



A HIGHWAYMAN ON TREK.

Frontispiece

GOD'S HIGHWAYMEN

THE STORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
CHURCH RAILWAY MISSION

TOLD ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE BY
DOROTHY FRANCES ELLISON

"An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall
be called The way of holiness."

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DEDICATED

TO

ALL ADVENTURERS IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

WHERESOEVER FOUND.

GOD'S HIGHWAYMEN

You are out upon the Highways,
Gallant plunderers for the Lord,
Down the lone, untrodden by-ways,
With the Spirit as your sword.

Capture souls upon the Highways
Through the long day's dust and heat ;
At life's even ride you sky-ways,
Lay your booty at His Feet.

D. F. G.

PREFACE

It is a good story that the following account of the South African Church Railway Mission tells, and it is good that it should be told. It is good, too, that it should be told by an Ellison, a name with which the Mission must always be connected.

Beginning in quite a small way, as all ventures for God and His Church do begin, it has gradually grown and extended its influence along the railway lines, not only in South Africa and the Rhodesias, but still farther north into what was known a few years ago as the Dark Continent.

During the forty years and more of its existence it has proved to be a very real handmaid of the Church, and that in a variety of ways. Its main purpose has been always to minister, as best it could, to the scattered railway workers over the thousands of miles of railways; but, more than this, it has been—in several places—the means of starting work in districts which are now established parishes.

It has always had, as we know, the practical sympathy and help of the superintendents of the various railway systems, and has been much valued by them.

Of course, the privileges which the missionaries have received for their work can only be expected so long as it is more or less connected with those employed on the railways; but we wish that, somehow, a separate department of the Mission could be established whereby the same kind of work could be carried on among the scattered settlers in other parts, much on the same lines as the Bush Brotherhood in Australia.

Perhaps this will come. But, meanwhile, we thank God for all that the South African Church Railway Mission has done and is doing.

WILLIAM M. CARTER

(formerly Archbishop of Capetown).

June 7, 1930.

FOREWORD TO THIRD EDITION

THE unfading popularity of "God's Highwaymen" among friends of the South African Church Railway Mission, and the many requests for it since the original editions were sold out, decided the Committee to ask Miss Ellison to add to the debt of gratitude the Mission already owes her by preparing a new and up-to-date Edition for the Press, in a form which would be within the reach of the most modest purse, and therefore available for use by Study Circles.

It goes forth with an assured success in winning new friends and subscribers to the work of the Church along the iron roads of Africa.

M. P. G. LEONARD,

Chairman, Home Committee.

THE quotation on p. 15 is made by kind permission of Messrs. Methuen and Co.; it is taken from "Bridge-Guard in the Karroo" in *The Five Nations*.

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GOD'S HIGHWAYMEN

CHAPTER I

BIRTH

" I BELIEVE it is as good as settled that I am to succeed Father Simeon in the Railway work when he leaves for England next month. In many ways it sounds very attractive—a whole fortnight each quarter spent in the open air upon a trolley, visiting all the gangers and stations over 300 miles of line ; and also looking in *en route* at any wayside house within reasonable distance, most of which never see a parson the long year through. I expect it will involve a good deal of roughing it ; but if only the outer man holds out I shall not mind that, and in many ways it will be a valuable experience."

So, early in 1892, wrote Douglas Ellison to his home people, only a few weeks after he had landed in South Africa as Chaplain to Bishop Webb of Grahamstown.

What did it all mean ?

Of the many people who nowadays travel on the railways up and down the length of South Africa and through the vast spaces of Rhodesia, how many stop to consider how those live who keep and guard its 15,000 miles of line, and who in a hundred ways toil that their pleasure or their business may be safely and swiftly carried through ?

If they do so consider, every few miles they will notice a solitary cottage, backed by a few Native huts. This is the home of a white ganger who superintends the Native labourers over a certain section of the line.

Probably a woman and some children will be standing outside, for the passing of a train is often the great event of their day.

Or your train may suddenly stop for no apparent reason. If you look out you may see one child, or more, holding up a red flag, as we in England hold up an arm to hail a bus. This is how the children get to school, or as they did in the days in which our story begins. Two hours and more they would travel, staying at the school perhaps till the evening train landed them back again whence they started.

And the woman? More of her anon. Suffice it now to say that she, quite possibly, has no white neighbour nearer than five miles.

Next in importance come the small stations; a few houses and a store, and possibly a farm or two within sight.

Every sixty to seventy miles are larger places—the railway camps, where are congregated the railway officials and their families other than the gangers. Conditions here are not so lonely. To-day probably the "pictures" come along, and even the wireless, and in many of them you will see a little church, probably two—Dutch and English—not to say one or more chapels.

But back in the nineties things were very different, and life was pretty dreary.

It was then a case of :

Few, forgotten and lonely,
Where the empty metals shine—

Till we feel the far track humming,
And we see her headlight plain,
And we gather and wait for her coming—
The wonderful north-bound train.

Quick, ere the gift escape us!
Out of the darkness we reach
For a handful of week-old papers
And a mouthful of human speech.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

Spiritually, conditions of transport made it almost impossible for a parish priest to get at these few sheep in the wilds, so year in and year out many of them had to forgo outward religious helps of any kind whatsoever.

What was to be done ?

Philip Barrington Simeon reached Grahamstown in 1885 with the intention of establishing a Community there. Among other activities, he was the first to break ground along the railways of that Diocese. For six years part of the system within its borders was visited at regular intervals, and a wide range of helpful service is on record.

The early nineties, however, witnessed the final abandonment of the Brotherhood ideal, and Father Simeon became Rector of Fort Beaufort. At this point the present narrative opens.

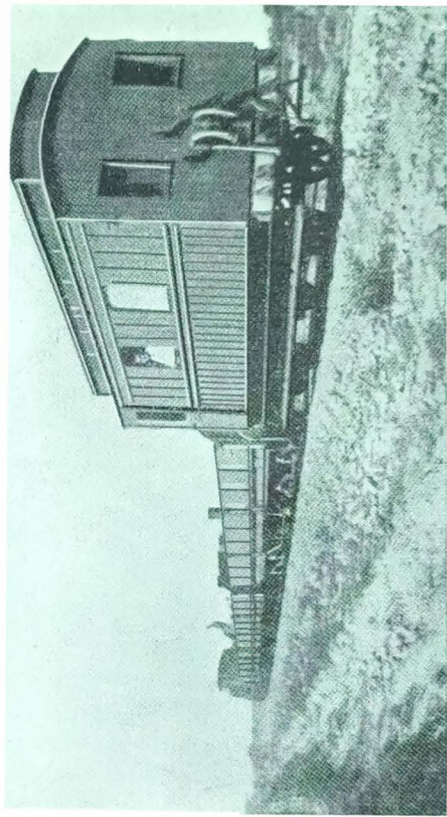
Knapsack on back and his dog "Smiler" alongside, Douglas Ellison set out late in 1892 to size up the situation along these 300 miles of the railway lines in the Eastern Province of Cape Colony. The railway authorities gave him a free pass and leave to use a trolley when possible. For the rest he walked. A chain of centres, some twenty-five to thirty miles apart, was soon formed, at which occasional Evensong was promised, with a Celebration to follow next morning. The days were spent visiting the lonely cottages between these fixed points. The children were baptized (some three hundred during six years) and the elder ones catechised; a short service was held, and literature and other delights emerged from the ubiquitous knapsack; and, generally, an attempt was made to brighten some very dull lives.

Where the padre himself lodged in these early days is not exactly known. The hospitality of his scattered flock was of the warmest, and wherever he could be put up he surely was. But sometimes a "hotel" bedroom had to be shared with a distinct "undesirable," whilst tinned foods provided the staple of his menu.

The "churches" were many and manifold: hotel parlours, waiting-rooms, country magistrates' court-houses, camp schoolrooms, and, not least, railway goods-sheds — all did duty, and all were willingly lent.

Two thousand or so of white folk, and a mass of Natives living alongside, made up this scattered population.

The education of the children and the heroic efforts the more isolated ones had to make to get to the school



COACH ON ANY TRAIN THAT WILL TAKE IT

Facing p. 16



AN OLD-TIME GANGER

Facing p. 17

were a constant trouble to the padre. Often they would share with him the guard's van at the end of a crawling goods train, with never a word of complaint, in spite of the long journey in the blazing heat.

Some of the farthest-off children could, even so, never get to school. For these, later on, the good Sisters of the Resurrection at Grahamstown started a boarding-house alongside that of their orphans. There the "Railways"—twenty-five of them—drawn from every corner of the great Diocese, found a happy home and a splendid education.

Among the efforts to brighten the lives of the men and women, not the least appreciated was the organizing of a band of workers in the larger towns, who collected old newspapers and magazines and sent them once a fortnight to every cottage along their own part of the line.

The Natives meanwhile had, very regretfully, to be left alone, for the Mission staff still consisted of exactly one.

At the outset the main difficulties were evident, perhaps, only to the man on the spot.

Human nature, for the most part, hates to be reformed; and any infant movement bearing within itself the seed of adventure along fresh lines must needs comport itself as delicately as Agag in the presence of the established order.

The Mission that was yet to be did not wholly escape this universal experience. From the first the pioneer worker established friendly relations with Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Elliot, General Manager of the Cape Government Railways. But behind him stood a

more formidable figure in the person of the Railway Commissioner, an official member of the Cape Cabinet ; and it was from the latter that each successive concession had to be "wangled."

The fight to secure the first coach—a constant and imperative need—was a case in point. It is no joke to itinerate in Africa, by trolley or on foot, so long as your next meal and resting-place at night alike lie in the lap of the gods. Moreover, such travelling along railways involves inevitable risks.

"Safety first" is a futile slogan for pioneers, and more than one close call for dear life belongs to this pre-coach period. There was a day, for instance, when the Chaplain, accompanied by his dog, a white ganger, and four Native boys, ran merrily on his trolley down a steep rock-bound gradient. They had just reached the level dip at the bottom when a goods train, reported as having been cancelled, came pounding round a corner of the opposite incline, 100 yards or so away on the single line.* The acrobatics by which that little crew deserted their ship to right and left may well have established a record. In any case, it has never been seriously challenged ; and long before they stopped rolling down the embankment their trolley and everything aboard it had gone sky-high. Some years later a small silver inkpot was washed up from the ballast by a passing storm—the sole survivor of this particular thrill.

Obviously, the Chaplain must have a home of a sort on wheels. The railway doctors all had them, also the

* The South African Railway Line from Capetown to the north is the longest single line in the world.

engineers. But a padre, forsooth ! Absolutely nothing doing !

More than one attempt was made to secure the privilege. Bishop Wilkinson, soon to become Primus of the Scottish Church, when on a visit to South Africa, boldly tackled the lion in his den, only to be met with a courteous but firm refusal. The bare idea of the thing was pronounced impossible.

Shortly after, though, came a change of Ministry, and with it a new Commissioner. The Chaplain, boarding a train on the Karroo at midnight, found himself alone with a bearded stranger. They soon got yarning together, as is the commendable practice of fellow-travellers overseas ; and, *inter alia*, out came the righteous grouching of a vagrant and coachless dispenser of things spiritual. His companion's comment was : " Of course you ought to have one "—viz., a coach. Was it mere chance that the speaker proved to be " Himself," Mr. Lang, the new Commissioner of Railways ? A fortnight later there came a heartening official letter, asking instructions for the actual lay-out of the coach ; and no time was lost over the planning, construction, and successful launching of " Number 404." So much, incidentally, for the " quite impossible."

There were difficulties, too, of another kind ; it was not always plain sailing in the sphere of things ecclesiastical.

The parochial system had been transplanted bodily by the Mother Church across the ocean, and was seemingly firmly entrenched in South Africa. But when the parish is the size of an average English county with a single priest in charge, it is fairly clear that the

old system, so age-hallowed in England, is impossible in the illimitable spaces of a continent like Africa. Notably so when, as at that time, the parish priest was destitute of any means of getting about short of the railways, save for a horse, a Cape-cart, or an ox-waggon. The cost of railway travelling was too often prohibitive.

It seemed self-evident that, if the Church of Christ was to attempt to keep pace with the new life fairly bursting into existence all over the land, some more fluid and pervasive organization was needed, supplementing the existing order. The Bishop of Grahamstown—at the time that far-seeing statesman, Bishop Webb—was quick to see this and to sanction the development of the work he himself had initiated. The Railway Chaplain was given board and lodging in his own house when he was not itinerating, and in every step of the way his blessing was given to the work. But, in spite of this, the challenge to the old system was not easily allowed to pass.

The coach was hardly a home, but it was a shelter, and it provided a bed, of sorts, on which sleep—again of sorts—was possible—sometimes. But to be attached, perhaps, to the end of a goods train which did its shunting by night, or which spent its night in a big shunting yard, needed some getting used to, and some never achieved the feat. There was also now the possibility of some rough cooking, mostly still tinned foods—pre-Boer War and pre-Great War tinned foods—supplemented always by the every-ready kindness of the people along the line. A few photographs and belongings gave this welcome newcomer some remote

semblance to a home. So thought two shunters in a station yard, who flashed in their lantern round about 2 a.m.

Their back-chat ran as follows :

No. 1 : " Look here, Bill ! 'Ere's where the ' something ' Government money goes."

To which Bill No. 2 replies : " Look out ! There's a bloke in there asleep."

As often happened, the bloke was not asleep ; so a few choice words sent them scuttling, without heed taken to the order of their going.

For the next three years the Chaplain lived, more or less, on the coach, thereby being able gradually to extend his beat to the whole 1,200 miles of line in the Grahamstown Diocese.

It meant not only extension, but intension. The coach, and its successors through the years, became veritable magnets to children of all sorts and sizes. Wherever one appeared it was the signal for all available young humans to climb on board. Many and merry were the games played there, as well as things deeper taught. Many, too, were the gifts of milk, eggs, fruit, and flowers brought by the little guests. Whilst on its travels, too, its amenities were often shared by the children going to or returning from their distant school.

The Native kids, too ! Acts, if not words, can be understood. The coach is caught perhaps going uphill, therefore slowing down. The padre is spied at the window. Off they rush alongside, shouting " Skoff, Baas ! " (" Food, Sir ! "). This, of course, was irresistible, and exciting scrambles followed, among

the grinning crowd, for the lumps of sugar and other scraps thrown to them.

The Chaplain's little dog, Peter, was a great asset where the children were concerned. A sad day came when Peter was lost, stolen or strayed, whilst his master was visiting a cottage on the veld. For a week he was sought for, and then mourned. Then word came that he was found. An engine-driver coming through the night saw ahead a small white object lying between the rails. "I'm blessed if that ain't Mr. Ellison's little dog," he called to his mate. But before the train could be stopped the "cow-catcher" in front of the engine had lifted Peter and tossed him over a bridge which passed over a river. Two miles on the train stopped at a station, and the station-master hearing of the discovery, with a Native porter and a lantern, walked back to the bridge and located Peter caught on a buttress halfway down to the river. Next morning a rope was brought, and a very thin little dog was hauled up and subsequently restored to a rejoicing master. He lived to become immortalised in the Mission records, through a famous answer in a "King's Messenger" examination paper:

Q. What do you know about Mr. Douglas Ellison?

A. Rev. Douglas Ellison thought, Who will look after the people who have gone out to make the line and tell them about God? And so for three years, with the help of his dog, he went to tell them."

Such, in barest, briefest outline, was the history of the Diocesan Railway work between 1892 and 1895.

Then something of a crisis had to be faced. The three years during which the Chaplain had himself

guaranteed the expenses had come to an end ; moreover, the need for further help had become insistent. He must have help or the work must close down. An appeal to friends at home was finely responded to, and thereafter, as the story will show, a splendidly faithful body of workers in the Old Country stood by—mainly, at first, private friends and relations—whilst year by year the railway folk themselves and the Church people of South Africa generally have played a notable part in ways too numerous to mention. Both the men and the money came along, even in the darkest days of the Boer War, which was so to devastate and impoverish the country.

CHAPTER II

GROWTH

WITH the coming of a second worker in 1896—one of three laymen successively provided by the Wolverhampton Brotherhood—the Grahamstown Diocesan Railway Mission may be said to have begun its organic existence, as distinct from the hitherto purely individual work on the line.

Its own literature—mere “*Monthly Letters*” for home, as well as a quarterly, “*Light for the Line*,” for local consumption—is in evidence, and the now familiar red “*Signal Box*” for collecting purposes makes its first appearance.

The first Year Book, 1896, and the last available returns suggest an interesting contrast. The total revenue of the Mission in 1896 was £92 18s. In 1937 it had risen to more than £6,000.

In 1897 the Home Letter tells that “the Mission staff is increasing apace with all the abnormally rapid expansiveness of a healthy South African child.” A third evangelist has arrived; better still, a second priest. The work is no longer necessarily stop-gap. More permanent and settled ministrations become possible. Even in construction days, while the new centre of population is still a wilderness, the Mission arrives, so to speak, with the navvies and engineers. Of these, in normal times, only the skilled workmen are white men; but even so, they need plenty of help. Not

only need, but sometimes ask for it. Here is one such petition :

“ So you be the Church of England clergyman, be you ? My name's ——. I come from ——. I am a confirmed member of the Church, and I wants you to give me some ‘ trac's.’ ”

“ What do you want tracts for ? ”

“ To read, o' course.”

“ Do you say your prayers ? ”

“ Naa.”

“ Well, then, what is the use of my giving you tracts ? ”

“ Well, yer sees ; it's like this : you 'as to get down on yer knees to say yer prayers, but yer can read ‘ trac's ’ on yer back.”

Ambrose Leefe, fresh from thirteen years' farming in Canada, the one of the lay evangelists who most left his mark on the line, expressed well the spirit of those early days :

“ In a work where we have so far to go, and where it is only possible to stay a little while, what can we report ? A quarterly visit to the far and scattered stations ; the visits to the lonely cottages ; a quiet talk ; the praying ; the prayers of the Church and the reading of God's Word is all that is possible. But the ‘ good seed ’ has been sown ; it has reached every man and woman, every boy and girl, along the 1,500 miles of railway over which the Railway Mission ministers. The results we leave in the Hands of God.”

No longer now, too, need the Natives be entirely neglected, for Jonas has arrived !

It may be only a joke which tells us that the Pilgrim

Fathers, on reaching America, first fell upon their knees, then upon the aborigines. Anyway, the procedure suggests one of the earliest enterprises of this embryonic Mission.

The ubiquitous presence and teeming life of the Bantu race all along the railway was self-evident. Every camp had its location, every farm or store its huts; every ganger's cottage its row of native dwellings, constructed of old sleepers, with a swarm of little blackamores, usually in their birthday suiting, playing around outside. Again, what was to be done about it?

The Tower of Babel was responsible for the first obvious difficulty.

It was possible, though, for the white man to supervise the work of English-speaking Natives. Hence the Native catechists, and hence—Jonas!

“In his way he is inimitable, with his almost episcopal appearance and his pectoral cross. How you would laugh over his letters and reports . . . expressing his sincere wishes for ‘Our Pater and Mater Church’; or, again, on receipt of a special and private tip in connection with the Queen's second jubilee, returning thanks for ‘Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Unmentionables.’ Jonas also has a daughter of thirteen, who acts the part of ‘Jack’ in ‘Jack and the Beanstalk,’ and, ‘in spite of her black face, you never saw anything at Drury Lane to touch it’ . . . and two sons . . . respectively named after eminent English ecclesiastics whom he desired to honour.

“And so the Mission develops year by year; more

help coming from the railwaymen ; much more from the Diocese generally, and an always increasing amount from England. It is good amid the constant anxiety as to finance to find, as early as 1897, a nest-egg being put aside for Church Building Funds at Naauwpoort and Cookhouse, two important and growing camps. An even more noteworthy item of expenditure is a modest £10 contributed to the Central Diocesan Funds ' as a matter of principle in recognition of the help the Diocese has given in our day of small things ' ; and a window in Grahamstown Cathedral, then being built, which bears the inscription ' From the Railwaymen of the Diocese,' witnesses further to a deepening sense of interdependence."

The years 1898-99 were red-letter years, wherein the staff was added to by the coming of four workers, some of whom did yeoman service for many years. The Rev. Alfred Long gave up an important London parish and generously offered himself for the work. Later, when his time on the Mission was over, he became Rector of Jansenville, Cape Colony, a parish which he himself had formed, and which the Mission had then handed over to the Diocese. Returning to England in 1903, he died in 1928. The following tribute to his memory from his old chief appeared in the Quarterly Paper :

" Some thirty years since, in the early days of the Mission, a rather rare man volunteered his services.

" To one in middle life the sudden change from a poor and crowded London parish to the wide, sparsely peopled district of Jansenville and Steytlerville may well have proved a testing experience.

"But Alfred Long had certain splendid qualities of the born pioneer. The quick disarming smile and charming twinkle, which seemed to say, 'What fun it all is!' came unbidden from a depth of character and purpose, an adaptability to difficult surroundings, a sanity of judgment, simplicity of faith, and single-hearted devotion to his Master, of a kind that is bound to prevail.

"A holy and humble man of heart, faithful shepherd of souls, loyal friend and helper—such was Alfred Long; and it is a type that the old Mission will love to keep in honoured, grateful remembrance."

He had, moreover, a touch of genius in his handling and training of young men. Two of these—J. R. Mather and Laurie Skey, both of whom served their first apprenticeship in the Mission and were both trained by him—now hold responsible posts in that land of their adoption.

To Dean Skey,* now also Vice-Head of the Mission, the work owes a very big debt. Though he left the staff in 1912 he has never deserted his first love, and in ways manifold he has come to the rescue of successive Heads—not least in taking charge, as far as possible, in any times of compulsory absence.

The Rev. W. A. Hewett, an old Oxford rowing "Blue," came from the Oxford House, in Bethnal Green, where he had been Vice-Head under the present Bishop of London; and with him came a young layman, Frederick Rogers, who, after many years' devoted work, both before and after his ordination, was to end up his South African time as Head of the Mission

* Dean of Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.

and, subsequently, Archdeacon of Pietersburg, in the Northern Transvaal.

The Chaplain—from now onwards to be known as the Head—was charged with recklessness in accepting these offers of service. "Well," was his answer, "it is a very fine line which divides a reckless undertaking from the ventures which are of faith."

In licensing Mr. Hewett and Mr. Rogers, the Bishop of Grahamstown, Dr. Cornish, charged them "to go forth and represent the Church in this Colony, in a field than which, I believe, there is no other more valuable or greater or wider in its possibilities"; and in his closing words, "So in the name of the Church of the Diocese, our common Mother Church, I send you forth to do our work, for the work of the Railway Mission is the work of the whole Church, the work of Christ Himself. The Lord Himself will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward."

