to the outside world (even of this island) until it was discovered to us, occupying a country 300 miles by 150, in hitherto untraversed and as yet unsurveyed Madagascar.

The Marofotsy tribe is a strange mixture of undesirables and explosive elements, such as one might expect of the children of gangsters, married to the offspring of beach-combers and native women of loose character. The foundation of the Marofotsy is Sihanaka stock, which, about 130 years ago, rebelled against the King of Madagascar and fled, trekking to a far and uninhabited land, now known as the Marofotsy country. These were joined by criminals who fled from justice, and slaves who fled from their masters, both of whom only sought a niche in which to hide. These gradually formed themselves into a tribe; out of such material what could you expect but evil of every form and at its worst?

I possess a detailed history of this tribe, written by a real Marofotsy, a fascinating story and terrible. The individual Marofotsy only lived for cock-fighting and bull-fighting, himself often the gladiator; to raid and fight and slaughter and steal cattle; to fill his stomach with food, to quench his unquenchable thirst with murderous alcohol, and indulge his animal passions. All the above are still rife. It was a land and a tribe unknown, a land nobody would have wished to know, a people with whom no one would have desired intercourse, in fact the legend of the great rebellion and trek westward, more than a 100 years previously, seemed to have been forgotten altogether.

The occupation of Madagascar by the French took place in 1895, but, for more than a decade, even they seem to have been ignorant of the tribe; it was only recently that French

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officials were stationed there, and to this day they only number two, and the whole area, bigger than Wales, can boast of but one post office. No real attempt has been made to survey the country, and, as yet, no serious effort to govern or elevate it. It is the simple truth to say that I am still the only European who knows the country. There are four European gold diggers within the Marofotsy, but not a single colonist. Europeans have visited it at various points, but no one except myself has explored it.

The story of how I came to enter the Marofotsy country is both interesting and illuminating. I was pioneering among the Bezanozano tribe, my wife being alone at the station. One day, during my absence, she was pottering about among her veranda plants when a weird creature, clad only in a loin-cloth, with a tousled head of hair, lithe, lean, black as midnight, wild, fearsome and fearful, appeared at the mission house. He prostrated himself flat upon his stomach before my wife in utter obeisance. Not a bit scared, she begged the man to rise. She asked him who he was, and was told. She asked him where he came from, and he answered, 'the Marofotsy country.' 'But where is that?' 'It is beyond those far mountains, three-and-a-half days' journey from here.' 'What do you want?' 'I have been sent by my tribe to you to beg for a teacher. We had heard that there was a praying *vazahalahy* (European) in Anjozorobe and we wish to be taught the "praying."'

Staggered and almost overcome, my wife took the man into my study, asking him to be seated, but as he had probably never seen a chair, he dare not trust himself to that strange household necessity, so squatted on the floor. They talked round the subject for some time, the English lady and the raw savage, a great picture and worthy of a large canvas. Presently the savage presented my wife with a dirty, torn, crumpled, dog-eared scrap of paper, with a few almost illegible crosses upon it in pencil. 'What is this?' enquired my wife. 'That is our petition asking for a Church and a teacher,' he replied; not a name on it, not a single letter. The Englishwoman's eyes became dim

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and overflowed. Fool that I was, I destroyed that scrap of paper, when it ought to have become the most precious of all my possessions, in spite of its filthiness. Instantly my wife gave the man assurance that I, the missionary, would visit them, and that they should have a Church and a teacher. At that the man literally bolted, away back to his people to tell them that I was coming.