A real Father in God did Bishop Cornish prove himself to the Mission staff. He would sometimes pay a visit to the coach, and come back to tell people in Grahamstown of the "chiefly tinned provisions" on which the workers lived, and "tea or coffee warmed over a lamp." Or, again, the Head would accompany the Bishop as he journeyed through his great Diocese. Away from the line there was no faster means of getting about than by mule-drawn Cape-cart, which as often as not had to go straight over the roadless veld, a matter then of hanging on for dear life, and of a good supply of "Elliman" for 'bruises. "A week since," one letter records, "after a hundred miles' drive, we reached the principal Native Mission station, St.

Matthew's, Keiskama Hoek, and you may imagine the delight of two jaded travellers on hearing the double line of pupil teachers drawn up to receive us burst forth with unconscious humour into the hymn :

Safe home, safe home in port,

And only not a wreck.

Early in 1899 the Head was home on sick-leave, and two far-reaching decisions were made : (1) A London Committee was formed, with the Rev. John Ellison as Chairman (he held the post, with unflinching helpfulness, until 1927) ; and (2) Miss Elise Astley offered herself as Honorary Secretary to the Mission. It was to prove a lifelong offering. Henceforward, for twenty years, till her death in 1919, she gave her whole self to the work. A daughter of Sir John Astley, a notable figure in the racing world, her social position, her charm, and striking personality were in themselves no small asset ; but her spirituality, her energy, and organizing ability, and, above all, perhaps, her sympathy and power of making friends, made her ideal for such a work. Her enthusiasm was infectious ; her gratitude for the smallest help given could but produce more help. What her backing meant, both to those at the Front and those at the Home Base, it is impossible to exaggerate.

In South Africa a rather priceless windfall now came the Mission's way. A headquarters house had become imperative, but no possible place was available. Now, owing to the great kindness of Bishop Cornish, Bishopsbourne Cottage, situated in his own grounds,

was lent rent free to the Mission, and was, surreptitiously, almost entirely furnished by fairy godmothers in the shape of Mrs. Cornish and the ladies of Grahams-town.

The situation was ideal, close to a railway-station for early starters and late arrivals ; with the Bishop's chapel in an adjoining garden, or, if time was no object, the run down to the Cathedral or to the beautiful Chapel of St. Peter's Home, where the Mission staff was always welcomed by that great woman Mother Cecile. "I want," she once said, "all the winds of heaven to blow through this place." The Railway Missioners proved good breezes !

There was also a golf course on the hill above the house and beautiful country all round.

Writing to England about this, the Head says :

"What it means to knock about a rough, new country like this for six or eight weeks at a stretch, and then on returning to your centre to find no decent corner you can call your own, is perhaps better imagined than described. Certainly, I cannot attempt to tell, in a few lines, what it has been to myself, after seven years of practical loneliness, to have these two tiny rooms, and with them some sense, as one returns from a journey, of 'going home.' May the new Mission House long continue to be a blessing to our scattered workers, their port in times of stress and storm, and their place of refreshment alike for soul and body, and, so far as it is possible out here, whatever else they may have learned to associate with the thought of 'home.'"

And such a home for many years it remained, till

the later vast expansion of the work necessitated more central gathering-places elsewhere. It was here that the first Retreat and Conference was held, thereafter to mean so much to the staff.

Sound sleep, a slack time, a game of golf, and good food!

The Cottage with its beautiful garden—beautiful, at least, when more water was obtainable than could be provided by emptying into it the soapy hip-baths of the inhabitants—was a very cheery, happy place. The men were all young together, and several of them had that gift of humour so priceless where tired bodies and strained nerves had to be dealt with. They had diversions, too, other than golf and gardening.

“One day,” wrote Gladwyn Batty, “dear old Henry Forshaw told us that he had seen quite a large snake bolt down a hole by the side of the little path leading from the station to our little Cottage. We felt that immediate steps should be taken for its destruction, and a party was duly formed. Henry Forshaw, ‘H. B.,’ Brocklebank, our Native boy and myself, sallied forth, armed with a spade, pickaxe and sticks. On arrival in the danger zone, I personally immediately climbed a tree, thinking that from an elevated position I might get an interesting photograph, and comforted by the thought that snakes don’t climb trees. Henry Forshaw bravely dug for some time without revealing any snake. Brocklebank was all the time very sceptical, and regarded the whole thing as an unwarranted waste of time. Finally he waved them all aside, lay down on the ground, and with his head well in the hole, declared there was nothing there. A minute



ELISE ASTLEY

Facing p. 32



BISHOPSBOURNE COTTAGE (BACK VIEW)

later, from the same hole, emerged a cobra about 3 feet 6 inches long! It was duly slain, and I have in my possession a photograph of its corpse, but I always think that 'Brockle' had a very narrow escape."

How much, too, these men owed to their housekeepers—Englishwomen all of them. Notably, surely, to Miss Chapman—now married and settled in the Transvaal—who for some years spared herself nothing that she might help to make the Cottage a home. Later, she migrated with the Mission to Johannesburg. A Native garden boy is also a vivid memory to the old stagers. His name was "Salem." It was inevitable that his nickname should be "Light's Abode."

CHAPTER III

WAR

It was well for the Mission that it was thus so firmly on its feet before the catastrophe of the Boer War shook South Africa to its foundations.

In November, 1899, the storm broke, and for the next two and a half years the work of the line had to take new and strange departures. Fighting was pretty constant over all the northern part of the Diocese; trains full of refugees crowded in open trucks—2,000 sometimes on a single train—were speeding south, and had to be met and helped in any way possible. Several members of the staff volunteered as military chaplains—Mr. Hewett, for one, who had been reckoned on to take over the coach work; and, not least, that trusty friend and servant "404" itself was commandeered by military headquarters, only to be returned at the war's end too much battered and shot-riddled to be ever again of use.

Henry Forshaw, the first ordained man to join the Mission, was one of those gazetted for active service. He was in many ways a remarkable man. He had spent several years roughing it in Australia. Then a year's work with Father Dolling at Portsmouth inspired the desire to take Holy Orders. Some of the best stories of the early days centre round "Uncle Henry," or "Hy.," with his quick and sparkling wit. His sympathy went out to everything and everybody in trouble—snakes always excepted. A refugees' train, passing through Naauwpoort, and crowded with half-

frozen women and children, all in open trucks, sent the white men running to their beds for blankets. As the train moved out "Uncle Henry" was seen to take off his coat and throw it to a woman, one of whose children had actually died that day from exposure. His own death in 1913 marked the first break in that cheery company, his life on earth undoubtedly shortened by his selfless service. "None of those who laboured by his side, none of our people, to whom he gave himself so unsparingly, will readily forget him. To many his memory will remain fragrant with the sweet savour of a true, brotherly affection, for he possessed to a rare degree the gift of endearing himself to others." So wrote his old chief in the *Church Times*.

Eustace Hill, too, a priest on the staff, was right at the front as Chaplain to Lord Methuen's brigade. He played a fine part there, as also, years later, in the Great War, in which he lost an arm.

Meanwhile, in divers ways and places the other workers were doing their bit to keep the old flag flying, though the visiting along the line was necessarily confined to the southern part of the Diocese.

Mr. Long, in a very Dutch district, had the difficult work of trying, not unsuccessfully, to draw together the two races in such bitter conflict up north. This, indeed, has always been the aim of the workers, and strikingly have their efforts been rewarded.

It was Father Waggett who once expressed the opinion that had some such unifying force as the Mission been possible in early days in America, many of the difficulties there might have been avoided.

The railway camp at Naauwpoort—in 1892 a mere

handful of cottages—became a great and busy military centre. Before the war the foundation stone of a little church had been laid there. The building was, inevitably, so much delayed that Mr. Skey used to threaten to raise a fund for the repair of that stone ; but eventually the Church of All Souls was built by the Brigade of Guards and other regiments from time to time stationed there, to commemorate the men, 300 in number, who died in the local hospital during those war years. Their names are inscribed on tablets inside the church.

The large number of Natives congregated at Naauwpoort necessitated a Native catechist being placed there, and no record of the Mission would be complete which failed to pay homage to the memory of Josiah Ngcambū. In the early days of the Mission Josiah was head coal-porter in the Railway Camp at Norval's Pont. Even then he used to gather his own people together and teach them about Christ. When the call came, he at once gave up his post and became the Catechist of Naauwpoort, and for something like half the salary he was earning before.

Here is a contemporary extract from a letter of a casual visitor in 1901 :

“ Naauwpoort is growing very fast, and with its present surroundings of camps is quite important looking. It lies on a plain 5,000 feet above the sea, surrounded by mountains, has a glorious climate, and is chiefly conspicuous for the amount of corrugated iron in which it clothes itself. Away on one side of it lies the Native Location, where Josiah, the Zulu catechist, is doing a very wonderful work. He asked us to go

one day to their Evensong, held in the large Government School. Every morning through Lent at 4.30 a.m. and every evening at 7 this is full, both for Matins and Evensong. The evening we were there, there were over a hundred present, of whom more than half were men; full choral service, unaccompanied; even the creed they sang to a chant. They say that the wonderful thing to hear is their Choral Eucharist. Nothing in the way of music seems to stump them, as you will realize when I tell you that the natives of Uitenhage once sang one of Gounod's Masses unaccompanied."

A Mission priest tells of a certain hymn singing when "one little fellow with a high, sweet voice sang an air of his own, winding in and out of the regular melody, now above and now below, but always harmonising perfectly with it." So keen were these Natives to have a church of their own that they collected £120 entirely among themselves.

But Josiah must speak for himself. Here is one of his letters:

"dear sir rev Ellison i shall be glad to hear what day when you com up here because i get 15 people grew people and 16 children together with babes now i try to teach them sometimes i going calld mr. rogers to com see them and another word the communion people they cry so much for it so much thank for presents [knitted socks from Scotland] i do this Sunday morning 9 o'clock for children 11 service 12 o'clock for grew people."

Another priest writes of having to baptize at one time no less than fifty adults prepared by Josiah, all of whom had passed Mr. Hill's examination. Josiah was

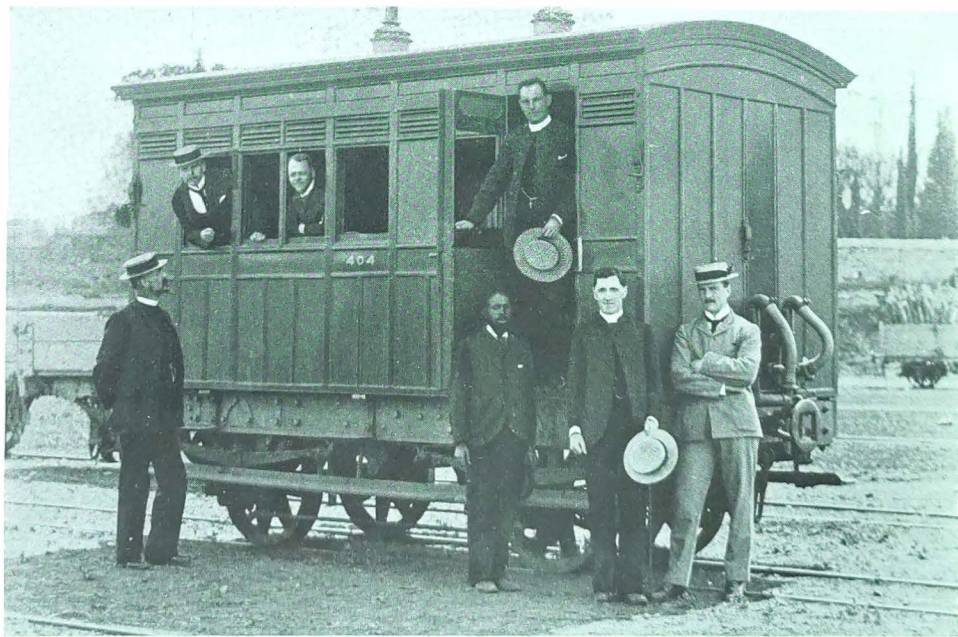
schoolmaster as well as catechist; there came a day when the local padre arrived just in time to see him giving one of his young hopefuls a fierce crack over the head with a ruler. On remonstrating, he was told: "It's all right, Umfundis, he's my nephew!" Josiah knew to a nicety the thickness and resistance of the family skull.

He died of phthisis in 1907, worn out by his unreckoning labours. He was laid to rest under the east wall of the church he had striven so hard to build, where, later, a stone was placed, subscribed for both in England and Africa.

The Head, who had given him his last Communion amidst a moving demonstration of love and sympathy, writes of "that old black saint": "Men of his stamp, whether black or white, are indeed few and far between. . . . I feel quite sure that a race which is already producing a type like dear old Josiah will yet fill a noble page in the story of our common faith."

There was another catechist at Cookhouse, unique in one way. The same visitor is writing:

"Perhaps more impressive to English eyes was the Native Confirmation next morning. It was to be held in their own little church, mud walls with a roof of flattened-out paraffin tins, all built by the hands of their Native evangelist, Johannes, who has two legs, one of wood and one of cork! . . . Robing in the church being out of the question, the Bishop repaired to Johannes' hut higher up, and a few minutes later the unwonted sight was seen of a Bishop in cope and mitre, preceded by his pastoral staff, processing along the Bush paths! . . . The reverence of these Natives



L. Moxon. A. Leefe.
H. Forshaw.

W. A. Hewett.
Josiah Ngeambū. D. Ellison. F. A. Rogers.
THE STAFF, 1899



NAAUWPOORT HOSPITAL



COOKHOUSE CHURCH FOUNDATION STONE

is very striking. For instance, it seems to come to them naturally, men and all, to bow the head at the 'Gloria,' and instead of singing it loud, as we do, they sing the first half of it very softly; and a very impressive effect it has. At the Confirmation the hymn 'Holy, Holy, Holy' was sung, unaccompanied, in English, and on the Sunday an anthem, also in English, and by heart."

Yes, their reverence is very striking. It is apparently impervious to any distractions. Is it helped, perhaps, by the absence of that keener sense of the ludicrous which sometimes defeats, in us British folk, the still deeper sense of reverence which is at the heart of our worship?

Here, for instance, stands the missionary holding forth to a little congregation of white people in an up-country waiting-room. A swarm of locusts is camping for the night hard by; and presently, attracted by the lamp, they start pouring through the open window. Everybody tries to make the best of things, until a young seven-year-old cries aloud: "They are crawlin' up my trousers!" That was the limit. It was his first experience of Divine worship, though later he became a chorister at Grahamstown Cathedral.

In spite of the war—partly, perhaps, because of it—the work down south became more settled. Four little churches for Europeans, besides that at Naauwpoort, and two or three for Natives were built. At Cookhouse they were only awaiting the gift from the Government of a site. It has waited a long time. The Head writes: "A casual visitor, travelling through our thousands of miles of illimitable emptiness, might

reasonably imagine that one could obtain an odd acre here and there, for the building of a little House of God, almost for the asking. But let him try! In the present case it has taken us just two years and a quarter; and the process has involved a pile of correspondence, in which any number of big men, from the Prime Minister downwards, have borne their part, for all the world as though we were trying for a bit of Government land in the very heart of the City of London. However, the matter is safely fixed up at last. Our poor little plot has battled its way triumphantly through both Houses of Parliament, and now only awaits the Governor's sanction, or what you would call the Royal Assent."

Six months later the first stone is laid, with the following inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND THE INSPIRING MEMORY OF
ST. PAUL, THE TRAVELLER.

DEC. 8, A.D. 1904.

"In journeyings oft."

Things long prayed for are greatly prized when at last they come to pass; Cookhouse Church was its people's home. There was a churchwarden there who gave up the whole of his annual leave to decorating the church throughout, making it sound and dust proof, and building a foundation for the font. The Sunday School children gave the altar rails. Cookhouse was

just a railway camp, but such things are not uncommon overseas. They could be matched over and over again in the story we are telling.

Money, too, was always readily given. Sometimes it was obtained in unusual ways. Of a certain little church we read: "The collection is a remarkable feature of this place. The acting 'churchwarden' is usually an athletic farmer, who carries the bag round and sees that everybody contributes his right share. If some member of the congregation puts in a smaller coin than the collector approves of, the latter stands and quietly argues with him till the requisite coin is forthcoming; it is impossible to resist a broad smile and six foot of well-developed humanity. In one case a man pulled from his pocket a handful of silver to select a coin for the collecting bag. The collector, however, soon settled the amount of the gift by seizing two half-crowns from the open palm. The result is that the collection in a congregation of twenty-five to thirty people is between £3 and £4. This is perhaps only less drastic than an occasion recorded in earlier days, when, after taking a service in the bar at a certain station, the barman handed the Chaplain six shillings to add to the collection." "You see," he added, "there are six chaps who didn't come to the service, so I fined them each a bob." The "tickey," a three-penny-bit, so popular in more favoured churches, was evidently not considered playing the game on the line.

Another of the same Chaplain's many anecdotes must illustrate this. He was travelling by night in a carriage with, for companions, the bandmaster of a famous regimental band on his way to a big show, and, in the

upper bunk, a slightly inebriated gentleman. The bandmaster unburdened himself to the parson of a grievance: "We propose to have a band concert on Sunday afternoon, but I hear . . . they don't think it right to have concerts on Sunday. . . . What's the difference between paying two shillings to go to a concert and putting something in the plate?" Whereupon a sleepy voice from the upper bunk was heard to mutter, "One and nine."

Not only the collection, but also, on occasions, the congregations were conscripted in ways unthought of at home. A lay-reader arrived at a certain station to find his notices of service had miscarried. A friend there kindly offered to go round and announce his arrival. He was surprised, when the time came, to find the whole population of the place running to church, and running fast. They were followed by his friend of the station carrying a loaded revolver. Having shepherded his flock into the service, he went out and shot a cow.

Temperance work was needed in those days, though the main body of railway men were sober consumers of "bush tea." Many a man through sheer loneliness "took to the bottle" for solace. The favourite beverage was what is known as "dop." The following story will show how, accidentally, one man was cured of his craving: "Travelling one day by train, I saw to my surprise a full bottle labelled 'dop' on the rack in the carriage. I felt that it ought to be handed to the authorities, and on alighting at a certain junction with the bottle in my hand, I was accosted by an inspector, who asked me what I had got. I explained that I had found the bottle in the carriage, and asked him what

I ought to do with it? 'You give it to me,' he said, 'that will be all right.' I was loath to do so, as I knew my friend's special weakness; but after assuring him that when we next met I should make careful inquiries as to what had been done with it, I handed the bottle over. I met the man again about a fortnight later and asked him what had become of the bottle. He made a very wry face, and said: 'It wasn't "dop"; it was horse medicine!' He afterwards signed the pledge."

The unfailing hospitality of the people on the line has been mentioned. They give always of their best. But sometimes the climate defeated their well-meant intentions. A Chaplain stranded late at night at a wayside station tells how "I took refuge in a shanty close to the station, where the good lady of the house offered me some refreshment. She departed to the larder, and her return was heralded by a most unpleasant aroma. The explanation was a plate containing two cold goat chops. To eat them was an impossibility, and equally an impossibility to hurt the feelings of my kind hostess. To solve the situation, on being left alone in the room, I wrapped the chops in paper and put them into my pocket, with the intention of dumping them at the first possible moment. The lady returned and asked me if I had finished? I replied that I had; whereupon, with a glance at the plate, she asked: 'What have you done with the bones?' I ignored the question and turned the conversation into a less dangerous channel. Retribution was, however, at hand. The train arrived: I got in, and with a view to making myself comfortable I rolled up my coat for a pillow, forgetting for the

moment the contents of my pocket. It was a kindly Providence that prevented me from being gassed."

As the war drew its weary length to an end there was activity behind the scenes in every department of English life, both at home and in South Africa itself, preparing for the inevitable rush north. The Railway Mission was on the spot and in the van as it has rarely been given to the Church overseas to be. The report for 1902 hints at probable development, and a little later the Head is able to say that, at the request of the Bishops concerned, "the work of the Mission will no longer be confined to a single Diocese, but is to be immediately extended into the Dioceses of Bloemfontein and Mashonaland, and possibly throughout the Transvaal"; and he announces that the Archbishop of Capetown has provisionally approved of the name of the Mission being changed to that by which it has since been known, the South African Church Railway Mission, an approval which was unanimously confirmed by the next Provincial Synod.

So the day of small things comes to an end. Tried and tested for ten years by self-sacrificing labour and on solidly built foundations, the Mission was to prove itself a finely tempered instrument "fit for the Master's use" in yet sterner work than any to which it had so far been called.

With the call were given the men. Some of the finest among the younger clergy in England offered themselves. Never again was it to be said of the Church: "She thinks her Empire still is the Strand and Holborn Hill."

The Head's enforced absence in England for a whole year was not an unmixed evil. Backed by a strong appeal from the Archbishop of Capetown, and an equally strong one from Bishop Carter, lately appointed to Pretoria, and not least by the emotional appeal of the distressed country, it was small wonder that both men and money came as never before. The S.P.G., a good friend to the Mission all its days, started the money-ball rolling with a grant of £1,000, and every sort of local help was generously poured out, under the inspiring leadership of Elise Astley, helped by an Organizing Secretary.

A notable development included the first appearance of *The South African Church Railway Mission Quarterly Paper*, the opposite number to the *South African Light for the Line*. It was in the best sense an advertisement. The almost daring design for its cover has had not a little to do with enthusing both old friends and new with the Mission's own spirit of adventure.

When it first appeared it stirred some anonymous critic into self-expression in the *Guardian*, only to draw from Bishop Cornish, then in England, a spirited reply :

" If the map of Africa, which figures on the outside of the Railway quarterly, does a little startle us as somewhat audacious in its bold conception, we take courage at the enthusiasm of those responsible for the Railway Mission, and feel with them that it is not only right and fitting, but the absolute duty of the Church, to claim from Capetown to Cairo for Christ. It is indeed a happy thought which has placed Jerusalem in the right-hand corner of the map, for that is the

source whence come those marching orders which are still binding on us to-day, and it is also the goal at which we aim, inasmuch as it is, in a figure, the New Jerusalem, whose gates we hope some day to reach.

“ ‘An highway shall be there and a way; and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.’ If through the enthusiasm of our Railway Missioners the Church is able to make that way a way for Christ across the Dark Continent, we shall indeed have reason to thank God for their courage and whole-hearted devotion to His service.” *

Later years have seen a Church Saloon, the property of the Diocese of Egypt and the Sudan. It was constructed with Church funds; but the cost of haulage, a native attendant, crockery, cutlery and table linen for four people, and bedding for the Chaplain are all provided by the Railway Company.

One half of the coach is equipped as a Church, with an altar and seats for twenty-five people.

The other half is divided into four compartments, for the convenience and comfort of the Chaplain and his servant. It travels over 2,000 miles of railway and is much appreciated not only by our own white folk, but also by members of the Greek, Coptic and Syrian Churches who join with our people in worship.

When they are present some of the prayers are in Arabic, and the Chaplain's address is often translated by one of the District Commissioners.

So the vision of 1900 has become the reality of 1938. We hail that Church on wheels as a kindred spirit, and wish it “ Good luck in the Name of the Lord.”

* The cover of this book is an adaptation of this design.

The total staff now numbered roughly ten priests and a layman or two, not omitting the invaluable Native catechists. At the first Annual Meeting held in London in March, 1903, Mr. Long, just returned from Africa, is found telling the audience that "at least one hundred men are needed to carry on the work of the Mission." The Head more modestly asks for forty, whilst Mr. Rogers, now ordained and serving his diaconate in Kennington, pleads for laymen, for "there could be no better preparation for a man about to take Orders than a year in South Africa."

Thus, with at most only a quarter of its necessary workers, the pioneers go north, where we must now follow them.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSVAAL

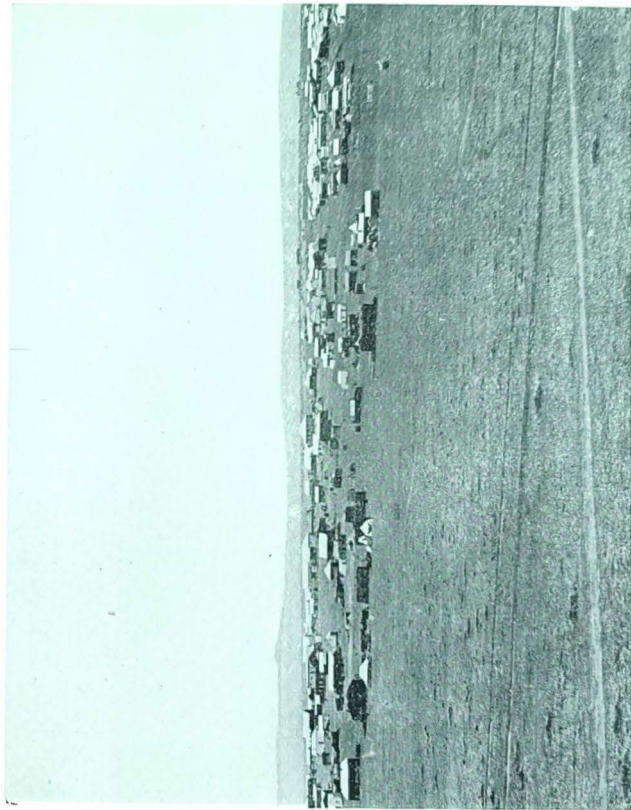
THE Transvaal, that great tract of country between the Rivers Vaal and Limpopo, with its compelling lure of the goldfields, was obviously the strategic point for the new start. Mashonaland was a pioneering call of scarcely less importance.

It was a glad day in 1903 when the Mission overleapt the boundaries of the Diocese which gave it birth. The change involved no break with that Diocese, and no forgetfulness of the unfailing encouragement given by its two Bishops through the difficult early years ; but it lies beyond gainsaying that the Mission entered upon a surprising new lease of life from the moment when it became of an interdiocesan character, and therefore an object of interest to the entire South African Province.

A lightning visit to the Transvaal and to Mashonaland—with Bloemfontein and the Orange River Colony taken in his stride—was the first call upon the Head on his return from England.

From Pretoria, the old Boer capital, he writes : “ Everyone who is anybody is out to help ”—in Government, Church and Society—for that fine body of English men and women realized the greatness of their opportunity, and their no less great responsibility for the making of a new nation—a nation, too, not solely British, but

“ A people, sane and great ;
Forged in strong fires, by equal war made one.”



JOHANNESBURG FIFTY YEARS AGO

Facing p. 48



OBSTACLES

A washaway on the line

Facing p. 49

This was the vision of such men as Lord Milner and Sir Arthur Lawley, of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, and it was shared to the full by the Church's leaders, and, on its own humbler plane, by the authorities of the Mission.

The almost terrifying growth and vitality of Johannesburg was a revelation to one accustomed to the more ordered life of Cape Colony. "Johannesburg, with a population numbering considerably over 100,000, is a veritable fairy growth, a town of fine streets and trees innumerable, of blinding dust* and, in spite of the prevailing depression, of simply exuberant life, as befits a fair young city of some seventeen summers."

"The Golden City" was as good as its name in its deeds. The Mirfield Community, only just starting their own great work there, were Mr. Ellison's hosts. There he meets the Greek Archimandrite, who takes his flock every Sunday to the principal English Church, hospitably open to him who had none of his own. He goes to Sir Percy Girouard, the Commissioner of the Central South African Railways, and modestly asks: (1) For financial aid from the Government; (2) free passes for the workers, such as are already given down south; (3) railway rates for their food, which means cost prices, a blessing enjoyed by all bona-fide railwaymen; and (4) "the prompt discovery and surrender (only in more diplomatic language) of one of the 'Kitchener' Coaches which he had bequeathed to the Church, but which somehow or other has gone and lost itself." (With the exception of (1), all requests were subsequently granted, while in Rhodesia the Chartered

* It has now, in 1938, reached 300,000, but the dust has mostly gone.

Company did give financial aid.) He finds large railway construction works starting, which are to be manned by European labour—every available Native being required for the mines—1,000 white navvies already at work; the Chief Engineer so keen for the Mission to break ground among them that he himself guarantees the maintenance of one worker which it was hoped the Navvy Mission would provide.

In fact, from this time forward, and increasingly as the Mission developed and they experienced its worth, there was nothing the higher railway officials would not do for the staff. The late Sir Thomas Price and Sir William Hoy, successively General Managers of the South African Railways, were both firm friends. Coach after coach was provided, till now there are four of them fully equipped.

And then the Rand! "I wish," the Head wrote, "I could convey one-tenth part of the impression that first journey along the Rand made on me. One hears about the mines up there, but one doesn't in the least bit take it all in. There they are, with their tall chimneys, jostling upon each other's heels, miles upon miles, and tens of miles, and for all the world like some busy English mining centre, without its smoke and under perpetual sunshine; and when at last, on reaching Park Station (Johannesburg), you are told that an even longer arm is stretching away in front of you, you begin faintly to realise the immensity of the problem which is confronting the Church in that one corner of South Africa alone."

From Johannesburg to Bloemfontein; from Bloemfontein to Kimberley, the home of the diamonds.

Those diamonds! It was the late Bishop Gaul, formerly Archdeacon of Kimberley, speaking in 1908, who was responsible for this bit of ancient history: "It seems to me the most romantic chapter in the whole of one's career has been connected with the railways of South Africa. When I arrived there in 1874 there were just fifty miles of railway going from Capetown, and you can hardly imagine what that meant to the people living in isolated farms, in mining camps—500, 800, 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 miles away—to be all that way from the nearest railway headquarters. In Kimberley, for instance, in those busy days, when the mail only came in once a month, we used to see some 4,000 or 5,000 men crowding up the main street towards the miserable iron shanty called the General Post Office, which almost fell down every week with the weight of the men leaning against it.

"Then I can remember the old 'Diamond Mail.' You know how carefully you lock up your diamonds here in safety every night, and wake up wondering whether there is a man under the bed waiting for them; that Diamond Mail used to start from Kimberley once a week, an open cart with six horses, and a black man—dear old Jacob—to drive it. If you wanted to go to Capetown it meant travelling eight days and nights as hard as you could go, with only just time to change the horses. You had to take your own 'skoff,' so as to lose no time, and you had to lie as best you could on top of the Diamond Mail. That mail went down all that enormous distance, week after week, for years before there was any hope of the railway reaching Kimberley. Then, when at last it did come, I used

to go along the line giving services to the men and taking care to secure land for future developments. So we crept up to Mafeking. And at length the railway passed on to Rhodesia . . . pushed on into that country through sheer force of will. Mr. Rhodes determined to have it there, and there's nothing you cannot do when you are determined to do it. And all this has been done within the last thirty-three years."

From Kimberley the Head makes "a long swoop to the north." The two days were gladdened throughout by the meeting with old friends from the original Mission beat who had found promotion in those far-off northern lands. "Bulawayo, where less than nine years ago poor old Lo-Ben was still lording it, is laid out on a truly colossal scale. A £60,000 hotel, for instance, nearly 1,500 miles inland from the coast, and other fine buildings to match; some forty miles of public streets; electric light literally *passim*, all combine to suggest the bigness of the outlook of the man who founded it. The one thing lacking is a proportionate population, and, like most other parts of South Africa just now, the capital of Matabeleland is clearly marking time, in hopes of a brighter future."

Again the Mission was to experience a very practical welcome from its Diocesan. A little house, St. Cyril's Cottage, close to the Railway Church, was offered by Bishop Gaul as a headquarters and resthouse for the advanced guard, whilst Mrs. Gaul undertook to superintend the furnishing. The Railway authorities had already provided a coach, which till now had worked in the southern part of the Diocese. They promised a better one.

So the line was laid for this great advance, and Mr. Ellison travelled back again to Grahamstown in the new "train de luxe"—another marvel of these African wilds. "Even a train can have its nasty pride. We passed a goods train at a siding, and I overheard the following (entirely friendly) greeting between the two guards:

"*Goods Train Guard*: 'Hullo, Jack!'

"*Train de Luxe Guard*: 'Hullo, you common, low down goods train man!'"

The prospect ahead in the way of expansion and reorganization would have daunted most men, for it meant the immediate addition to the work of some 3,000 miles of line, and "side-shows" innumerable in the new world up north. But, like Cecil Rhodes, the Mission had long since dreamed its dream. It was now to be realised in a way which it is granted to few to experience.

In simple faith that God, Who had given the call, would give the wherewithal to answer it, the Mission staff set itself to grip its new task.

The breaking of ground for the Mission in the Transvaal was entrusted to the Rev. A. G. de Rougemont, who, with his vicar, the Rev. Wilfrid Gore Browne of St. Hilda's, Darlington, had gone out in 1902, one of that fine band of younger clergy who had heard "South Africa calling."

Mr. Gore Browne, enlisted by the Head when in England, went out meaning to work on the Mission, and for a few weeks did so. But he was too big a man to be overlooked for the very important post of

Rector of Pretoria, which fell vacant almost as he landed. He, too, was one of those who gave his life to the country, first at Pretoria and then for sixteen years as Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman. The Railway Mission may justly claim him as one of its gifts to Africa, and a priceless gift at that; not to mention his devoted sister, whose work and influence were only second to her brother's. The bodies of both now rest in South African soil.

Early in 1903 an exploring trip was made by these two newcomers on a fine new coach lent for the time being. The climate of Johannesburg was pronounced "perfection," whilst a later recruit compared it with that down south as the difference between champagne and stout.

Mr. Gore Browne reports: "The journey was an experience which one does not care to repeat more than necessary, as we were next the engine and had the most terrific bumping all the way. I have, however, found that we might have been worse used, as since then I have seen the railway lamp knocked out of its socket in the ceiling, and a brother priest (lately Army chaplain) tells me he has seen every bit of glass and china in the carriage shattered by one of these bumps." His first services—at Belfast—in a church disused because of the war, are "encouraging"—"twice or three times as many men as women.* The congregation consisted chiefly of South African Constabulary (Baden Powell's), teachers from the farm schools, and officers of the repatriation camp. . . . I do not see how places of this type can be served unless by a travelling Mission,

* There were then very few women in the country.

as there is no wealth to pay for a resident clergyman. But it is only fair to say that the laity will not accept an indifferent ministry. Faithful, humble men, who have the eloquence of their convictions and who practise their profession, are in tremendous demand, and will have an untold influence. But men who take a faint interest in religion are at a discount, and no amount of bonhomie will make their ministrations pass current. Life here is too strenuous to admit of trifling, and the teacher must have a definite message. The shibboleths of party become uninteresting in face of the life problems presented.* Are there no gallant souls called of God to win this land for His Christ and the Church? " He concludes by quoting his Bishop as saying " that he considered the Mission as one of the most important works of the Diocese, as we have no other aggressive work for seizing new openings."

The climate of the Low Veld, through which their journey took them, is even now proverbially bad, and at that time malaria was rampant. This probably accounts for an experience of Mr. de Rougemont's, surely unique in his life. Arrived at a certain station, he finds nearly everyone down with fever. A well-known Irish storekeeper kindly takes him in hand, and finds a few people able to come to his service. Failing a better place, this was held in the bar of the so-called "hotel." All went well till the padre was well launched into his sermon. Then the storekeeper, standing at the back with a whisky-and-soda in his

* It is noteworthy, in this connection, that the Mission has welcomed on its staff men of all shades of Churchmanship—S.P.G., Colonial and Continental Society, etc.

hand, politely interrupted him with, "Excuse me, your Riverence, but don't you think it's about time you had a drink?" It was well meant. The Low Veld did not understand anyone working so long without one!

It was some years after, in this same district, that one of the few South African born Chaplains was sent to look up the construction works, where a branch line was being made. It meant walking. "I left Belfast about nine on the Monday morning. Every few miles one met a few men at work; that meant a few minutes stop and a talk, and a cigarette and tea. About dusk I reached the first village. . . . I found a farm, and was very kindly welcomed. An English 'Predicant' who could speak Dutch—better still, who was himself an Afrikaner—was something quite novel. I hope they didn't think me greedy, but when you have walked twenty-five miles and only had a cup of tea since your early breakfast, you cannot be blamed if you do full justice to the supper. . . . When the cloth was cleared the books came on; then, 'Would Domine please lead the devotions?' These consisted of Bible reading, a metrical psalm, and extempore prayer. This is the daily 'Family Prayers' in a Dutch house; one fears 'Family Prayers' in 'Church' houses are almost unknown.

"Next morning I was off again. This proved a day of adventure. The roads got worse and worse, and at last I had to take off shoes and socks and wade through mud and water for an hour or more. About sundown I struck a bridge construction gang. This was the last camp, so I left the line and began a hunt

for a farm for the night. The river winds somewhat just here, and I had to cross it three times in less than a quarter of a mile. It meant stripping each time. At the last crossing the current was strong and the river deep, so I had to put my clothes in a knapsack on my head, holding them with one hand, and but for my stick I think I should have been washed off my feet. . . . The farm never materialised, but at eleven I saw a light and found myself at a Kaffir hut. The Natives were very kind, but much amused at the idea of a lost cleric. They hurriedly prepared some mealie meal porridge and made some coffee. Since breakfast I had had only two cups of milk, and these at noon, so you can imagine what an excellent meal I made. After the meal we all sat round the hut smoking, and had an 'indaba'—*i.e.*, a talk. Then they made me up a bed of blankets, and I slept till the house was a-stirring at 5.30, when, after coffee, I walked into Lydenburg, and the great walk was over.

"I think it was only my clerical collar which got me admission to the hotel. I had walked right through boots and socks, and had to buy new boots, socks and a clean shirt. After a bath . . . I walked into the dining-room—and ate! I wonder the management didn't double the charge. 'Well,' you say, 'what good did it do? You held no service or anything of that kind.' No, but it showed them that they were not forgotten by the Church; it brought them into contact, if only for a few minutes, with the 'sky-pilot,' and perhaps it made some of them think more respectfully of religion."

This was proved by the fact that a few weeks later

the padre was asked by one of the men he had then met to go out to their camp for a few days ! " I told the chaps there was a sky-pilot I wanted them to meet, and if you will come we will get up an ' indaba ' in our big mess tent."

Mr. Gore Browne and Mr. de Rougemont were both, more or less, birds of passage, and the work in the Transvaal passed at the end of 1903 under the direction of the Rev. Harry Ellison, commonly known as " H. B.," a younger brother of the Head, who had arrived during the war. He describes himself as " single handed at present in charge of at least six Railway lines of various lengths, let alone construction works, and with all those places and people along them to minister to which are not touched by existing parochial machinery. This was our original charter in the Grahamstown Diocese, but the responsibility laid on the Mission up here is considerably increased by two facts : one, that many places on the line in this Diocese are as yet outside any parochial *boundary* even, and this includes places with a growing population of some 600 or 700 whites ; the other, that all along the line fresh townships are springing up, which, in their initial stage, will be entirely dependent on the Railway Mission."

Similarly, it was a noted fact that when, about this time, the Dutch Reformed Church started a Railway Mission, staffed at first by a single young layman, he was backed by a standing committee of their Synod, which issued an annual appeal for the work to every Dutch Reformed Congregation in the country.

A headquarters at Johannesburg—two rooms above

the Public Library—and the arrival of Mr. Forshaw and Mr. Gladwyn Batty made it possible to do some central organising of local help. The ladies under Lady Lawley, the Governor's wife, formed a committee in Pretoria, for the raising of money, on which every department of the town's life was represented. The Loyal Women's Guild, now known as the Victoria League, organized the collection and distribution of papers and magazines and books along the lines in the Transvaal, this being only made possible by the offer of the Railway authorities to carry parcels gratis once a month to every small station and scattered house.

The need of priests was more urgent than ever ; also of buildings. The latter need was temporarily met by one of those ventures of faith which, throughout, the Mission has so often had to make. The break-up of the big military camp and hospital at Naauwpoort put many huts on the market. The Mission bought enough of them to make into six temporary churches, and also a house for Josiah to replace his present one, " a wonderful construction of matting, tarpaulin and the like." Three of those embryo churches went up to the Transvaal, one of them, furniture and all, being the gift of the Winstanley Guild, the girls of a boarding-school in London. Writing from the Transvaal, Mr. Batty, temporarily in charge, says : " We up here scarcely know whether we are standing on our heads or our heels, from the fact that it is simply raining portable buildings ! I keep on receiving advice notes from the Railway authorities telling of these buildings from Naauwpoort having arrived at their various destinations."

At the Mission's first public meeting in Johannesburg in 1904 an appeal was made for a permanent headquarters, something better than these rooms above the Library, which only admitted of haphazard restaurant meals. A house was subsequently found at 18 Ameshoff Street, to be succeeded in later years by one in Auckland Park.

In a vigorous speech by Archdeacon Furse, then beginning his seventeen years' work in the Diocese, he complained that, as it were, the Mission undersold the market and worked for too little, the wage only of a good Kaffir. For the first time, one of the Railway chiefs, Mr. Benson Wall, appeared on a Mission platform. Referring to the possible amalgamation of the South African Railways, he thought it might prove a first step towards the federation of the country. Meanwhile the Mission had anticipated them, and had already federated the railways under their Chaplain-General, Mr. Douglas Ellison. Some time later there was a drawing-room meeting at Lord Selborne's house, when Sir Thomas Price got up uninvited and asked to say a few words: "I am a Baptist," he said, "and I do not suppose that I should always agree with everything that Mr. Ellison and his fellow-workers teach; but this afternoon I am not concerned with theology, but am speaking as a business man who is General Manager of the Central South African Railways, and I wish to say that the Administration of the Railways gives every help it can to the Railway Mission, because it is convinced that the work of that Mission tends to make our employés more useful workers and more valuable members of the community."

The probably inevitable "slump" which followed the war boom was a big handicap to everybody and every cause, whether in Church, in State, or in business. We find Lord Milner, the High Commissioner, at another meeting, some six months later, explaining the situation as it affected the community generally: "We are here at the very beginning of the organization which is necessary for a civilised community. We started almost with nothing in the veld, and we are called upon to do almost everything at once, with means that are no doubt considerable, but not considerable enough to accomplish in two or three years the work which in other States—older Communities—has taken as many decades."

Speaking of the Railway Mission, he said: "I feel about all Missions to small scattered Communities of our own race, or even scattered individuals, that it requires more rather than less enthusiasm to do that kind of work than it does to carry on religious work in great central Communities. It requires very rare men, and obviously it is very difficult to provide even a small number of men of the stamp that you require. Even if the men were available, they cannot live without means, and work of this kind is, from the merely material point of view, very costly. . . . I believe there is nothing more calculated to keep people, living in solitary homes far away in the veld, in touch with all the higher influences by which we are constantly surrounded than the efforts of a Mission like this."

Speaking a year or two later at a Church Extension Meeting in Johannesburg, Lord Selborne, who had

succeeded Lord Milner, spoke words which are as true to-day as when spoken: "What about the soul of our nation? Do you think we would have done what we have done, or become what we are in the world, if it were not for the soul of the nation? It is the soul of our nation that has made the English name, the Scotch name, the Irish name; and it is only through the soul of the South African people that the South African name will be made. Therefore, I tell you you want more clergy here to nourish this national soul."

It is probably impossible to exaggerate what it meant to the South African Church in its heroic efforts to keep pace with the material organization developing on such a vast scale, to have had at the head of the State in those first few years after the war such men as Lord Milner and Lord Selborne.

The long-expected new coach had now been given to the Mission by the Railway authorities for the work in the Transvaal. As "21660," it became as well known along the line as was the old "404," which gave its life for King and Country. Its size necessitated a Native boy being attached to it when in use. He kept it clean and did the cooking, or tried to. Between them, he and the Chaplain sometimes got a bit mixed over that. "My best achievement during the trip," writes Mr. Rogers, "was to make tea with some water a Native boy had brought to wash the coach with. It looked beautifully clean. . . ." On inquiry, after tasting, it was found to contain a liberal dose of Jeyes' Fluid.

The Mission of Help, this same year, was a fine spiritual tonic both to the staff and to its scattered

flocks. Three English Bishops of later years had the doubtful pleasure, as priests, of living for a few days in a Railway Mission coach.

One of them, the late Bishop Gurdon, thus describes his personal experience when hooked on to the end of a train :

“ Here it was so shaky and jiggly that you had to be very careful and do no cooking when you were going downhill, else your dinner was suddenly jerked off the stove on to your feet ; so you learnt to do your cooking hastily while going uphill ! . . . I was awakened from my slumbers one night in the Transvaal coach by a set of ‘ H. B.’s ’ cricket stumps descending on my head from the rack, which I had eyed suspiciously, as it was stuffed to the top with every conceivable thing. . . . At one station where I was told to hold a service I asked which room it would be in, and was told the refreshment-room, but that it must not be when the train came in, as all the passengers turned out for a meal when they arrived. I asked when the train was due ; they said it was due at seven, but they would signal up the line and ask. They did so, and were told the train was two hours late. So we held the service at once, but in the middle of the sermon a distant whistle was heard. I at once set to work with the men to put the room to rights, and when the train arrived none of the passengers guessed what had been taking place only two minutes before, and the railway employees thought all the better of a parson who could stop his sermon. Though to me it was a delightful picnic, yet it was not nice always to find a frog in your plate, or always to live in a hot, jolty coach

with flies and dust. The workers out there have a very hard time, and more men must go out to help them. . . . I cannot understand how young Englishmen who have the sporting instinct so strong in them can resist going out to help a bit of work like this."