When I returned from my journey east of the forest, my wife thought that she had great and amazing news for me. Though amazing it was anything but glad news, for we missionaries had recently had orders from home forbidding us to extend, rather to retrench, as there was a debt of £66,000 at the Mission House in London. 'It is no good, my dear,' I said, 'I must not, I dare not, go.' 'But you must for I have promised,' argued my wife. I sat tight and did nothing because I could do no other—or thought so. About two months later the man came again to know why the *vazahalahy* (myself) had not been. Again I was away from home. Once more my wife promised that I would visit them and they should have a Church and a teacher. I sat tight, unable to budge—or thought so. He came a third time and once more he failed to catch me at home. He returned with a renewed promise. I still sat tight, but with a heart like lead, aching to go but remembering explicit orders from home. He came a fourth time and again I was in the Bezanozano country. My wife was even more emphatic in her assurance that I would go out to the Marofotsy country, and that they should have both Church and teacher. My despair when I returned and heard made me unbearable. He came a fifth time and caught me at home, the one person I did not wish to see, except out of curiosity, almost hating the man for his persistence and yet loving him for it. It was heroic; it was magnificent! I took him into my study and we sat there to talk the thing through. I wanted to bid him go about his business, and yet I also wanted to hug him, for was not his business my business?

Here was a man sent by his people to beg for the Gospel. I was not thrusting at a closed door; he was flinging a door

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wide open, which I wished to enter and dare not. It is maddening to find a door you fain would enter, closed, bolted and barred against you ; it is far more maddening to find a door open as the heavens and inviting you, and yet to see an invisible, imperious notice hitting you in the eye, saying : ' Out of Bounds ! ' That man, by the time he got back home would have done thirty-five days on foot, across lonely mountains, to ask for the Gospel of Christ, and yet, according to my orders, I must refuse him. I could scarcely speak. That is what debts at Mission Houses in Great Britain mean to missionaries out in the field. The pleading and persistence of this man could no longer be denied ; now, in spite of orders, I dare not refuse to go. And I went. I founded a Church in his village, my first in that wide, terrible land. For years and years after my arrival in Madagascar there was not a single Church of any kind in the whole Marofotsy country, now there are 108.

In 1918 I set out to explore an unknown land and to plant Churches. I saw things, things I could not have believed had not my own eyes seen them and my own ears heard them ; a land inundated by the most virulent and devastatingly poisonous drink ; a tribe saturated with disease due to unrestrained immorality (and they unconscious that it was immoral) ; feuds that resembled devil-possession ; polygamy everywhere the accepted custom ; sorcery employed by all and sundry to strike with disease and death ; charms supposed to be able to bewitch and destroy ; death-dealing poisons secretly dropped into a family water-pot, or surreptitiously slipped among the rice of the man with whom the murderer was eating ; girls married at nine years of age ; the sick, and especially the aged, flung out of the houses of their children and left to die ; wee girls, little more than babies, ravished. I am not exaggerating, but can give names of people and places in every instance in verification. In addition the whole country was over-run by bandits (banditry is still rife), whose one purpose in life was to raid and slaughter. The bureau of the *Chef du Poste* at Andriamena (where my

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station now is) is within fifty yards of his residence, and yet that was raided and 40,000 francs stolen.

Recently a native official, when in the country tax collecting, was seized by nine bandits, belaboured into unconsciousness, and then robbed of 25,000 francs. Recently, also, when on a journey, I heard that the village of Anosimiarina had been raided. I knew what that meant, so laid aside my itinerary and made straight for it. With forced marches, we reached it in two days. There I found nine people who had been badly mauled, one had his head cut open in three places, and the knee of one poor woman was completely torn off by a ferocious blow from a cudgel. I stayed and doctored them until on the road to recovery, happily none died. At Bevazaha, a woman near her confinement was caught by the bandits, and immediately disembowelled.

On my very last journey we passed a smoking village which had been raided and then fired. At another, two days before I reached it, the bandits had attempted a raid, but had been driven off and a bandit caught. This delightful creature was carried bound and in triumph to the village (Ankaramanga) and put to death, how, is too dreadful to recount. When dead, the women fell upon the body in a frenzy and literally tore the flesh from his bones. The morning I arrived, a note had been brought into the village to say that the raiders were returning in full force to avenge the death of their comrade. That night my men and I slept in the open; they insisted in sleeping around me for protection, and all of us were ready to spring to our feet and assist the villagers in case of attack. In another village I was ordered to quit instantly, with a score or more of glittering, aggressive spear-heads within inches of my body. I stood my ground, however, and slept in the village, not leaving until the following morning, and that of my own free will.