Such witness helped. A few such men "with a sporting instinct on their spiritual side," as another friend put it, continued to offer themselves, making further extensions possible. It was not, however, always easy for the Mission to protect its men from the advance made by vacant parishes, which found it easier to snap up a good man on the spot than to face the trouble of searching for, and perhaps importing, a fresh parish priest of their own.

The Head was now under medical orders to restrict the constant travelling which he had done for twelve years. The "outer man" was beginning to strike. But from Bishopsbourne Cottage he could still direct operations and welcome the tired men as they returned home.

Mother Cecile and the Bishop of Grahamstown had meanwhile persuaded him to act as Warden to her big and ever-growing family of Sisters, Students, and Orphans at St. Peter's Home—a bit of work which he loved and found it difficult to refuse, and which he was now able to do without hurt to his other claims.

CHAPTER V

THE BLAZING OF THE NORTHWARD TRAIL

THE great brooding spirit of Cecil Rhodes seems still to live and work for the land he loved. But it was of the far north that the final vision had been shown him. A Cape to Cairo Railway was part of that vision.

After the Matabele War he had appealed to his old friend, Archdeacon Gaul, of Kimberley, to come and help him up there. "You will save me £500 a year in police," was his flattering estimate of the Archdeacon's influence. The appeal was answered in 1895, when William Gaul was made second Bishop of Mashonaland. The two men were real friends and understood each other. They respected each other's aims to a degree which made them indeed a partnership for good in that land of "great spaces washed with sun." It is due to Cecil Rhodes that the religious education of Rhodesia is so carefully safe-guarded. As the son of an English Rector, he knew what that stood for; and his Bishop took care that he should not forget it.

But what was it like up there in these early days? Cecil Rhodes himself, like Moses of old, was never to cross the Jordan—in this case the Zambezi—into his Land of Promise. There was no railway, and there were no roads worth speaking of beyond Bulawayo. The Victoria Falls were a far-off goal—with Con-

struction Camps and a few gold-miners pushing their way towards them.

In 1903 came Bishop Gaul's appeal to the Railway Mission to supplement work already begun, in as rough and adventurous a bit of pioneering as has ever been given to the Church of England to do. The man sent to Bishop Gaul—and it proved a well-justified choice—was the Rev. H. P. Hale, newly arrived from a curacy at Bakewell. In the nature of things much of his experience was unique. It has been shared, though, in varying degrees by others who followed after and forged their way right up and into Belgian Congo-land.

No apology, then, is needed for quoting, at some length, his own account of his work, as contained in a Paper read before the Missionary Guild at Brisbane Cathedral in 1911. It may be taken as roughly typical of what the Church's "voor-trekkers" should reckon with before hazarding their fortunes beyond the borders of the familiar rut.

Writing a year or so later, the venture is described by the Head of the Mission as the one "round which centres most of the heroism and romance of our common work." To which Mr. Hale retorts: "When men dare the fever, etc., for the gold that perishes and gain no character for heroism, why should one who dares for that which is without price and eternal gain such a character?"

In the following testimony, borne by the Bishop of Northern Rhodesia at the Mission's Annual Meeting in London in 1927, he puts his finger on the real difference between the two: "In reading his—the Missioner's

—reports, you need be on your guard against the temptation to think that his work is all light and easy. On the contrary, there is no harder—I was going to say more heroic—task than that of the Railway Missioner. He has many difficulties and none of the helps that priests have at home. . . . In face of these tremendous difficulties he has to be a man of God, moving up and down the line among people who have none of the ordinary helps, and by his very presence take the place of those influences for good which in a more settled country help to purify and uplift. There is no priest in the whole Catholic Church who has a more uphill task than the Railway Chaplain."

If this is the case to-day, we can visualise better what it meant in those early days five-and-twenty years ago.

MR. HALE'S NARRATIVE

"I cannot better sum up, shortly, the position of the Railway Mission in the organization of the Church than in the words of my old Bishop in a letter of welcome to me when I first arrived in Rhodesia: 'The Railway Mission I look upon as our Pioneer Force, *Corps d'observation*, Scouts and Intelligence Officers, etc.'

"I arrived in South Africa in November, 1903, and my sphere of operations was defined as from Mafeking northwards indefinitely. As a matter of fact, I wandered, or sprawled, over a length of line some 1,200 miles long, 800 miles of which were on the so-called Cape to Cairo Railway. Five hundred miles of this section lay between Mafeking and Bulawayo, 300 miles

between Bulawayo and the Victoria Falls, 300 between Bulawayo and Salisbury, with the odd 100 miles on a branch line into the Gwanda District. I have always claimed, without much danger of contradiction, that I had the largest parish in the world. It spread into four distinct countries: Cape Colony, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, South Rhodesia, and finally North-West Rhodesia, countries having an area of some 750,000 square miles. As the Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge said to me: 'You obviously measure your parish, not by square miles, but by degrees of longitude and latitude.' He had met me on the Sunday in Bulawayo, on the Tuesday at Malindi, nearly 200 miles north-west of that place, and later in the week I said good-bye to him as our trains crossed at Kalikani Siding, 400 miles south.

"My work lay, principally, among railway men—among the gangers, stationmasters, and pumpers; among storekeepers, Government officials, and policemen. I had also much work with men on gold-mines. Wherever, in fact, I could manage to minister within forty miles of the line, there, as opportunity served, I wended my way. Let me take you in thought over part at any rate of my district, starting from Mafeking North. At eight to ten-mile intervals we meet lonely gangers' cottages. There the gangers live—sometimes married, mostly single; but each responsible for an eight or ten-mile stretch of the permanent way. Their children, if any, I try to persuade them to send to the Church Railway School at Plumtree, more than 400 miles north of Mafeking and sixty south of Bulawayo. Their spiritual needs, such as Baptism and

Holy Communion, I learn by accompanying the Pay Train, as it passes month by month over the length and breadth of the railway system, distributing stores and paying the wages of every employee as it meets him on his work. Having discovered these needs, opportunity must be engineered to meet them. To find that opportunity may involve 600 or 700 miles travelling to take a single baptism. It may mean getting off in the dark hours of the night at a lonely siding, in the bitter cold of winter, the wrapping of one's freezing limbs in the blankets which were invariably carried, and lying in the frost-bitten atmosphere until the morning breaks and the ganger arrives with his trolley to take me to his cottage—ten, fifteen miles or so away.

“They are a lonely and mixed crowd of men, these gangers, drawn from every class of society. One is an old Carthusian, another is the son of a baronet; this man is an ex-solicitor; and that is an architect down on his luck, squeezed out of Capetown by bad times, tiding over his family by the first honest work he can get, and far away from the gaping criticism of his acquaintances, who knew who and what he is. The architect went out one morning and was carried home with broken limbs. His trolley load had pitched forward, the trolley had jammed and he was crushed beneath it. For weeks he lay awaiting amputation of the leg. It was a grim choice he had to make, mortification or heart failure under chloroform, with but a hundred-to-one chance of life to make him reach a decision. He died, and all I could do was to beg a free pass for widow and orphans to Capetown and find some money for their use by the way.

“The ‘journeyings often’ of my work were not always a bed of roses. One night, for example, I found myself bound 200 miles along the Victoria Falls line to take a wedding on the ‘Long Straight,’ a remorselessly straight bit of line, seventy miles in length. We were packed in a box truck in a freight train. There were twelve of us, all told, including two semi-drunks, one malodorous Native, a dog and two kittens. The floor slats bit into the ribs when sleep was essayed, and it was trying to be periodically awakened by my drunken companions and assured that they were fond of kittens, was I? Ten hours of monotonous trolleying followed close upon this, under a tropical sun, reflected upwards into the eyes by the white, glaring sand. At night I held a service in the Permanent Inspector’s house. Later on, I boarded a train again for another 200 miles, travelling this time in the guard’s van, trying to gather some sleep, with my body curled round the handbrake upright, my travelling companion in another corner shivering and bathed in perspiration as he fought out an attack of malaria.

“It was dangerous to postpone any of these arranged-for visits. On one occasion I had promised to stop over and baptize the infant of a Cape boy. By no fault of mine, I am thankful to say, the arrangement fell through, and I promised to administer the Sacrament on my next trip down that way, eight or ten weeks hence. I accordingly dropped off the train one morning early at the nearest siding, and inquired the distance to the cottage. But that very night the ganger had taken his babe, rigid with convulsions, twenty miles by trolley, into Wankie; taken it with the cold fear in his

heart, only too justified, that it was even then a corpse that he carried.

“Perhaps the most trying, physically, of my experiences in this work, because it was a continual experience, was the irregularity of the meals. One day, breakfast must be at 4 or 5 a.m. The next I must wait until 11. There was a deadly sameness in the meals at the railway refreshment-rooms. I still have a feeling of nausea at the thoughts of the everlasting goat-meat, and sago pudding made with water, or, at best, with condensed milk. On some sections I was forced to carry my own ‘scoff.’ It usually worked out at bread and butter (tinned and of oily consistency) and cheese. The fare palled upon me after three or four consecutive meals. The transition from feast to fast was often sharp and swift. One day I would share the frugal dinner of an unmarried ganger—tough mealie scones and bully beef. The next I would fare sumptuously with a Civil Commissioner, or even with His Excellency the High Commissioner of South Africa himself. It was all in the day’s march. There comes to mind a supper with a little Polish Jew storekeeper, none too clean, but hospitable withal. The room was a corner of his dusty ‘kaffir truck’—lumbered store. The light was a single candle, stuck in an empty tin. The table was a packing-case, the seats were boxes. Tea was made in a kerosene tin, and ladled out in battered and chipped enamelled mugs, saucerless. Tinned mutton (we helped ourselves with our own knife and fork from the tin) and sour Boer bread were the solid elements of the meal. We scraped our plates with bread and paper in preparation for the ‘sweets’ course—tinned pears. This last

was an unwarrantable extravagance, and I am sure the little man went without sugar for a week to reimburse himself for his generous outburst. But enough, he gave me of his best.

“The hospitality of my hosts was often larger-hearted than their accommodation was extensive. I was welcome to share the sleeping quarters of a storekeeper, 9 feet by 9 feet, occupied by himself and his brother, and containing two stretchers. The storekeeper politely gave up his bed to the ‘padre’ and slept on the much limited floor space between the two beds. I was welcome in another place to spread my blankets in a ganger’s storeroom, the only available spot, and lie curled up like the letter Z among the provisions, crocks, and boxes.

“My toilet under such like conditions was accomplished in the open air. This was no manner of hardship, save when, at 5 or 6 o’clock on a winter’s morning, my naked body became pinched and blued in a frosted atmosphere and biting wind, or when my innate modesty blushed to carry on these toilet operations before a staring and apparently admiring crowd of Native women, who were thus early trading at my host’s store.

“Train travel, on the whole, was safe and uneventful. Big railway disasters were, at most, remote possibilities on lines with only one or two trains a week. Our chief excitement was to jump the rails, or to tumble through a washed-out culvert or bridge. One morning I started south from Bulawayo on the Matopos branch line. We were speeding along merrily, at double the permissible rate, when suddenly and without warning of any sort

the passengers (three in number) were thrown headlong from one end of the carriage to the other. We picked ourselves up uncertainly, felt our limbs gingerly, gathered our wits, and looked carefully out. An alarming and disturbing sight met our eyes. The engine was out on the veld, standing on its head, amid a blinding smother of steam. It had run into a trolley, jammed it on a small culvert, and pitched head foremost down the embankment. The guard was shouting for help. He told us the driver was buried under the coal of the tender. We got him out, loosened his clothes, and laid his limp body on the ground. Then one of my companions rode on to the next siding, three or four miles away, hoping to get through on a phonopore and summon help from Bulawayo. I, to make sure, cycled back to Bulawayo, eleven or twelve miles along rough Kaffir tracks. It was a grilling ride, and proved a labour in vain. The doctor and a breakdown van were starting out as I arrived. The poor driver died two days later. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. We passengers escaped lightly with shaken nerves, and were not even subpoenaed to give evidence at the inquiry. Such an occurrence was too ordinary to need searching inquiry.

“Sleeping on the train was something of a lottery. The Manager of the Globe and Phœnix Mine boarded the train at Sevakwe. He had in charge the month’s tally of gold, some 2,000 ounces. Whilst he sought a dinner at Gwelo he left me to guard his treasure, and had armed me with a formidable six-chambered revolver. He had been shadowed previously and was prepared. I was reading Henry Kingsley’s ‘Geoffrey

Hamlyn,' and had laid the story down where bush-rangers were about to make an attack upon a station. We turned in. An hour later our compartment was boisterously entered by a wild-eyed man who, making a hurried search, hurled lurid language at our heads. He had only lost the number of his compartment, being drunk. We got to sleep again. A terrific smash and a shower of broken glass. Our manager, in an uneasy slumber, had kicked the window glass to atoms. It was harmless, but it settled on the nerves. There was no more sleep.

"Not that a night in our little Railway Coach offered rest and quiet. I did not often occupy it, but during shunting operations it kicked like a horse. I have found myself out of my bunk, and over-run with the all-infesting cockroaches. I always sought, for sleeping purposes, an ordinary compartment on the train, but when I was travelling on a goods train I had no alternative.

"It was my good fortune to escape malaria in any serious form. On some sections it was nothing accounted of, for abundance. That from Wankie to the Victoria Falls, deadly in Livingstone's day, was as deadly in the day of the railway contractors. A dead man under every sleeper was a gruesome, perhaps a little too highly coloured, description. Alas! it was suggestive of a terrible truth. But with better housing, more settled conditions of life, fresh meat and vegetables, malaria tends to disappear. Places once barred as fever nurseries are now almost sanatoria.

"Weddings on the line were by no means infrequent. Wonderful was the varying value put upon my ser-

vices. In some cases I had to reduce drastically the fee they tendered. 'Your need is greater than mine,' I would say. On the other hand, I travelled 400 miles to marry a man who grudged the ten shillings I suggested as a reasonable fee, because he discovered had he gone ten miles to Gaberones he could have been married by the Assistant Commissioner there for two shillings and sixpence.

"The greatest ordeal to me of these line weddings was the subsequent feasting and all-night dancing. I could not avoid them, and I think my presence always kept the drinking within bounds. The festivities of these railwaymen had often a grim side to it. They feasted sometimes, with death not very far away. One man, who had won my astonished admiration for his gastronomic powers at such a wedding, I met the following week being carried on a stretcher to the Bulawayo Hospital, at death's door from the dreaded blackwater fever.

"A coloured couple, the woman dressed in strict accordance with the white woman's custom, orange blossoms, etc., I married with anger in my heart. They had come into the siding, and the only place the white people there would grant me to marry a 'black' man in was an empty storeroom. There I joined them, in God's name and with His blessing, with only a cask of cement for an altar, and a carpet of thick dust to kneel on. Man's cruelty to his fellow, how great can it be, and yet again at times how great his kindness! Here is another scene. A poor Boer woman, a 'by-woner,' travelling from Pretoria in the Transvaal to Victoria in Mashonaland, 1,500 miles by train, 100

miles by coach, is carrying her three months' old baby. She is too poor to purchase nourishing food for herself or milk for her sickly child. So he fails; is seen by the Government doctor at Gaberones, who can do little; dies near Francistown (300 miles north) and is carried on to Plumtree, where I am requisitioned by the guard, as I go down to join the train, to bury the little body. With the assistance of the B.S.A. policeman stationed there I procure some kind of a box from the local store, cover it decently with white linen, cut a cross of blue ditto, and tack it on the lid. Meanwhile the two lady teachers at the school prepare the little body for burial, and every member of the community rolls up for the committal; the body is carried to its last resting-place by four of the schoolgirls. Then the hat goes round, and from that little community, a struggling one, a handsome sum is at once collected to help onwards the poor stranger who has come so strangely and so sadly among them.

“The exigencies of the work compelled me at times to play strange parts. A newly married ganger left his young bride one morning at 6 o'clock, waving a farewell as his trolley moved down the line. Again a displaced load; again a jammed trolley, and a mutilated corpse rescued from the wreckage. I am passing that way, and am 'inspanned' to take the funeral. I and the local engineer accompany the widow on a trolley back to her house, the coffin having preceded us on another trolley. We arrive before anything has been done to place the body in the coffin, and the poor woman at the sight of her dead husband goes into hysterics. The engineer sickens at contact with the

mangled remains and goes to look after the distraught widow. I am left to prepare the body and to place it in the coffin with the aid of a Native ; and, finally, to wash the bloodstained face so that the widow might not see it for the last time in all its horror. Then I screw the coffin lid down, and we carry it out to the back of the house, and there, some couple of hundred yards away on the veld, bury all that remains of a young man who went forth but a few hours before rejoicing in his strength, and at the beginning of a wedded life. Alas ! there are few ganger's houses, on some sections of the line, that have not their little mound away at the back, a silent witness to one who has passed away, in many cases unknown both as to his past or as to his relatives and friends. How often have I been asked to offer up a dedicatory prayer over the grave of someone who had died and been buried without any service or prayer save the stuttering sentences of lips all unused to make them. An impression seems to hold that they would lie happier and more peacefully thus commended to God's care. Man flies to religion, if at no other time, at least in the hour of his great needs.

“ But perhaps what stirred my soul most on account of their solemnity were the Communion brought to a few, all too few, of these dwellers in loneliness. Over the quiet service in the little room or hut brooded a mighty Presence, realised more rarely in a larger House of God. Some deep religious feeling had kept alive an intense desire to meet their Saviour thus in Communion, and He was present in very deed. What saints and soldiers of the Master were some of those

people I ministered to under these circumstances! There was no public opinion to keep them straight. Only the love of God was their inspiration, and His grace their strength. I recall my Churchwarden at Francistown, now beyond the veil, but not before he had mightily influenced for good the little Community around. There were those three Welshmen and an Englishman, my only communicants at Wankie, the leader of whom broke down all contempt and enmity and, keeping himself unspotted from the besetting sins of the place, gained the respect of bad and good alike. So I might continue had I time.

“I saw enough, too, to reveal to me how much their religion meant to the Native Christians. I knew one who had travelled some 200 miles each way, and that not by rail, to make his Easter Communion. Another man who confessed to me a grievous sin and whom I had forbidden Holy Communion until he had made certain reparations, a reparation he could not make for two or three months, besought me again and again, with tears, to give him the Holy Communion to strengthen him against temptation during the long journey he was making.

“At intervals of forty or sixty miles along the line there were communities carrying some twenty or thirty souls all told. At such places I and my lay-reader would hold services at as regular intervals as possible. Generally, the whole community would turn up, if they could. The service, at any rate, broke the dull monotony, and was an event in a rather dull life. Very notable and strange were some of those who turned up. At Lobatsi, on one occasion, a white Native trader

came to the service. Once and once only in every two years he would come in from his store in the midst of the Kalahari Desert, the Great Thirst Land. His object was to replenish his supplies of 'kaffir truck.' Yet civilisation, weak dilution though it was at Lobatsi, palled upon him in a few days, and a fortnight was the limit ere he sped back to his loneliest of all lonely huts near Lahututu, 150 or 200 miles west. There he would see a mounted policeman once or twice a year, and for the rest a few Bushmen to spend their money or barter their corn at his store.

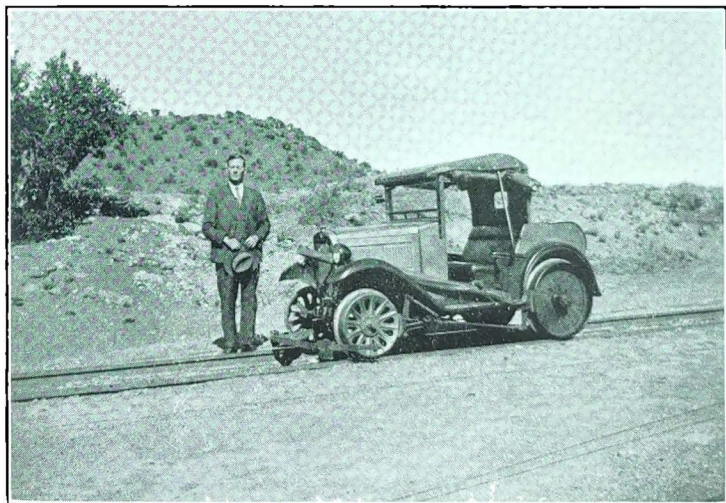
"A mean exterior sometimes hid a heart of steel. I wormed the story out of her, for she had no desire to tell it herself. She was a poor Dutch woman, almost transparently thin, with a half-starved look about her, and attired in a faded rusty, black dress. She lived with her husband on the Gwaai River, twenty miles north of Malindi, where I was holding service. I should rather say they existed there, for the struggle for existence was hard and uncertain, 200 miles from any market. One night, grunting sounds were heard outside their living hut, and the husband, taking his rifle, stepped out into the darkness, hoping to get a shot at a wild pig, no mean addition to the larder of people living for the greater part on Kaffir mealies. Almost on the threshold a lioness sprang on him and hurled him to the ground. He cried for help, and the frail wisp of a wife responded without hesitation to the call. Seizing another gun, but unable to find any cartridges, she rushed out into the night. Guided by the cries and by two vicious eyes glaring in the light from the open hut door, she clubbed her rifle, and fell,

with the fury of love in despair, upon the lioness. Fortunately for the woman and her husband the lioness proved to be so emaciated by hunger and old age that she had spent all her strength in the spring upon the man. Thus exhausted, she allowed herself to be driven off her prey, and before recovery of strength could be made for another attack, the husband, scrambling to his feet and seizing his gun, shot her dead. I tried to probe the woman's feelings at the time, but she would own to nothing save a momentary excitement. Such incidents were all in the day's work, to be passed back and dismissed the memory.

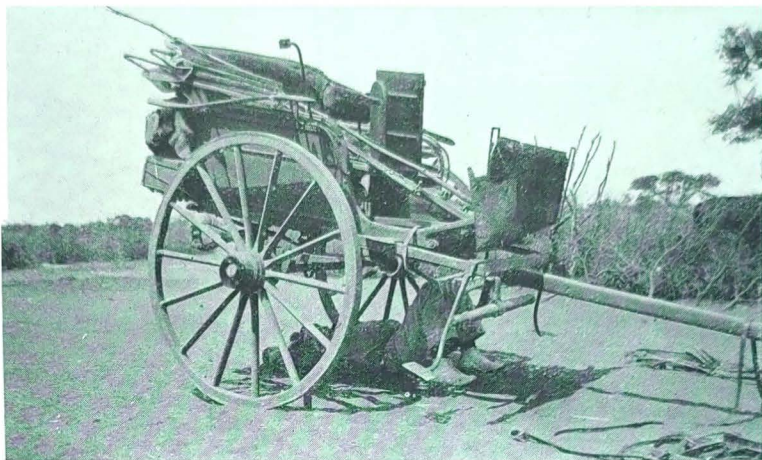
“Thirty-five to forty miles west of Palapye Road was the great stadt, or town, of Khama, paramount chief of the strong Bamangwato tribe. The road to Serowe, as the town was called, ran over a great plain of sand, thickly sprinkled with thorn bushes, a fringe of the Kalahari Desert. I have done that trip at every time of day and night. Sometimes by moonlight in the bitter night air; sometimes by day in the blazing vertical sun; once I faced it in a sandstorm, which smothered me internally and externally with sand. But it was never a way of joy. Yet I always looked forward to my visit. To see this great town of innumerable huts, housing some 25,000 to 30,000 souls, as for the first time it burst upon the view, coming through the kloof in the hill, was a sight never to be forgotten. It always brought to my mind what the serried tents of Israel must have looked to Balaam as Balak bade him curse the Jews. Native life was to be seen there in much of its primitive simplicity. The naked piccanins, the ubiquitous goat, the jumble of dwelling hut



REV. H. P. HALE TROLLEYING WITH INSPECTOR
AND WIFE (1903)



PERMANENT WAY INSPECTOR HAYTER AND HIS MODERN TROLLEY:
i.e., an Austin Seven motor fitted to a railway chassis



THE ONLY BIT OF SHADE

Facing p. 81

and cattle kraal, cheek by jowl, the never-ceasing procession of women, jar poised gracefully on the head, going for water to the 'pits,' were of never-ending interest to me. It was indeed a great privilege to come into touch with King Khama at Serowe. He was an ideal Christian gentleman, and one could only regret that the Church of England had not had the honour of numbering him among her converts. There are no Church Missions in the Protectorate. Practically the whole Native Mission work is done by the London Missionary Society, and they have the names of such men as Dr. Moffat and Dr. Livingstone on their scroll of fame.

"My work there was with the white traders, some fifty or sixty in number. They had built a really fine little stone church, which stood there for any minister of any denomination who might happen along. I was the only one who responded to that invitation. As a matter of fact, I was the only minister of any denomination working among the white people of the Protectorate at that time. A strong muster always rewarded my efforts to get to Serowe, and a few communicants valued the opportunity of making their Communion.

"Farther north was the town of Francistown, where my largest and most organized congregation was. It was the centre of that strange little buffer district between the fierce Matabele and the Bamangwato, a Mesopotamia, embraced by the Shashi and Ramaquabane Rivers. The Tati district, as it is called, is a Concession, and that fact made my section of the railway run through five distinct kinds of Government.

"Sixty miles north of Francistown lay Plumtree, where

a Church Railway School was at work. It drew its pupils from places as much as 1,000 miles apart. I was Chaplain and Vice-Chairman of the Governing Committee, consisting of Church and Railway Representatives. A boarding-school, as it was forced to be, its dormitories were round huts, built Native fashion with 'daga' (ant-heap mud) and grass thatched roofs. Here and at Francistown were my only permanent church buildings.

" Elsewhere, I held service when and where I could—in court houses, dining-rooms, public bars, verandahs, in mud and grass huts. These places had their disadvantages; snakes made an unwelcome intrusion during the service, scorpions crawled solemnly in, tarantulas scurried up and around the walls, whilst on verandahs the insect life at times proved so irresistible as to put out the light and send us ignominiously inside. Nor were we free from human interruption. I have had to persuade six half-drunken men to clear out of the dining-room before I could have my service. At another place several drunken men took possession of the dining-room and acted a parody on the service so soon to be held. Their performance, obscene and blasphemous, so sickened many of my would-be congregation that they had no heart left for anything solemn, and the attendance consequently suffered severely.

" The pulpit was not necessarily the parson's fortress, sacrosanct and inviolate. At the Geelong Mine a drunken man wanted to argue the truth of the Resurrection during the sermon, and lit his pipe to help him in his argument. At Hartley a man followed me into

the Magistrate's Office, where I was wont to change my surplice, and challenged me to say whether I had been preaching the sermon at him. Something in it had hit him hard. On the Giant Mine, in the same district, a man solemnly rose at the end of the sermon and in all sincerity propounded this conundrum: 'What would you do, sir, if you had to work every day and always with a lot of Blantyre niggers?' Evidently he thought I should do even as he did—to wit, heave brickbats at them. Another man precipitated himself in a semi-drunken condition full length on the floor between me and my congregation; however, he made most honourable amends the following morning by going round to every member of the congregation and apologising. Sometimes the zeal of my flock to provide me with a good congregation outran their discretion. I noticed at Gwanda, on one occasion, that all the Jewish storekeepers were lined up in the congregation against the back wall. On inquiry I learnt that the Christian male members had roped them in, much against their wills, so as to give the 'padre' a good show. The same people, on another occasion, deserted me *en masse* a few minutes before the service to see a dog fight which was being waged around the corner. They came back when it was finished. Maybe something of a penitent's cry sounded in the words of that hotel keeper in one district, whose drunken carouse with two boon companions kept me awake one night, when, a day later, he said to me: 'I hate and despise myself when I see these piebalds (his children by Native women) running around here.'

"Holding service one Sunday evening at the Victoria

Falls Hotel, when one of the greatest lay pillars of the Church of England was present with his family, the electric light failed. It was generated from a very primitive installation at the Falls. Cutting short the psalm, I started a lesson, only to find that the two candles, my only remaining lights, were beginning to genuflect owing to the exceeding torrid heat. I was forced to extinguish one and help the remaining one to keep in an upright position with one hand while I held my book with the other. All this whilst I went on with the service.

“That remarkable man, my Diocesan, Bishop Gaul, had a theory that it was good to test the grit and initiative of any clergy or churchworker coming to his Diocese. Perhaps he was right, yet maybe at times the test was a little too severe. I would conclude my reminiscences with an account, which I once wrote for a magazine, of the first definite work he gave me to do. It may illustrate my meaning. The incidents of that journey stand out very clearly in my memory.

A Trip to the Victoria Falls, January, 1904.

“‘Go up to Livingstone and the Falls. Give them our Blessing and their Christmas Communion.’ Those were my Bishop’s orders. I heard them and went.

“We were a variegated lot, with many goals and divers destinations, as we gathered on the Bulawayo station platform one evening towards the end of 1903. All of us were bound for, or through, notorious Wankie—Wankie the hot and malarious, the centre of Livingstone’s Valley of Death, and railway-head for the nonce. Some would stop there, employees of the

one Rhodesian colliery, just being developed, to flirt with fever, blackwater and death, for the sake of big money. Some would go a little farther on, to wrestle with the mopani-clad, boulder-strewn, kopje-jumbled country, which had worried the railway contractors from Mbanji Tank to Wankie, and was to worry them until the rails dipped down and crossed the Matetsi River and climbed up to the sand plateau which, forest covered, stretched as far as the Zambezi and beyond. Some would cross the river, and bow to the unkind fate which doomed them to seek a livelihood at Livingstone Drift, whose *raison d'être* was forwarding merchandise to north, east and west in North-West Rhodesia; but where drink and fever too often ran a race to claim a victim first. Others, unsatisfied, pushed into the back of beyond, chasing 'will-o'-the-wisps'—to wit, possible copper mines—which glimmered and danced over the water-logged country embraced within a great river bend, the Hook of the Kafue River.

"To many it was a plunge into the great unknown; into a country peopled with lions, elephants and giraffes; along a line whose eccentricities had gripped the imagination of Rudyard Kipling. There was that previously mentioned seventy-two miles 'straight,' the world's third longest, which ran unswerving and immutable until it flung itself to twist and turn among the aforementioned M'Banji-Wankie country. Did not the veracious Bulawayo Press daily report lions 'skoffing' Native 'boys'; treeing lonely station-masters as they went to shift the siding points; elephants crossing and re-crossing the line from feeding

ground to drinking hole ; proud giraffes disdaining to stoop, and bringing swift damage to themselves and wreckage to the company's wires ? The schedule time over one short section, seventeen miles in length, was four full hours ; all too fast for that historic horse-box, which jumped the rails on every right-hand curve and left them twenty-three times in thirteen miles. Did not the train from Bulawayo, which I once waited for at Wankie, take a header through a washed-out culvert, killing three Natives, which, in popular judgment, did not matter, and breaking a white man's rib, which did ?

“ Yes, there was distinct promise of pleasurable excitement ahead. ‘ Well, good-bye. Good luck, pleasant journey. Hope you will come back alive. ’ We make for our compartments, stow away our ‘ impashla, ’ unroll our blankets and, as the night wears on, drop into an uneasy slumber in the heated, dust-laden atmosphere. A sharp report, a violent abrupt stoppage of the train, bring us back from the land of dreams and send our heads bobbing out of the windows. ‘ What's the matter ? ’ ‘ Lions, elephants, giraffes, washaways in front of us ? Which ? ’ No, only the driver and fireman going at best speed across the wooded veld in chase of a wounded duiker. Meanwhile the train, His Majesty's mails, and passengers, await their return ; the latter, like good sportsmen, uncomplainingly. And why complain ? There is a longer wait ahead. A few more miles and at early dawn we arrive at Lukosi, seventeen miles from Wankie. Journey practically over, we say, and congratulate ourselves. Not a bit of it. We must change our heavy engine here for a light one, and we must await that

light one's coming. Hour after hour passes and it still tarries. Stomach demands do not, and it is a hungry, thirsty crowd that prepares to spend another night aboard. But at dusk we cheer and forget our troubles as an engine forges its way into the siding. Four hours later we are in Wankie. A black pall of darkness mercifully hides the hideousness thereof.

"The place is warm, but the welcome warmer. Piloted up a kopje, we ravenously address a plenteous spread. We realise African insect life as never before. 'Hottentot gods' sit up all round us and say their prayers; flying ants drown themselves by whole battalions in our soup; and when our hosts, pitying our discomfiture, tells us that the 'norm' of things is for scorpions and tarantulas to run steeplechases up our chair, over our heads, and use our plates as water-jumps, there is no more heart left in us. We capitulate, with hunger only partially appeased. Afterwards comes the latest lion sensation. Our sleeping apartments lie on yonder kopje. The track thereto runs past a goat and cattle kraal. Only last night six piglings lay there, sleek, fat and ready to grace the Christmas board. A lion, starving and greatly daring, had sprung out of the darkness, and the piglings were no more. The doctor and another, vowing vengeance, were even then lying out in ambush near by, hoping and expecting the lion's return for another easy and toothsome meal.

"The tale ended and midnight passed, we were handed a lantern, lit by a farthing dip, given directions, and sent forth to tread that path. With a trembling, which none would own, least of all the 'padre' for

the credit of his cloth, we stepped out to face we knew not what. We passed the kraal, bid a feebly cheerful 'good-night' to the lion-watchers, plunged down into and across the vlei, up the kopje, and heaved a heartfelt sigh of relief as the door of the manager's house closed behind us.

"Wankie is no beauty spot and no sanatorium.* Twelve stationmasters invalided in six months is proof of that. As 'padre' I gathered the people together for service—the whole in the dining-room, the sick in a hospital ward. My sermon to the former was interrupted by two Natives, who fought vociferously in an adjoining kitchen. Pandemonium was let loose. But confusion worse confounded reigned when the manager got amongst those two with boot and sjambok. His arguments were forcibly effective. So were those of the 'boy' who knobkerried his opponent later on. But my discourse suffered.

"Eighty miles of road had now to be faced, and faced in Zeederberg's Mail Express, to wit, a Cape-cart drawn by 'trotting oxen.' Passage to the Falls, £12 fare, luggage extra. 'Proprietor is not responsible or liable for any injury to person through the colliding, capsizing, or breaking down of the vehicle or animals, or owing to any other cause, including the negligence, gross negligence, wilful act, default, or neglect of the proprietor's servants.' So ran my ticket. 'Walk or ride, but as you value your limbs or self-respect, avoid the coach.' So ran sound advice, tendered in all good faith and born of stern experience. But to walk eighty miles over unformed tracks and through burning sands

* This was in 1904.

or black soiled vleis! I could not face it, and every horse was dead or dying of horse sickness. Nothing was left but to pay out twelve honest sovereigns, and shoulder the privilege of being transported and tortured. Myself, the North-Western Rhodesia Christmas Mail, and £2,500 in specie to foot the Christmas bills, made up the freight. We started three days late, and we knew that beyond the river were those who waited and cursed the delay. That they might not wait too long for Homeland letters and for Christmas cash, we did those eighty miles in thirty-six hours, in half the scheduled time, and broke the record. Not without price of wear and tear. First, we blundered over boulders, myriad in number and diverse in size and shape; we glissaded down and in and up precipitous sprufts, lurching fearsomely at every angle and at every moment. My head played ping-pong with the Cape-cart's hood, and the box of specie played skittles with my legs. But we did not overturn; of that we boast and boasted. It was a 'padre' bruised to a pulp, indescribably filthy and tortured with a maddening thirst, who crossed the Matetsi River, and who was straightway plunged into forty miles of burning sand, to crawl monotonously in quivering heat, and sickened by the innumerable beetles, centipedes, and other insects, crushed at every yard by the wheels of our juggernaut.

"But all things have an end. The second night passed, and in the quickly coming daylight the driver cried, 'Look, baas, look!' Right ahead, some seven or eight miles distant, were rising five columns of spray, 1,500 to 2,000 feet in height. On top of these had

formed a mighty cloud. 'Mosioatunya,' the 'smoke that sounds,' there it was, the first sight of the Victoria Falls. A few miles farther and a deep boom struck the ear, the first sound. But Cape boys, mails, and specie wait for none of Nature's wonders. On we crept and groaned until, five miles above the Falls, we reached the broad Zambezi. Across the flood and drift, Livingstone Drift Township. That was our destination.

"A week or ten days, face to face with men sick, sickening or recovering of fever. That was my lot. In a mud hut lived a married man, with children who looked like death's heads, faces like wax, who started to shiver as you talked to them, stricken with the shakes. Close by a man was drinking himself to death from very fever fear. In the corrugated-iron store beyond lay a man gripped by drink and malaria and at death's door. Two days later I buried him. A weird and solemn sight was that funeral procession. A creaking cart drawn by two oxen; a rough deal coffin placed upon it; the whole community following, stripped to the shirt and with wide sombrero hats; so the *cortége* wound its way through the primeval bush until it reached the little tree-shadowed burial-ground on the river's brink. There we laid the tired body, to wait what time the veld gives up its dead. Next Sunday as I celebrated the Great Mystery, I myself paid toll to that torrid, steaming atmosphere; paid, indeed, lightly, but still I paid. A sudden faintness, and two days upon my back.

"But I should see the Falls, the mighty Falls. See them before the railway had intruded and the hordes

of tourists arrived, to whom money makes all things easy. I saw them with eighty miles of forbidding wilderness between them and the multitude. Nor will I dare to describe them. A yawning chasm in the ground, 400 feet deep, one mile and a quarter long, a few hundred feet wide, and into it a mighty river pouring its flood. Give play to your most riotous imagination and picture the whiteness of the boiling water over against the basalt blackness of the rock, the greenness of the vegetation, and the varied hues and rainbows, as sun strikes rising spray. You will yet fail altogether to visualize a hundredth part of what there is to see. Nor can I help you.

“We turned our faces east once more and Bulawayo-wards. This time I had a four-wheeled waggon and companions. We were more comfortable but less safe. For, first, our driver was a ‘mompapa’ (a Native name abusive). Second, our brake power was weak and inadequate. There was difficulty to distinguish oxen from waggon, peler from leader, on a kopje downgrade. We had to sort them out at the bottom. Outspanned the first night, we built a fire and lay around it rolled in our blankets. In the small hours we woke with lions roaring and fires burning low. We argued as to who should probe the nearest bush for fresh supplies of fuel, and having settled the point, lay down again, but not to sleep. The day broke welcomingly. On we lurched and creaked, and at midday reached the Matetsi River. On our up-trek it was a rocky and almost waterless bed; it was now a rushing, flooded torrent. A survey engineer, taking levels thereabouts, guaranteed our power to cross. ‘Strike up the stream,

and "hamba gashlee" (go gently).' But a 'mompara' driver and an angry river are unequal antagonists. We reached midstream, the oxen pointing well to shore. A direction disobeyed and the oxen were swiftly swept away, down and past us, dragging the waggon sharply round. The wheels locked, and we were over. No, not over, but nearly so, or perchance this tale would not be told. Wet, but thankful, we scrambled ashore and set to work to salve luggage, waggon and cattle. The man of levels helped and directed most ably. A quiet remark: 'That river swarms with crocodiles; you will stay with me tonight,' was all that he vouchsafed when the work was done. He knew and had faced the danger and thought his knowledge best kept to himself. Perhaps he did not err.

"With morning, we put our fortunes to the test once more. The fates were more propitious. The flood had spent its force and we were soon set free to tumble over rocks and plough through swamps that smelt of fever-reek. Night fell, but we pushed on till pulled up short, off-wheel jammed fast against a mighty boulder. The very heavens jeered upon us in our trouble, and poured forth rain and thunder and lightning out of the murky darkness. Imagination and memory filled us with fears; hyenas and jackals howled in consort; lightning's brief flash peopled the wilderness with shapes. The vision of fever haunted us, and we laid the spectre with forty grains of quinine. But, hark! a shout through the night: 'Eckmon, Ongleishman, Rooinek!'—transport and rider's cries. 'Wait,' we muttered between gritted teeth, 'wait till the day,

and we will tell you straightly, we will tell you forcefully, what we think of you, as you call your stubbornest, your stupidest oxen an Englishman.' But now we dissemble. Yes, we welcome you, brother Boer. Lay on your uncouth tongue and swing your whip. Take charge of us, and put a healthy fear of sjambok into our blockheaded charioteer. For the light of day must see us on the Deka River banks, midday at Wankie, and evening once more on board our quondam friend, the train.

"My tale is told. What mattered it to me that my old friend, quinine, which fought so gallant a fight on my behalf at the Matetsi River and on the dark, damp kopje, did now rebel and quarrel with my inner man? A week prostrate. But again, I say, what matter? I had seen the Victoria Falls; one of the first five hundred.

"The work was strenuous and exhausting, but withal a great joy. Results were not perhaps too clear. Much work had to be rushed, such as preparation for Confirmation. But there was a heartiness and welcome which made great compensation. The thought uppermost in my mind all through was that I was keeping the flag of religion flying in places where otherwise no witness would be borne. To many the prayers, the old hymns, were a reminder of nobler days and an incentive to return to the old paths. As one man said to me: "The sight of a surplice, the singing of the old familiar hymns, brought a lump into my throat." Even those interruptions (at least in one or two of the cases I have mentioned) were the result of an awakened conscience.

“ Perhaps at times the heart grew faint ; the weariness of the way seemed intolerable. My three years in Rhodesia were indeed years of unrelieved commercial depression. There was neither lift nor go in business matters, and it coloured Church affairs. Retrenchment, here and everywhere, and people fleeing the country as from a land accursed. I may have vowed deeply, solemnly, and loudly, not once or twice but often, that I would gladly shake the dust of the land from off my feet. I may have spoken lightly, but not less emphatically, in the words of an American : ‘ That when my three long years were up I should be in so great a hurry to quit that my going would not be seen for dust.’ But the spell of Africa still lies hard upon me. Her breadth and spaciousness, her mysterious empty spaces, are ever beckoning me back. And her sons are men. With all the sin and vice which abounded, there was in them a width of view, a largeness of outlook, which drew and draws. In a Birthday Book (a strange companion in the back of beyond), in which I was asked to write my name on the eve of my leaving the country, the words against my birthday were :

But to-day I leave the galley, and another takes my place ;
 There's my name upon the deckbeam ; let it stand a little space.
 I am free to watch my messmates, beating out to open main,
 Free of all that life can offer, save to handle sweep again.

It may be that fate will give me life and leave to row once more,
 Set some strong man free for fighting, while I take awhile his
 oar ;

But to-day I leave the galley ; shall I curse her service then ?
 God be thanked, whate'er comes after, I have lived and toiled with
 men.

Yes ; I had lived and toiled with *men*. As I wrote my name alongside those words, well within sight and sound of the Victoria Falls, I thought they strangely yet truly expressed the feelings of my heart."

Bishop Gaul himself visited the Falls eighteen months later in company with Mr. Hale. His description of them will express for many who, too, have seen them, what they felt to be inexpressible.

"After a hasty snack, we," in company with the Government Forester, "strolled down to the Devil's Cataract—but why Devil's and not Angel's?—and there, thumping, rolling, tumbling, rumbling, grumbling, groaning, leaping, dashing, rushing, smashing into bottomless confusion, was one little bit of the great Falls. We stood still, aghast, trembling, awe-struck at the sight, and felt being drawn through its endless struggles and into the lost gurgling depths of the great, awful down-below. So we looked up—as frightened souls always should—and there was the great sapphire shield of the sky over it all, and the stars for lamps, and the glorious full moon, and then, lo ! across the silver spray-mist below there grew a light of hope and peace, growing into a shimmer, hazy arc of glory and grace—a lunar rainbow telling of God's providential government, telling of His Beauty, telling of His Presence in Nature as well as in Grace—a lovely, gracious parable ; and silently we went to rest.

"Next morning we went off early to stand on the wondrous bridge across the mighty gorge, over which the rails had already been laid. We looked between the

planks—there was no railing—and there beneath was some 420 feet of space above the rushing water. Into the gorge you could put St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and then have room for St. George's Cathedral. Think of it! Four hundred and twenty feet of basalt wall on either side the gorge! And there the slender and graceful bridge with its immensely strong bands of iron binding the two sides of the gorge together for all time, and carrying the religion and politics, and commerce and enterprise, and hopes and fears of the Empire and, let us hope, its Christianity, into and through the great dark African Continent!