I have had the horror of seeing women perfectly nude strolling about their villages. On my last journey, pioneering in an unknown area, and holding a service, the very first time they had ever heard of Christ, a woman in the crowd

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broke in upon the solemnity of the occasion, and, bellowing, offered me her daughter as concubine. When I refused she wanted before all the people to insist that I took her for the night. One could fill a volume with such stories and incidents. Do not blame these people. Our own children would become queer creatures were no restraint exercised upon them, and no instruction given to them. Let us rather blame ourselves that 2,000 years have flown since Christ came, and yet, such has been our lethargy, or indifference or want of self-sacrifice or unwillingness to go forth, that scores of millions have not yet heard of a Saviour or His conquering power.

Here also is something which ought to reinforce our faith : never, in all my journeys during more than twenty-six years, have I stood before a group of the rawest savages and preached Christ to them, without finding an almost immediate acknowledgment that what I declared and taught was good and right, even though they may have been unwilling at the moment (or for years) to accept and follow it. Thus there is something within us which instantly responds to what is true, what is high, in a word, God, because we were made by Him Who is the Truth, and are His. 'We needs must love the highest when we see it.' That perhaps needs qualifying, 'We needs must acknowledge that the highest is the highest when we see it.' That wild Marofotsy, tramping thirty-five days and making five journeys to the mission house in Anjozorobe, was acknowledging that 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.' It has been my experience among some of the darkest and most ignorant people in this land, that, sooner or later they have had to give way, that, though they may have resisted for five, ten years, Christ and their bitter needs have conquered in the end. But even resistance, other than a mild hesitation, has been rare, whereas frequently it was I who was sought out to give them the Gospel of Christ.

There is one great story of my experience. When pioneering in a region I had not previously penetrated, I actually discovered a Church which had been in existence

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eleven years. A man, having heard of Christ, in a far-away village, had returned home and told his fellows, who, there and then, in almost total ignorance of what Christianity is, met together to worship the Unknown God and the Unknown Christ, and this they have continued to do ever since.

### Generals as Taxi Drivers

**M**ANY people wonder why so many Latin-American republics keep large armies, and why so many politicians are generals. The answer, of course, is that just as most 'revolutionary' governments are of military origin, so they are only kept in power by having armed forces which they can control; and control is obtained by putting generals in the cabinet. Some governments, however, like the Mexican, although numbering generals among the executives, are not notably 'militarist.'

In spite of this, the army is not an honoured profession. 'So-and-so is an officer, but honest' is a phrase sometimes heard. Few sentences convey so much disdain in a few words as, 'That individual is a *militar* (military).' Unfortunately, posts of authority, civil or military, in Latin-America do not require the possession of moral character. Just the contrary; I once asked an acquaintance what account he could give me of the prisons in his country. He replied, 'A prison in this republic, my friend, is an establishment to which every noble-hearted man has had, has now, or will soon have, his place.'

There is little education in the army, and ignorance is widespread. All except the poorest buy themselves out from conscription, and consequently the rank and file represents the most backward sections of the population. I once had to apply to a sergeant for a permit to visit some ancient ruins which were under military protection. I asked him how old they were. He replied, 'These ruins, Sir, are so old that it is doubtful whether they ever existed.' He was quite serious, but completely unable to handle words.

In the more backward republics every revolution throws up a crop of new captains and colonels. So that, when things have settled down a bit, it is perfectly possible in the capital that a general may be driving your taxi.

Such conditions, and the fact that the army so often controls the destiny of the nation, make Christian work among the soldiers, as is being done in Mexico and Chile, of special importance and interest.