“But description is impossible. There were great rock altars, thrones lit up with heavenly lights, great clouds of incense rising from the spray-mist like the prayers of the saints, and over all the emerald and topaz and amethyst of the ‘Rainbow about the Throne.’ It was an illuminated chapter of Revelation, and we offered a *Gloria in Excelsis* in thanksgiving for the wondrous scene. We advise all to come up and see for themselves—but not in a crowd. Here we want to listen, amid a great silence, to the Voice of God in Nature—to look in enraptured solitude upon the transcendent Beauty of God in Creation.”

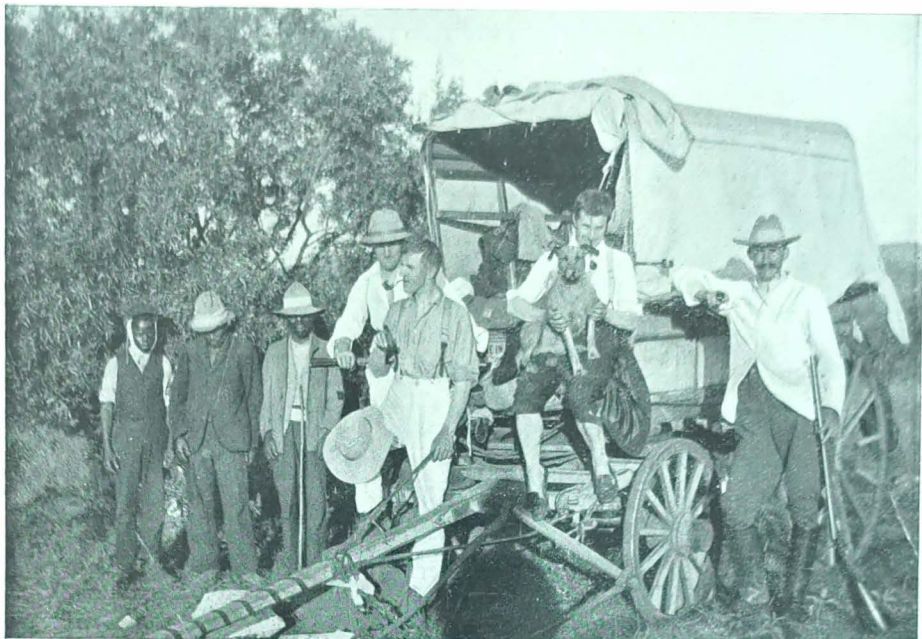
Appealing later for two clergymen to be sent up there at once, he adds that they must be “ready to go anywhere and do anything, live on buffalo hide and sleep on thorns, love sand and delight in fever, and always come up smiling, as does Mr. Hale on his weary round of camp and station and siding, with a vision of the future compelling him on—his hopes of the future measured only by God's achievements in the past.”



J. H. Warner. P. C. Preston-Thomas. *I. Hands. C. F. Tomlinson. L. Sparks.
*H. B. Ellison. H. A. Lewis. *D. Ellison. C. Bond. *F. A. Rogers.

THE CLERICAL STAFF, 1908

Those marked * were successively Heads of the Mission



HIGHWAYMEN ON HOLIDAY

Facing p. 97

CHAPTER VI

THE ORANGE FREE STATE

AT the end of 1905 the Head, after another threatened breakdown, had again to go to England. Being there, he was at hand when Mother Cecile, who was also in England, passed to her rest after a serious operation at the early age of forty-four. The Railway Mission owed her much in things material as well as spiritual. In times of special emergency she had even allowed two of her Sisters to work on the Railway, and she was never tired of telling what she and her community owed to the Mission priests.

Whilst at home, the Head's activities were limited by his doctors, and further by a broken elbow, the result of a fall on the ice in Switzerland.

The urgency of the financial side of things was answered by some rather unusual gifts, worth recording so many years after. One sent "my dividends from the South African mines. . . . It is a fitting thing they should return to the land whence they came." Two thank-offerings were sent by members of the British Association "in gratitude for their time on the South African Railways."

In Africa it was chiefly to Johannesburg, in spite of the severe depression, that the Mission looked, and never looked in vain, for help. In 1906 a Finance Council was formed. A little group of first-rate business men rallied round, with Archdeacon Furse* as

* Now Bishop of St. Albans.

their chairman. It was a question of some retrenchment all along the line or of the tapping of some fresh source of supply. The latter, in the shape of local guarantee funds, was decided on. This marked a new epoch in the evolution of the Mission. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and this goodly principle is better insisted upon by laymen than by the labourers themselves! What was inevitable at first in the way of voluntary, or at most underpaid, service could not be allowed any longer. And there were big things ahead which demanded all the help which England and South Africa could give, quite apart from the financing of normal needs. Was there not a historic day when two members of the Johannesburg Ladies' Committee took their courage in their hands and went round to the principal offices and collected no less than £680 in one morning?

In 1907, at long last, work was started in the Bloemfontein Diocese. For two years Bishop Chandler had been waiting for the Mission priests, but none could be spared. Now Mr. Rogers, soon to be followed by the Rev. Lionel Sparks, was able to set to work to make up for lost time. Working as a layman during the Boer War, the former had once before been very near the Orange Free State. When Lord Methuen was concentrating his troops near the Orange River he had actually swum halfway across, but had ignominiously been made to swim back again by a sentry.

The Mission's new sphere was to be from the Transvaal border at Vereeniging, where the Peace was signed, to the Cape Colony border at Norval's Pont, a distance

of 330 miles, together with something over 200 miles of branch railways, always excepting places where the parochial clergy could themselves minister, which, of course, meant the few larger towns. Amongst the places served by the Mission were "Parijs," the Dutch for Paris, with its junction, "Dover," and a halfway siding, "Calais." At first it added a touch of romance to be able to travel from Johannesburg to Paris, via Dover and Calais, in twelve hours!

It was, perhaps, in the Orange River Colony more than anywhere that the need of work on the veld forced itself to the front.

The majority of the white labourers and gangers were already mostly Dutch, and of the rest, few were Church of England. The Church people were largely the settlers on the farms, far distant from the line.

Heroic efforts they made to get to the Railway services, but many of them had neither horses nor carts available for longer than a two hours' drive. Many of them were three to six hours away. Among those who did come the Mission found its best supporters. "I am the only intinerating clergyman in this large Diocese" (Bloemfontein, which then included Kimberley), writes Mr. Mark Rice. "My work being along the railway, I never visit those large tracts in which dwell numbers of Church-folk, terribly left in the wilds.

"If there were enough men this Colony could be split up into districts, each with its stretch of railway line and tract of country, and the Railway Mission might be doing its ideal work, and pushing along the railways into the recesses of Africa, and yet minis-

tering, through the veld, to men and women and children at present unreached and uncared for by us."

A year or two later an attempt was made to reach these wilderness folk on horseback. Mr. Austin, financed by the Diocese to the extent of £60 per annum, started off on a tour of discovery and met with such a welcome that the need of such work was more than proved, and was continued for nearly two years. Moreover, it became—with the Diocesan grant—self-supporting. But then it had to be given up. Mr. Austin, strong man as he was, broke down. "To ride on horseback," writes the then Head, "day after day and week after week, whatever the weather may be; to have no home, no means of carrying luggage, no regularity in meals, is a severe strain on any man, and it seems to prove that the only way to attempt such work in this country is by a motor-car."

The Mission had by now become a *persona grata* both with Church and State as well as with the Railway world. So it was healthy for the souls of the staff to read a letter in a South African paper which informed its readers that "I think it cannot be too widely known that this Mission is in connection with the ritualistic Church of the Province of South Africa. . . . Further than this, you will find that the Chaplain of the Mission is a Warden of the Community of the Resurrection, and at least two of the assistant Chaplains have been trained at Cuddleston (*sic*) College, which in itself is quite sufficient to show your readers the lines upon which they work. I have spent a few years in South Africa and can assure you that if anyone wants to help forward

true religion in that part of the world there are plenty of opportunities, but they certainly will not do so by assisting in any way the above Mission."

Properly humbled, we trust, that very mistaken and useless person, the "Chaplain," in 1907 once more turned his face north, for there were still 350 miles of line north of Livingstone waiting to be annexed by the Mission. The Pan-Anglican Congress was only a year ahead. It was inevitable that he should be present, and that his facts about the now vast work should be up-to-date.

Odd little lights on almost forgotten political crises meet us in his letter home. "If one may judge from appearance, the poor oppressed Chinaman" (he writes *en route* from Johannesburg), "seemed to be one of the few fairly prosperous sections of the Community. It is a novel experience—though, I am told, quite a common one—to find a cabby refusing to pick one up on the ground that two or three of these downtrodden Celestials—also on driving bent—represent a more lucrative fare." In England at this time a certain political poster represented these same Chinese chained together as slaves!

Everywhere he goes he finds heartening progress, in spite of "the furnace of financial depression" from which the country was suffering.

Mr. Hale had gone home after his three years of strenuous service. He had told a London audience something of what it had meant. He had also added his testimony to one to whom the Church of England owes much: "There rise before me those men at the Falls who had come under the influence of a man

whom I want to meet and shake hands with—Father Stanton of St. Alban's, Holborn. There were four men—clean-living, upright, honourable men, and regular communicants—whenever I was up there; men who owed, and who admitted they owed, much that was good in them to the influence of Father Stanton.” “ Travelling up and down these lines,” he continued, “ I know that one of the great needs is that the Church should be on the spot to set the moral atmosphere of these new Communities.”

The following story sadly illustrates this :

“ Six months ago,” writes a Chaplain, “ on a mail train from the north I met a man to whom I was instinctively attracted; he was a hard case. ‘ Padre,’ he said, ‘ I’ve trekked through South Africa with the Forces. I’ve been in Central Africa and all over the place, often up against it; no companionship except the natives. I’ve been so lonely that I’ve dropped on my knees in the bush and prayed for the companionship of God.’ A fortnight later that man died of delirium tremens. It leaves one puzzled and mystified.”

The Rev. C. H. S. Matthews, in his book “ A Parson in the Australian Bush,” tries to solve the puzzle. “ It is my firm conviction that in the Australian Bush most of the men who drink do so in a kind of wild, unconscious effort to save their souls. This sounds paradoxical, but I believe it none the less to be true. Failing some temporary means of escape from the monotony and isolation of his life means in the end madness. Drink gives him, at all events for a time, the escape for which his soul longs. . . . The man drinks at first

not because he has lost his soul, but because he has discovered his soul."

Those who do not drink to excess he divides into two classes: "Those who have never discovered their souls, and, not having made that awful discovery, can live contentedly on the animal plane; and on the other hand those who, with the discovery of their souls, have discovered also the true satisfaction, more intoxicating than any alcoholic liquors—the religion of Christ. . . . After all, it was the inspired Apostle who discovered this alternative, when he said to his converts: 'Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit.'"

"Oh," exclaimed one who had had five years' work in Australia, "if we had only had a Railway Mission away in the back-blocks of Australia and the other great countries from the moment the railway construction began, how different would things be to-day!"

Three hundred and fifty miles north of Livingstone! And Livingstone is north of the Falls which that great missionary explorer first discovered for civilisation. . . . and where on a certain tree his initials, once carved there, are still faintly visible.

At a crowded meeting in 1857, held in the Senate House at Cambridge, David Livingstone, fresh from his amazing journeys, had flung his challenge, "I go back to Africa to try to open a path for commerce and Christianity." Then, suddenly shouting, "Do you carry on the work I have begun? I leave it to you," he sat down amid a silence which lasted a few seconds, and then came an outburst of cheering such as that august building had never known before.

He went back to Africa, and there he died—actually on his knees in prayer. The Universities' Mission to Central Africa was the answer to that dramatic appeal.

There was another meeting in 1859. The infant Mission needed careful rearing, "for there were not a few," we read, "who looked with jealous eyes upon a scheme which might deprive the University of those chosen spirits whose places would be difficult to fill."

At this meeting Bishop Wilberforce* dramatically claimed—it was All Saints' Day—that the spirit of his father was present, bidding him relax no effort until Africa should be Christian.

In 1907—a few weeks before Douglas Ellison went north for the last time—the jubilee of that great Mission had been held in Cambridge, and a second Diocese, that of North Rhodesia, had been inaugurated.

Archbishop Davidson incidentally said that "Civilization, represented by the railways, is pushing itself farther and farther into the heart of the mysterious continent, really mysterious no longer, and we have to see to it that the Christian Faith, in works as well as in heart service, is preserved among the white people who are going out as colonists, as well as that the Word of Life is taken to the dark races."

It was fitting that the man who had been called to pioneer for Christ on these African railways should have been not only a graduate of Cambridge, but the first student to be entered on the list of that University's Missionary College, dedicated to the memory of that great pioneer, Bishop Selwyn. But for the doctors,

* His father was William Wilberforce, through whose life-work an end was put to the Central Africa slave trade.

he would originally have joined the University's Mission. South Africa had been a compromise.

But sixteen years of such work, combined with the heavy financial burdens for which, ultimately, he had made himself responsible, had left him in a condition which now made it imperative that he should leave to younger men the work to which he had devoted the best years of his life. He was now only forty-four, but never a strong man, and of a spirit which saw difficulties only to surmount them and which recked nothing of self so long as the vision " which had been shown him in the mount " had been attained, he had, like all such men, to pay the price physically. A long rest was decreed, and in 1908 he resigned the Headship.

He had proved to the Church of his fathers, in spite of initial opposition in various quarters, that in these vast countries now so rapidly opening up there was not only the opportunity but the absolute necessity of a more fluid organization as well as the old parochial system—an organization which should overstep not only these small divisions, but even those between Dioceses, and should be limited only by the confines of the country in which it works ; an organization which, by working primarily from various centres on the railways, the highways of commerce, could plant the flag of Christ's Church really in advance of civilisation and coextensively with the growth of each country, or rather each continent.

Lord Selborne, an old friend of the Mission, speaking at the Mission's Annual Meeting in March, 1911, congratulated its inventors " on having discovered and

appropriated a new, magnificent, and fruitful field of Mission work among white people."

Following Lord Selborne at this same meeting, Bishop Furse, then Bishop of Pretoria, in a characteristic speech, said: "You know it has been said that generally the Church of England is last in the field; that it comes doddering up, bumping up in the last coach of the last goods train, next to the refrigerator, and just about as cold. . . . What the Railway Mission does is not to bump up (they are generally bumping, of course, on some railway), but they do not come up in the last luggage train, next the refrigerator, but they go on ahead in a trolley."

That speech was so effective that a cheque for £250 was sent by one lady in answer to his appeal.

So in his letter of resignation to the Committee at home, Douglas Ellison writes: "It is not I who am leaving the Mission, but—which is far more satisfactory—the Mission which has outgrown and left me; and though it seems probable I must remain in England these next few years, my heart will still be out there. It now only remains for me to drop quietly over the side myself"—so quietly, he being in England at the time, that there was no sadness of farewell in Africa.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONGO

DOUGLAS ELLISON was succeeded as Head of the Mission by his brother, "H. B." The appointment was made by those of the South African Bishops then in England for the Pan-Anglican Congress, after consultation with a special sub-committee of the London Committee.

They also expressed to the Committee their great sense of what South Africa owed to Douglas Ellison, and "their gratitude to God for the work that had been done through him."

"H. B." had been on the staff since 1901, first in charge of Cookhouse, in Cape Colony, and latterly, as we have seen, directing the work in the Transvaal, with his centre in the Railway Camp of Johannesburg at the little Church of the Good Shepherd, Braamfontein.

His brother's unexpected resignation had obliged him to go home for consultation and advice, leaving Mr. Rogers in charge.

On his return in December, 1908, he found South Africa "passing through the worst time of depression that she had ever had to face." Retrenchment all along the line, in a very literal sense, was already beginning. One official after another was dispensed with, and with him went, generally, a wife and family; from every Mission centre came the story of reduced

congregations, and, therefore, of reduced subscriptions. It was a critical time for all concerned, and the new Head called for three months of special prayer and intercession, and many prayer circles were formed in response. "Let us have 'interest' in the Sunday School, but let us have 'passion' in the Church," he quoted. This time of industrial depression did not reduce one iota the need of the Mission's expansion. In two directions the Head was urged to break new ground. That in North-West Rhodesia he was virtually pledged to do, and in 1909 his brother's long-cherished wish was accomplished, and the Mission crossed the Zambezi.

Mr. Rogers, who had been on the staff on and off since 1899, was given this pioneering post of honour. The 300 to 400 miles of railway above Livingstone was only in part constructed, and his first exploring trip was a pretty severe test of endurance. Three attacks of fever in less than six weeks hindered the start.

The Congo border—nothing less—was his objective. Railhead stopped sixty miles north of Broken Hill. Thence a track about a foot broad was followed, leading through country still in possession of its native wild beasts. A lion, growling and grunting at him twenty yards off the path, only causes him to cycle faster—"much faster, I might say"; a river has to be crossed on the back of a Native, who subsides into a pool as they cross (those who know Mr. Rogers, even only by sight, will not be altogether surprised!); close up to the Congo border one of his companions and a Native get lost, and a "large area of forest has to be burnt down" in the endeavour to show them where Mr.

Rogers is. Even a British bicycle turned at such a strain, and on the way home it just collapsed and broke in two.

But Construction Camps had been found, services held, and everywhere he had been received with unbounded hospitality and kindness, the wages for his carriers for the entire trip being given him at one place.

Such men were worth following up, and such men could also appreciate a man who would go through what he did to reach them. Only a few months later Mr. Rogers was in hospital at Livingstone with enteric fever, and this meant the end of his pioneering venture. It was "home" for an indefinite period after that.

But the end was not yet as far as he and the Mission were concerned, though it was the end for the time being of the work up north.

The need of more priests was urged again and again in the Quarterly Paper. "Read the life of Cecil Rhodes," the Head wrote in 1910; "you will learn that South Africa, and, above all, Rhodesia, is a land of adventure. Men and women are building up that land who have adventured all that this life holds in 'playing the game,' as Rhodes loved to call it. The game cannot well be played to the full in any life if we are not ready to take the risks and at times to make the great adventure. If we want the big life we must learn to take the risks, whether in the matter of faith or of purely worldly things. It is, above all, men of an adventurous faith that we want for our work, and not least for the new work up north."

"H. B." himself trekked north to size up the situa-

tion, for, from one cause and another, the staff was then seriously depleted.

Another problem to be faced was the recurring request from various Dioceses—notably from Bishop Furse in the Transvaal—that the Railway Mission should now extend its borders and add a Veld Mission to its labours. In almost every Diocese the circumstances were identical with those in the Orange River Colony.

But for the present the tempting invitation had to be refused. The free passes, so generously granted by the Railway Chiefs, were conditional on the Chaplains sticking to the line and its near dwellers. Transport was therefore one obstacle, but “men, more men,” the old cry, was the deciding factor.

The unification of the South African Railways, consequent on the Union of South Africa, greatly affected the Mission's work. But in no case were privileges withdrawn—that very good friend, Sir William Hoy, who was made General Manager, saw to that.

Things altogether began to look brighter as the year 1910 grew old. Heralding the arrival of several new priests and of two ladies, the Head writes: “Two months ago things began to look desperate indeed; but then, as it seemed in a flash, the situation was saved, and we can now almost see our way to making some of the extensions which looked out of the question for so long.” Mashonaland was urgent in its demands for workers, and “as fast as we can put them into the field.”

It was a case of “ups and downs”—“ups” because of Mr. Rogers' eighteen months' work as organizing secretary in England; “downs” because one of the

first happenings after his return to Rhodesia, this time with a second priest, was the entire destruction by fire of their little headquarters, St. Cyril's Cottage, Bulawayo. Not only were all personal possessions lost, but also the MS. of a History of the Mission which Mr. Rogers had written and which had been accepted for publication.

In September, 1911, "H. B." Ellison resigned, after ten years' work on the staff, including three as Head. It meant a big wrench, but it was enough for any man who did not mean to be permanently broken.

So he left South Africa, but he never forgot the old Mission, and after the Great War, when he served as Chaplain to the Forces, he succeeded his brother, Prebendary Ellison, as the very efficient and beloved Chairman of the London Committee.

His devotion to the cause of Toc H, in which he was affectionately known as "Uncle Harry," carried him in later years twice again to South Africa and once to Canada; but it cost him his life, and on January 3rd, 1934, he passed away suddenly in a train on his way home from a Toc H. meeting.

"No one could know Uncle Harry and not know more of the character of Christ. His gift for friendship was divine." Such was the testimony of the priest who celebrated at his requiem service.

His obvious successor was Mr. Rogers. In his first letter to the Quarterly Paper he comments on the growth of the Mission:

"In 1895, 1,200 miles of line; possibly 2,000 Europeans, and a staff of one, with an income of £338 8s. 3d. In 1908, 4,000 miles of line; Europeans

beyond reckoning, and a staff of eleven priests, one layman, two ladies and three nurses, with an income of something like £3,000. In 1911, nearly 8,000 miles of line; thirteen priests, four laymen, six ladies and four nurses, and five Native catechists (income not available at the moment)." No wonder this prefaced an appeal for "ever increasing support."

After eighteen months another compulsory visit to England was made to join in the scramble for men and money, Mr. Skey (not for the last time) being left in charge. Mr. Rogers then went back to two years of very hard work. The extension of the line into the Belgian Congo meant also the further extension of the Mission's work. For Elisabethville, the capital of Katanga—a mushroom town which grew up almost in a night—housed a good many Britishers, all bent on copper mining. There was no Anglican priest within 800 miles. Two years before the site was virgin forest; in 1912 it possessed avenues and boulevards with high-sounding names, two weekly papers, sixty public-houses, and a population of under 800 Europeans!

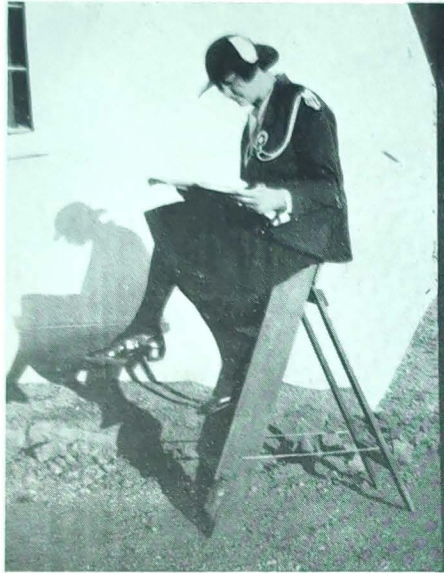
Mr. Rogers, with Mr. Douglas, the local Chaplain, paid two visits there in 1912. "We went by train," he writes, "to Railhead, about sixty miles north of Elisabethville, where the ordinary passenger train stops at present. It was new country to both of us, though Mr. Douglas had been most of the distance. Yet we hardly met a man we had not come across somewhere before. . . . On construction trains we do not enjoy the luxury of passenger coaches, and when we asked the General Manager of the *Chemin de fer du Katanga* to run our private coach from the Belgian border to Elisa-



A GANGSTER'S COTTAGE IN CAPE PROVINCE.



A TEA PARTY ON THE COACH



SUN-BATHING AFTER A SNOWSTORM



GUIDES AND BROWNIES

bethville, he replied he would be pleased to do it for £48, so we had to leave it behind and travel . . . on open trucks. This has its drawbacks when the thermometer stands at something over 100° F. in the shade, and there is no shade." On each visit to Elisabethville they had to find a different place for their Sunday evening service. "The first time we had it in the billiard-room of a club, before the billiard table had arrived; but by our next visit the club had gone into liquidation, and since then has been burnt down. . . . So this time we fixed on the stoep of the leading hotel; but before we got there the third time the proprietor of this hotel had gone bankrupt. Once more we had to find a new place, and we were kindly lent a cinematograph hall, which answered the purpose very well. Now that, too, has "gone broke," and on our last visit we used the dining-room of another hotel, and we are expecting to hear at any moment of some dire catastrophe which will compel us once more to move our place of service. If anything happens to this last, it seems as if we shall have some trouble in finding someone who will risk lending a hall or room for Church services."

It was of somewhere up this way that one of the Chaplains wrote: "I don't carry a spear, no; I take refuge in the story told of Bishop Gaul of Mashonaland, who, in his trek through the bush, was once confronted by one of the king of beasts tribe. He had nothing but his Book of Common Prayer, which he took out, and forthwith began reciting the Thirty-Nine Articles, at which the lion turned tail and fled."

It became more and more difficult for the Head of

the Mission and more and more of a strain to follow up these extensions north as well as those east and west, while at the same time superintending the staff generally and consulting with the ecclesiastical authorities as to the Mission's constitutional place in the Province. Its advance-guard, we must remember, had now left the South African Province behind. North Rhodesia, with its northern border 150 miles south of Elisabethville, was in Central Africa and under the jurisdiction of the Universities' Mission.

Many serious questions had to be faced, and the time of the Head was too often taken up with long journeys and with increasing correspondence. Mr. Rogers records writing 1,000 letters in eight weeks; and as he was credited as being "a man to whom accounts were a pure joy," the Mission's finance, in spite of lay help, could not be entirely given over by the Head.

The Synod of the Pretoria Diocese in 1913 decided that for every Chaplain working in that Diocese the Bishop would provide £50 towards his stipend, an example which was soon followed by the Dioceses of Grahamstown and Mashonaland. This was a big milestone in the Mission's history, and considerably eased the finances.

One by one, too, the Dioceses were now taking over those Railway Mission centres which had become more or less self-supporting, leaving the Chaplains more free for pioneering.

This sort of work was very obviously, too, a strain in that most important sphere of all, the spiritual and devotional life of the men who were doing it.

For this reason alone it is probably true, as more

than one man has said, that five years at a time should be the limit for most men to work with the Mission. It is work which demands a life lived very close up to God, for it is one of constant giving out, a very literal saving of life by losing it.

In July, 1914, Mr. Rogers placed his resignation as Head of the Mission into the hands of the Archbishop of Capetown. This was partly on personal grounds, for he felt that after sixteen years, in all, on the staff he ought to resign, and partly from the feeling that the Mission would benefit thereby. The Bishop of Pretoria had offered him the post of Archdeacon of Pietersburg, which he had accepted.

It is a big proposition for your name to be a household one from Cape Colony to the Congo, but that was true of Mr. Rogers. Need any man ask for more?

With this resignation the last of the original staff of the Mission left the work, and a new chapter in its history begins.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WOMEN OF THE HIGHWAY

"WOMEN and children first" is a good old British cry, and long before this date the need of women's help to supplement the work of the Chaplains had made itself felt.

More than one of the staff rivalled the immortal "Pied Piper" in his attraction for children, and needless to say these gave as much as they got of cheer and uplift. In those early days the more isolated among them knew next to nothing of that joy and brightness which is the birthright of healthy childhood the wide world over. Save at school and on their long journeys to and fro, they had many of them no companionship save that of the Native "piccanins" gathered around their parents' cottage. The Mission staff, therefore, had to prove themselves playmates as well as teachers.

In this latter capacity they had for them their "Guild of the Good Shepherd," with its simple rule of prayer and Bible-reading, and "the Queen Victoria Bible Prizes"—the children's memorial of the old Queen's 1897 Jubilee—really good Bibles and Prayer and Hymn-Books, resplendent with the Royal Arms in gold on the covers. Sent out from England, they were, however, the gift of the better-off children of Grahamstown, who were quick to respond to the appeal of these young things so often stranded up and down the railways.

There was need of some encouragement to Bible

study. The examinations showed the most astounding ignorance, most of all perhaps in a failure to understand the difference between the teaching of the Old and New Testaments. For instance, in answer to the question, "Write out the story of Daniel and the lions in your own words," an English child of fourteen wrote: "The King of the Romans put David (*sic* !) in prison because he was a Christian. . . . But the lions would not touch him because their jaws were stiff !"

In reply to another question, "What do you mean by a prophet, a martyr"—and sundry other kinds of people—came the charming portmanteau word "A proptyr is a person who knows everything." A deacon was a "person who went round giving the children of Israel Holy Communion."

Many children of English parents did not know what was meant when one talked about prayer, and some only knew the sacred name of Jesus as a swear word. On the other hand, there were houses where a very different atmosphere prevailed, a few where daily family prayers were read, others where family prayers were read every Sunday; and in one case—which will not strike those who have lived only in England as very remarkable, but which will appeal to those who have lived in South Africa—a clerk on the railways, brought up in England, but having lived for five years in Cape Colony, was found to have gone Sunday by Sunday to the Native Church to receive Holy Communion at the hands of the African priest because it was the only opportunity he had.

But what of the women? The clergy and the laymen did their man's best to help them spiritually and

by their sympathy and good cheer. But more was needed.

In the camps and larger centres, as we have said, things were not quite so hard. But as a group the women were facing life under conditions of unimaginable loneliness. Picture to yourself what it means to exist in a ganger's cottage, five miles from anywhere—further north it is ten and sometimes even fifteen miles—and on that sun-baked veld, with no communication with the outside world, even in sickness and bereavement, beyond the rare stopping of a pay-train or the visit of the doctor's coach. The white women's burden in these pioneering places is a pathetic reality to the onlooker, though it is borne by the women themselves in a spirit which may well claim for them a place in the unrecorded honours list of the Order of the British Empire.

Trained nurses were the primary and imperative need, not alone for these wives and mothers so inevitably stranded in their hour of need, but also for their sick children and the never-ending accidents to their men-folk.

The conditions which then prevailed were such as few nurses would have faced; but to Nurse Eardley, who joined the Mission in 1902, belongs the honour of making the venture; and thereafter, till hospitals and other nursing schemes came along, she and her successors, several of them voluntary workers, continued their labours of love. It was work which at that time could probably only have been carried through by women full of the Christ-spirit—and of humour withal!

Here a nurse has to share a bed with her patient

and the new baby, whilst the husband and three or four other children are crowded into the small second bedroom. There, in a family of "poor whites"—Dutch—the nurse finds the family bread put into the bed with a patient in a high temperature to make it rise the better!

No wonder these women were loved up and down the line. Of one it is recorded that when, after six years of service, she left for home, her journey to the coast was "of the nature of a triumphal procession."

But this was not all. It was a woman's friendship which these women, well or ill, were unconsciously asking for. And a bright page of our story is written in the multifarious activities of the Mission's itinerating women workers.

Of these Miss Beckwith, for no less than sixteen years in all, gave herself to the service of these women and children. Her clear-sighted wisdom was no less helpful to the priests than to their flock, and her self-forgetfulness was an inspiration to them.*

These ladies were only the forerunners of some forty or more devoted and surely sporting successors, several of them again honorary workers, who have, during the years, helped almost to revolutionize life in many a railway home.

Getting at intervals a share of the Mission coach, they have bravely faced all that means of real roughing it, not to say of loneliness and even of danger. When the coaches and trains—often still only a guard's van at the end of a goods train—are not available, bicycles have done the work; and that often means carrying

* She died in 1937, worn out by her reckless self-giving.

your bicycle with only the side of the railway track for a road and with an African sun overhead, or an African storm, whether of thunder, rain or sand, around one ; and always the chance of meeting a cobra !

Some doubters had, at first, underrated, not the will or the pluck, but the physical endurance of British women. True, there have been serious breakdowns in health, and one, Miss Watson, undoubtedly gave her life for the work. But there is no question now of their special spheres of work being given up.

An old friend of the early days, Sir Arthur Lawley,* at an Annual Meeting in London, spoke of the developments in the Mission since he first knew it. " It has stretched," he said, " over an enormous area, and the difficulties are in proportion to the size of the work ; and the work is always growing, constantly growing, growing in magnitude and scope." Speaking of the women on the line, he said : " I believe it is impossible to exaggerate the difficulties which some of these women have to face. There are these workers who belong to the Railway Mission who have made it their beautiful task in life to help these women by all the means in their power, to face those difficulties bravely and to overcome them as best they can ; and not only that, but they have also undertaken to nurse the sick and suffering in that land. For myself, I cannot conceive of work more noble and more deserving of our help."

In 1907 another of those fine ventures of faith was made on their behalf. They had till then no headquarters where they could feel at home between their journeyings. Up-country " hotels " and up-country

* Later Lord Wenlock.

meals were not what they are to-day. Sometimes it was better to fend for yourself. "If you have not had chops cooked in an engine shovel, you don't know how good they can be," writes one. Healths began to feel the strain, and doctors insisted that conditions must be improved. This meant, in that land of high prices, another £400 a year; but the thing had to be done, and was done, a little house being built for them at Naauwpoort.

As the years have passed, the one central home has become impossible owing to the dispersion of the workers. In 1927 the then Head wrote: "Our women workers all live in 'rooms,' and very small ones they are in some cases. How they stick it I do not know, but I have never heard one of them grumble over the matter. . . . It is not thrilling, to say the least of it, after a tiring trip up and down the line, to come back to a small room hidden behind a house and to have to go out for your meals, or else rejoice in a cup of tea made on a 'Beatrice' stove, accompanied by a liberal supply of Marie biscuits. There is usually a pile of letters waiting to be answered, and the idea of a rest at headquarters is a bit of a snare and a delusion." The "sense of spiritual isolation from which we all suffer" is stressed. All this is preliminary to the hope that the time may come when the women may be able at least to "live in pairs." Already another small house has been built by the Mission at Waterval Boven, where a shortage of rooms made it necessary. It is hoped this effort may be extended.

"Adaptability to circumstances" is one of the qualifications asked of lady workers. Here is one instance

out of many: "A short time ago I experienced something of the loneliness of a cottage on the Umtata line. I asked for the train to put me down at No. 13 cottage. . . . When I got to the cottage no one was at home, and a terrible dust storm was blowing along. I looked in at the windows, and came to the conclusion that the house had not been left long, and so perhaps the woman had gone to see a friend who might possibly live near-by. I looked for the least dusty corner and sat down to read and knit, and the dog and cat were most friendly. It was about 11.30. The hours went by and no one came. The nearest place I knew of was nine miles away, so I did not attempt to walk. At 5 o'clock I heard the puffing of a goods train, and never was there such a joyous sound! When the train came, I stood in the middle of the line to stop it. Then the puzzle was how to get in, for the climb was tremendous. At last the guard knelt down, and I just put a foot on his back and jumped up. It was almost dark, and I was glad to get to the 'end of a perfect day.'"

Or here: Miss Watson has had a picnic for the children at a certain station. She goes to bed at night in the coach, shunted on a siding—where the elder children had spent the evening—blissfully oblivious that one of her boy visitors had started playing with the brake. A high wind sprang up, "and about 3 a.m., with a shunt, a jolt, and a shudder, I felt we were moving." Looking out, she found she was slipping slowly through the station. Shouting out: "We're running away!"—a cry unheard in the storm—she pursued her involuntary John Giplin career down the hill beyond the station. Half a mile on the coach was

stopped by an opposing gradient. Lighting all her lamps to warn a train nearly due, she made her way back to the station to tell the night clerk. Fog signals being laid, they sat and waited for the train, which then pushed them up the hill into the station. "All's well that ends well!" but the Scotch stationmaster's parting remark to Miss Watson next morning was, "If ye hadna' been a missionary, ye must have been kilt—ay."

The Mission literature abounds in delightful touches and incidents showing what the response to the women's work has been.

"Leave me dirty! Leave me dirty! Miss —— will be there, and I shall be late," was the agonized cry of a little child overheard by the said Miss —— as she passed a certain cottage on her way to open Sunday School.

These Sunday Schools were necessarily held any day of the week, sometimes on the coach. It was not uncommon for a child to ask for "Sunday School every day." Over and over again it is evident how enthusiastically these children responded, as any lonely child must, to the devotion of these wonderful new friends. For it was "Roses, roses, all the way," when their lady appeared. Perhaps a picnic on an ox-waggon, or a tea-party on the coach with games galore, or more thrilling still Father Christmas himself—or should it be "Mother Christmas"?—well heralded, passing over her whole section on the mail train, and throwing out parcels to excited family parties waiting at each ganger's cottage.

Later have come the Scouts and the Guides at the

larger centres, not omitting the "Cubs" and the "Brownies," while the "Lone Guides" find many a recruit among the isolated children. One such came a nine hours' journey to be enrolled. "Now she is plodding on again, in spite of the epithet 'Lonely Gee-Gee,' applied to her by her brothers."

"Faithfulness to the Guide and Scout Law in its highest and best sense," writes one Guide officer, "is going to mould splendid characters for coming generations of South African men and women." Followed up as these are by the "Rovers" and the "Rangers," and, lastly, by the latest newcomer on the line, "Toc H" and its sister society the "League of Women Helpers," all making a deeper spiritual claim on their members, we may well take courage and give thanks.

The Mothers' Union, too—from the first a proved and generous friend, in a land where the loneliness of the home life throws on the mother, as in few other parts of the world, the chief responsibility of training her children—is of value beyond words through its literature and fellowship. The need of such work and that of the G.F.S. may be guessed when we read of a young couple, both under twenty, with already five children.

Preparation for Confirmation is often part of the women's work: beautiful work, but difficult when your district is perhaps from 500 to 800 miles in length.

Here are three boys of seventeen, eighteen and twenty, living away from the line. They want to be confirmed, not knowing even the Lord's Prayer. They had never been in a train until the Mission lady took them to the Confirmation, and when they got into the

church they felt they had never known before that the world contained so many people.

"There was once a young storekeeper who had only myself to help him. His store lay among the bush on the top of some of the loveliest hills in these parts, and I climbed to it one grilling afternoon when all the world seemed asleep in the excessive heat. Business had to go on as usual, so we had our class standing on either side of the counter, each armed with a Prayer Book. Every now and then two or three Natives would come in with their noiseless tread, to buy calico or tobacco, going away again as silently, when we resumed our talk. It did not interrupt at all, neither did the customers think us strange."

Was this "throwing out spiritual things in fragments" as one worker describes it? "Beauty of holiness" in the Mission-field is not interpreted in terms of beautiful churches beautifully fitted. The intensive effort to bring the help; the self-sacrifice involved; the worthwhileness of it all for one individual; if "fragments" they have to be, theologically, they are fragments full of the Holy Spirit, a word of God which will not return to Him void, but which will perform that whereto He sent it.

So also of the strange places in which the Holy Communion has to be celebrated. How truly one writes: "Somehow in the cottage or the gods-shed one seems to get very near to the realities of the Sacrament."

At no other time in her work is the worker so conscious of the guidance of the Holy Spirit as when "scouting" for unknown Church-folk. Here, one

lands at a certain station ; all Dutch and all kind, but already looked after by their " predikant " ; a blank as to any English folk.

To help to pass the evening till the next train comes along, she shows her magic lantern. An English voice out of the dark thanks her at the end. The speaker then explains that she lives on a farm not many miles off, and claims a visit from the Mission lady. This is paid the next day, when—" quite by chance "—whilst she is there no less than four different English families turn up, all famers, with twelve children between them.

These ladies no less than the priests, have been finely helped, too, from England—not least by the boys and girls, to whose enthusiasm, romance and sportsmanship the Mission has always appealed. There was that girls' school in London already mentioned, which for many years collected considerable sums of money, and in other ways has done yeoman service. " The Winstanley Guild," so named after the headmistress, long since passed away, still stands by.* Then the boys of Mr. Carey's school at Mourne Grange, in Ireland. Boys may come and boys may go, but their keenness for the Mission goes on for ever. Like " Peter Pan," they never seem to grow up !

As long ago as 1909 these children helpers and others in the Old Country banded themselves together as " Children of the Veld," their object being to send what help they could to these isolated children. Correspondence was brisk between children in England

* The Guild is now renamed " The Railway Mission Church Crafts League."

and Africa, and books and toys galore found their way south to gladden many a railway cottage, while considerable sums of money have been given by some of the "C.O.V. Schools." At one time the children had their own missionary. The town children of South Africa also joined up. To them the gangers' cottages and their isolation were matters of constant observation, and their sympathy was easily aroused. Both in Africa and England organizing secretaries nowadays help these children and keep their interest growing.

Of these, Mrs. Collier, in Africa, took with her on the coach a Native girl to wait on her. So amazed was this unsophisticated young woman at all she saw, and at what her mistress could do, that she confided to a friend that she thought she must be "God Almighty's sister."

Of this same journey Mrs. Collier writes: "The only drawback this year was that, owing to careless shunting at one place, I was hurt—I did not know how seriously until the trip was over. Somehow or other I managed to carry on till then, when it was found by X-ray examination that my breast bone was broken! Since then I have been in a contraption worthy of the Spanish Inquisition—a kind of aluminium clamp, back and front, night and day! However, I am much better and hope to be off on my travels in March."

Truly women have played a noble part in this story—not only at the front, but those who have stood by so steadfastly all these years at home, with none of the romance or the inspiration which, in spite of the handicaps, the workers on the staff have to help them. They have ministered of their substance in ways beautiful

and often hidden ; they have undertaken year in and year out, some of them from the early days in 1892, the collecting of the money, which has often not been easy to get, and, above all, they have prayed.

If we mention special instances, it is merely to give some idea of the variety of the help given.

Here is a venerable lady emerging from an anæsthetic, busily though unconsciously plying her needle over an imaginary piece of work. Why not ? for at the time she was still at work on the last of the little cross-stitch altar-rail kneelers and mats with which she had furnished no less than eight of the Mission's little churches.

Then the "Local Representatives."*

Not much inspiration in the name, but many among them have, by their enthusiasm and their love for the work, created a fellowship which has made the South African Church Railway Mission a synonym for keenness and comradeship as between the staff and the home base.

Of such women we must mention three, all of whom have now passed beyond the veil, and all of whom died in harness as far as the Mission is concerned. Louisa Hambly, of Bodmin ; Margaret Wanklyn, of Bournemouth ; and Priscilla Lloyd, of Guildford. They surely are still standing by, and, can we doubt it ? are still ministering to and still praying for the Mission they loved so well.

* These Local Representatives are now known as "Diocesan Representatives."



Miss Agg-Large. Mrs. Collier.

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Bottom Row—Rev. F. Syngé. Capt. Harding, C.A. Miss K. Hill. Rev. N. Faull. Facing p. 129

THE WORKERS ON THE HIGHWAY, 1931

CHAPTER IX

GERMAN SOUTH-WEST

CANON THORNELY-JONES, Rector of Jansenville, was appointed by the Bishops of the Province to succeed Archdeacon Rogers. He was new to the work, but Jansenville was the place nursed for five years by the Railway Mission, under Mr. Long, and then handed over to the Diocese as a parish. Ever since Canon Jones had been its Rector and in close touch with the Mission. He had made himself so indispensable that Archdeacon Rogers confessed that he had not dared to go there after the appointment was announced to discuss plans with him, for fear of being lynched.

For the next eight years, 1915-1923, his remarkable powers of endurance—he was no longer a young man—and his great-hearted sympathy with his workers, together with his keen sense of the need of this "highway" work, proved him to be the very man for the post.

It fell to him to guide and govern the Mission during most of the years of the Great War. They were no easy years for those in charge of big concerns not out for profiteering! Men were everywhere wanted at the Front, women for war work somewhere or other, and expenses, notably passage money, were doubled.

In spite of all this, the Mission was always being called upon to extend its sphere of action.

The first such call to the new Head was from the Bishops for the newly conquered "German South-West." It was a big proposition. A country with an

area of 322,000 square miles and with already 1,500 miles of railway line.

Canon Jones went there to prospect, and came back after a few weeks of very rough experience, only to send one of his staff to start work there before he himself had to go to England to consult with the London Committee.

At the Annual Meeting he told something of what this new country meant for the Railway Missioners. In the whole country there was, as yet, no church, no altar, "not a stick or a stone, and politically the future was too uncertain to make permanent provision. But the inevitable British civilian population had come in after the conquest and must be followed up spiritually. He owned that the Mission was, in the first instance, not wanted. Some of the authorities thought the parsons would be in the way. "Anyhow, if they do think you're in the way, in that part of the world they do not hesitate to let you know." On one occasion at a certain junction a man, seeing a private coach, asked whose it was. "Bishop's," was the reply. Thereupon the first man went to the engine-driver and said: "That's the bally Bishop in there. Give him a bump!" They gave him a bump, and then found it was Mr. Bishop, the Chief Locomotive Engineer. Mr. Bishop had heard the man talking—he himself talked after!

Mr. Esdaile was the man posted to this difficult job. His first introduction to the Mission had been a casual request to help to arrange the chairs at the London meeting some years before. He was now on its staff in the Pretoria Diocese.

The authorities soon found he was well worth their while, and they converted for his use a German guard's van. Later a saloon was substituted.

Four years after, in 1920, he himself told the story in London of this bit of pioneering for Christ. "I went up in January, 1916. . . . I managed to get to Windhuk by camel special . . . a goods train loaded entirely with camels. I found an extraordinary state of things on the railway and everything upside down, a tremendous congestion of military stores being rushed back from South-West to German East Africa.

"After a month or two I got a truck with sliding doors which I could not open, or which opened when least wanted. . . . But even that poor box truck came to an end . . . the buffer of the next truck went through it. I was 270 miles away when that buffer went through just exactly where my bed was.

"Then we had a cattle truck, which had iron windows and iron rings, abominable things which clattered against the side of the coach and made an extraordinary and deafening noise; but we ended that annoyance by tying our spare socks round them." Mr. Esdaile voted it "a most enjoyable picnic."

The isolation there was far worse even than in Rhodesia—the cottages ten, twelve or fifteen miles apart, with nothing at all between. True, they had the telephone which helped a bit, but the women had to go 100 miles once a month to shop, travelling all night in a goods van, sleeping with one eye on their groceries, because if they did not someone would steal them. One woman, whose Confirmation was stopped by the birth of her baby, had the courage about ten

days later to travel with her baby 200 miles to be confirmed by the Archbishop of Capetown, who was visiting the country. Mr. Esdaile tried to get a Bishop to confirm once a year ; but as it took a five days' journey in the train to get to Windhuk, the capital, and perhaps the five Confirmations were 200 miles apart, the whole trip meant a month away from his diocese. South-West Africa (now Damaraland and Namaqualand) has to-day a Bishop of its own, who is his own Railway Missioner.

A Santa Claus trip was one of Mr. Esdaile's happiest recollections. He went along distributing gifts sent from South Africa, almost night and day for three days ; sometimes, when he knew the people very well, waking the children up to receive their toys.

When first he went, " all the rations " (Government allowed him these) " came along the line in sacks on the floor of vans, with people sitting on them ; so that when the food was taken out the bread and meat made one indistinguishable mass ; you could not separate the one from the other."

Even the water for the cottages had to come by train, and many a time they were without water. Small wonder that after eight months of such a picnic in a temperature at times 123° F. in the shade he broke down, abnormally strong man as he was ; or that his Chief, filling the gap after this, wherever he went heard the same story, just one continuous tale of appreciation of his devotion. Of this same country Archdeacon Rogers, as he was then, writes to-day : " About five years ago I offered to do Bishop Fogarty's work, as far as a priest could, whilst he attended the

Provincial Synod and had a decent holiday. I was to go for three months, and he planned out the tour that he himself would have made. But for some reason or other he did not arrange for me to have the coach. The trip in the coach would have been trying; without it, it was a nightmare. I cannot now remember details, but it involved one consecutive journey of fifty-two hours in the guard's van of a goods train, in the hot season, during a drought which had lasted without a break for twenty-one months. I was seedy the whole time, and at the end of two months the Traffic Manager heard what I was trying to do and offered me the coach; but it was too late, and the doctor said I must stop." Surely it is the response which such devotion has created all through the story of the Mission that accounts for the "strange fascination of the work," spoken of by another worker, "a fascination which effectually prevents one from 'grousing' at what, in other circumstances, would be called discomforts or even hardships."

This particular priest had charge of another new line, that part of the Low Veld running up from Komati Poort to Selati for hundreds of miles, where, because of the climate, there was not a single white child. Lonely prospectors, gangers and keepers of Native trading-posts formed the only population in that farthest outpost of civilisation in the Transvaal. Few services were possible, but individual talks opened up greater possibilities than many an ordinary service would have done.

One of the tiny sidings along this line boasted a very curious waiting-room, a few boards placed high up

in the fork of a tree. Here the benighted travellers could perch safe from lions and other wild beasts, so numerous in that region.

Mr. Hopkyns, when in charge of another section, writing in 1910, says: "If the attendance at services is a criterion, they supply a deeply felt want. Of course, there are people who do not care whether they have services or not: 'that,' as a Canadian Missionary recently said, 'is how you manufacture them in England.'

"Our chief task out here is to prevent people from having to do without religion. Several people have told me how they missed the ministrations of religion when they first came out from the Old Country, and how soon they learnt to do without them. At present the result may not be very bad; people who have centuries of Christian teaching and sentiment behind them cannot readily get rid of the influence of Christianity on their life and thought.

"But we have to look to the future and think of their children who are being brought up in a part of the country the prevailing atmosphere of which is heathen."

It is sometimes commented on that the old Railway Missioner finds it hard to settle again to parish work, or anyhow to that sort of parish work which consists in shepherding the faithful few, and those chiefly ladies, in beautifully appointed churches. One can hardly wonder. Nor that any formal clerical dress is often anathema to him.

"This cycling along the line," says one, "is one of the greatest joys of the work, and I look forward to

summer with quite a regret, as it is too hot to do much of it. The other day, though we are only emerging out of the winter, the sun was so warm that I had to resort to my surplice as an extra protection. By the aid of a massive safety-pin I attached it to my hat, so that it flowed down my back and made quite a serviceable spine-protector. To the few people I did meet I don't know what I looked like: a bridesmaid on holiday, or perhaps a clown got loose! A travelling circus had just passed down the line."

Back from his first trip to England, Canon Jones had to post off to Bulawayo, where, by a strange coincidence, the two priests there had again had their headquarters destroyed by fire; again, too, in their absence. It was at far north Kafue that a lantern lecture by the Head, illustrated by war slides, in relief of these fire activities and in aid of two war funds, produced no less than £119!

On this one journey too, visiting all the chief Mission centres, he travelled 13,852 miles in three and a half months.

A heavy time was at hand for the Mission in 1918. On September 20th that devoted woman worker, Mary Watson, died after a short illness. For eight years, save for an interval at home, she had given herself and her great gifts unstintingly to the women and children on the line in the Bloemfontein Diocese. The sorrow and the love shown by all ranks of men, women and children during her illness and at her funeral spoke for itself.

Hardly was her passing reported home before South

Africa was swept by that terrible epidemic of Spanish influenza, which no one who lived through it can ever forget. In Capetown, 5,000 deaths; in Kimberley, 3,500; such figures give some idea of what it meant. When it was at last over, the Mission had to mourn the loss of two of its finest workers, Agnes Burt and Ralph Seacome, who had thrown themselves into the fight, and both of whom fell actually in action, nursing Natives.

Miss Burt was one of Africa's noblest women. A great educationist, as Principal of the Diocesan School for Girls at Grahamstown and a member of the School Board she was able to do a big work for education outside her own sphere. But this was not enough, and for many years after her retirement she edited the Mission's *Light for the Line*, and was the Children's Secretary in South Africa. For two years before her death, because of the shortage on the staff, she became one of its travelling workers, with all that meant of roughing it to a woman of fifty-eight.

Ralph Seacome, once a cross-country runner for Oxford, had only been on the staff for two years, but he had made his mark in Rhodesia; so much so that when he died the Railway Administration claimed the right and the privilege of paying the funeral expenses. "Early in the morning and far on into the night, going where many a one might fear to go and doing what many might fear to do, he was all over the countryside." One of his doctors said of him, "He did far more for us than we could possibly do for him!"

It was in this same year that the Mission was faced with the greatest loss in its history.

Elise Astley became seriously ill ; an operation gave hope of recovery ; but in March, 1919 another operation became necessary, and after some months of great suffering, borne with the buoyant courage which was her hall-mark, she passed away on October 14th. It was a loss which seemed irreparable. It was written of her at the time :

" Socially, intellectually and spiritually she was singularly fitted for her post, though the one thing she never could do was to speak in public ; on the one occasion when she had to do it she said she came to the end of her speech in three minutes ; but those who knew her well knew that her whole life was lived in an atmosphere of prayer and communion with God. It was that that counted."

What she meant to the workers at the Front, both men and women, it is impossible to exaggerate.

" She never once failed me. We were often hard up against it in those early days, defending the work with one hand and building, under rather hopeless conditions, with the other. But she at least never seemed to lose heart, and although she must have been disappointed, deep down, she always managed somehow to come up smiling and to make the most of our small measure of success. I shall always remember with thankfulness that familiar and characteristic handwriting. I know, to my sorrow, how many others have seemed to fail ; but there was always sure comfort, even with things at their blackest, in a despatch from her."

" It was the steady, quiet, unobtrusive, but never-failing support that one used to be conscious of in South Africa. Whatever the problem might be, she

doing a great national work in trying to make the name of Britain respected in every corner of the world, and among every type of people, and especially in South Africa."

Mr. Hobson, home from the Kimberley section, stressed the sureness of the foundation on which the work rests, "the foundation of real sacrificial common sense, which made St. Paul, the first great missionary, use the roads of the Roman Empire to spread a knowledge of the Gospel, using thus the means provided by the secular power. So the Railway Mission. It is sound common sense. To capture these souls the Mission has to go out on to these State highways, has to leave the ninety-and-nine to the parish priest and go forth after the one. So we feel our Mission is very near the sacred heart of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd."

The spiritual strain of the Railway Missioner's life has been often noted. Mr. Hobson added: "The Railway Missioner must carry with him the spiritual atmosphere; wherever he goes he must carry with him the atmosphere of our holy religion. If you step into a church here in England you have to do violence to yourself to feel irreligious. The atmosphere of the people who have prayed there, perhaps the Blessed Sacrament, makes the place feel religious, and this catches you as you go in. But when the Railway priest in South Africa gets out of the train on a siding there is no church—probably the atmosphere of kind hospitality and of freedom, and all that, but not the atmosphere of religion. He has to carry this with him on the platform and into the waiting-room. . . . That is

where your prayers tell. . . . Not that a very real religion is wanting in many homes. I can think now of isolated farms where Christ is undoubtedly the Master and where the Holy Mysteries are venerated with fervour; lonely dwellings of station officials; cottages of gangers; stores, where a priest gets a warm welcome because he conveys the things of the Higher World, not just because he brings in on their loneliness a fresh blast of this world. Government officials one has met, men in police or civil service, whose calling has led them at times far out into the wilds, long beyond the reach of even a Railway Missioner, and yet it is quite evident that the Hand of divine grace has never really lost its hold on them. So it is that our Mission has not only many a chance of recovering the lapsed, but also the happy task of leading on souls who are already treading the heavenly path."

A striking proof of this is found in a ganger's daughter, who was reported to be going to a Mission station to test her vocation as a missionary. And another, a little boy, who was six or seven when the Rhodesian Chaplains first began taking services in his home, who, in 1923, had given up his training as a doctor that he might read for Holy Orders. To which must be added this "snapshot" of earlier years:

"An ordinary ganger's cottage, on the main line. Behind the house is the private school chapel, built by the ganger and his wife and family for use as a school and church for themselves, their Native boys, and their families and neighbours. Built of old iron sleepers set on end and lined with plaster, the place is lighted

by two unglazed windows. The church bell, a piece of rail hung up outside, has gone echoing round, and the worshippers are assembled. There, in cassock and surplice, sits the old lame catechist from the nearest Native church. In front are the good ganger and his wife, who, unlike most Colonials, care for the souls and bodies of their Natives and are almost worshipped by them in return. Behind them sit their two daughters, who run the school. There is not room for the Communicants to come up without confusion, so the Holy Food is taken to all in their places. The number of whites and blacks is exactly equal, and nowhere else would one see the two races meeting thus for Communion in a church provided and built by a ganger." The collection put into a Mission box since the priest's last visit amounted to 24s.

Contrast this with the following :

" More than once I have taken a Communion Service at a private house, and at the conclusion have found some devout old Native, baptized and confirmed, kneeling outside in the passage, not allowed to come in. Clean enough to do the household work, to handle and cook the food, to mind the baby, but not clean enough to receive the Bread of Life with fellow-Christians of another race and colour ! I know full well that what I write will make some people angry. *But is it true ?* That is the only thing that concerns me as God's Priest. . . . The Church in her best days has always led public opinion and taught the people. It is easier to ' bow the knee to Baal ' and say things people like to hear."

Thank God the South African Bishops have made

and are making themselves felt on the side of the Native, and a Church conscience is being aroused.

For eight years Canon Thornely-Jones had led the Mission. In April, 1923, he felt he must hand over to a younger man. He had carried on the high tradition of the Headship in times of extraordinary difficulty. By his cheery optimism and unfailing self-effacement he had kept up the spirits of the workers, both in South Africa and at home, through the dark days of the war and its subsequent depression. Without his great physical as well as his spiritual strength he could not have carried on for so long. He left the work not only free of debt, but more firmly than ever entrenched in the affections of those among whom the Mission works, and in the respect of the authorities, whether ecclesiastical or secular.

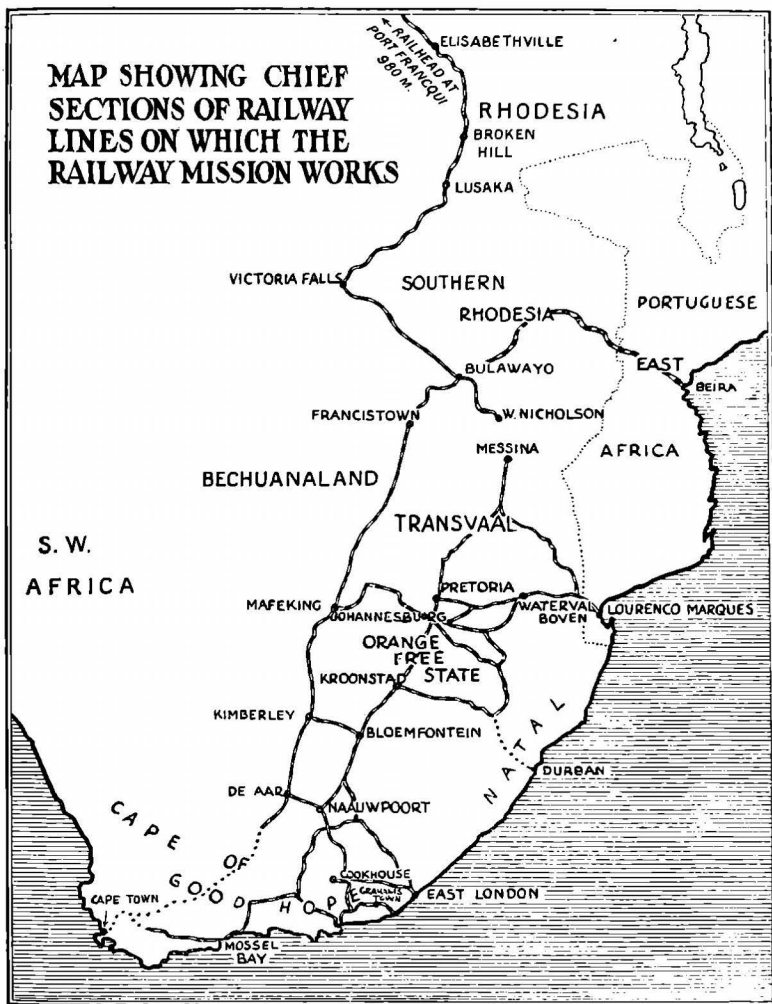
It will be a long time before the Railways forget "the Canon."

CHAPTER X

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

MORE than once in its history the Railway Mission has had to give of its best to a Bishop for parochial or Diocesan purposes. Now the Bishops again made a handsome return in their appointment, as successor to Canon Thornely-Jones, of the Rev. H. P. Rolfe, a younger man, not long out from home, at the time Vicar of a Johannesburg parish. He soon realized, as had his predecessors, that in South Africa "the whole thing is held together by the railways, and these are the life-blood of the country. Without them South Africa could hardly be said to exist." Motors might nowadays make him modify that statement; the Secretary for Air might also protest, but mainly it is still true.

"Now for the two M's," he writes home—"men and money. I put men first because they are so badly needed. . . . We can only offer hard work, a great deal of travelling, small congregations, and a most cheery welcome. I feel alarmed at times when I find so many children growing up quite ignorant of the Faith because there are no priests to teach them or to encourage their parents to attend to the matter. . . . So give us the men and the money. . . ." He added that two-thirds of the money required was now raised locally. He looked to England for the other third, for, incidentally, the passages in one year alone cost £500.



The scale of this map is about 200 miles to the inch

An outsider's impression of a Mission trip up north, from Johannesburg to Elisabethville, in the Belgian Congo, was given by Archdeacon Cameron, of Johannesburg. He undertook the journey at this time to help to fill one of several blanks.

"To those who know the South African Church Railway Mission only from its magazine, or from an occasional attendance at a meeting in England, such a trip as I have recently made would be a revelation of its work, its ramifications, its possibilities, and, above all, its necessity. Perhaps the thing which struck me most on my journey from Johannesburg in the Transvaal to Elisabethville, in the Belgian Congo—1,626 miles—was the warmth of my reception everywhere by the railway officials. The air of bored officialdom which usually accompanies the 'Ticket, please,' gave place immediately, when I said I was travelling on behalf of the Mission, to one of lively interest. 'Was I the new Head?' 'No,' but 'the new Head was a friend of mine.' 'Had I seen Canon Jones lately?' 'Did I ever come across Mr. Eustace Hill, who was at one time at Naauwpoort?' 'Where is Mr. Rogers now?' 'Did I ever know Mr. Douglas Ellison?' 'No, I did not, but his brother and successor, Harry, is an old friend of mine.' One conductor was so much interested in the whole subject that he almost forgot to look at my ticket.

"Another thing that was borne in upon me with renewed force was the utter inadequacy of the parochial or Diocesan machinery for doing the work which is now being done by the Mission. In the continuous shortage of and scramble for men, these little wayside

stations, with a handful of farmers near-by, would rarely or never get a visiting parson. The increasing pressure of the bigger places would break down the resistance of the most determined Bishop. However determined his determination might be, he would throw up the sponge and yield to the importunities of the larger centres of population. 'The greatest good to the greatest number' is, of course, normally an argument which cannot be gainsaid. It is, therefore, a tremendous advantage to these isolated Railway folk that the Mission occupies a position in the South African Church which is, in a certain sense, extra-diocesan, and therefore uninfluenced by these arguments.

"' Paul planted, Apollos watered. . . .' On the Railway Mission the erection of a church almost always means an increased and settled population. It is then that the Diocese steps in and reaps the fruit of the work of the Mission, which packs up to start fresh elsewhere. There are many parishes in South Africa which owe the existence of a well-ordered church, with a flourishing church life, to the pioneer work of the Mission. . . . How the successive heads of the Mission have stood the strain of incessant travelling year after year I cannot guess. I enjoyed my trip, which lasted a little over three weeks, but I don't want another one just yet. If my trip has taught me nothing else—and it taught me many things—at least it taught me how much this country owes to the South African Church Railway Mission and to all those friends in England who, during the past thirty years, have supported and maintained its work."

The story of the Mission for the present was one more of consolidation than of expansion. It gives us breathing space in which to chronicle more in detail a few of the romances of the work and of its spiritual values.

Mr. Hobson, described by Canon Thornely-Jones as "a veritable war-horse," who has served two periods of three years each on the staff, was invaluable as a letter-writer, as all Irishmen should be, and most are. He it is who tells us of a young ganger, confirmed but never a communicant, whom he had met once before as he was bicycling along the line. Now his conscience was burdened by a grievous matter. "So we retired a few yards into the bush, and in that boundless temple of Nature he knelt on the mother earth, and I sat beside him. There 'he confessed his sin unto the Lord,' and the Lord forgave him the wickedness of his sin. How simple and primitive it was!"

So also was that strangely beautiful little private celebration told of by another of the staff. A young ganger, lately baptized and confirmed, a very keen Churchman, had had to miss a celebration held in his own cottage. The Missioner found him on the line. Leaving his Native "boys" to carry on, the two went into the bush for quiet, and there made their Communion. The altar was a railway sleeper fixed in the branches of two trees.

What a contrast to this other story of Mr. Hobson's:

The Missioner and a travelling conjuror arrived by the same train, both wanting to use the schoolroom. "Both of us being Hibernians, we came to an amicable

arrangement, the Church taking precedence and having the first innings. So I held my service in the school-room with the conjuror and his wife in the congregation; he followed on immediately with me in the audience, and quite good he was. I fancy it was due to my eloquent appeal on his behalf that in my collection I got six bob and he got ten! Next morning, in a fit of generosity, I gave him the Church collection too, so that he can never say he was done down in any way by this collision with religion."

Entertainment was sometimes provided by the Mission itself. "I have vivid recollections," wrote Mr. Batty,* "of a visit I paid to the Natives at Cookhouse. We carried on the coach a magic lantern, and thought it might be helpful to show some of the pictures to a Kaffir congregation. I wound my way through the prickly pears to the Native kraal; the wall of the central mud hut being beautifully white-washed, I decided to use it as a screen. About 200 Natives assembled, squatting on the ground and wondering what was going to happen. I showed the first pictures, whereupon the entire congregation with a yell leapt to their feet and fled away in panic! It was with great difficulty we got them back, and to believe that I had not 'got a devil in the box'!"

General Smuts, in one of his Rhodes Lectures at Oxford, spoke of the African Native's childlike psychology and outlook, and added: "A childlike human cannot be bad, for in high spiritual matters we

* Since the first edition of this book was printed, Gladwyn Batty and Ambrose Leefer have now both passed away. R.I.P.

are bidden to be like little children." He summed up the African as "the happiest man I have ever come across."

Childlike yes; and therefore so easily influenced by the white man, whether for good or for evil. Johannesburg—where Natives from every part of Africa gather to work on the mines—is commonly held to be a place where these children of Nature pick up all that is worst in civilization. Thank God they equally pick up what is good.

Mr. Batty, when working in the Northern Transvaal, tells how he was sent for on one occasion by a Native Commissioner, and was asked to hold a service once a month, if possible, for the Native Christians in his district. Some negro missionaries had been going about, and under the guise of Christian teaching had taught that Jesus Christ was a black man, and had nothing to do with the whites, and that Africa was a black man's country, and the sooner the whites were driven out the better. Rightly, these false teachers were cleared out of the district.

On coming out of the Native Court Room, after his first service, Mr. Batty was told that three Natives wanted to see him. They explained that fifteen years before they had worked on the mines in Johannesburg. During their time there twenty of them had become Christians and had been baptized and confirmed. They had then taken their discharge and returned to their Native kraal. For fifteen years they had been there, without once coming in touch again with a Christian priest. Would the priest visit their kraal and celebrate for them the Blessed Sacrament?

Arrived at the kraal, he noticed a mud building, larger than the rest, with a wooden cross. They explained that it was the church they had built on their return from Johannesburg. "We have had Morning and Evening Prayer in it every day since, but all that time we have had no priest to give us our Communion." A service of preparation that night was followed by a Celebration in the early morning. "I can truthfully say that I have never ministered, at home or abroad, to a more devout congregation. After the service I met outside two Christian Natives who had heard that I was coming, and had walked on their bare feet from another kraal, twenty miles distant, in order to be present at the service. They had no watches, only the sun by which to tell the time, and they had arrived a little late. Needless to say, I returned to the church and gave them what they had come for."

These little communities of self-sown Christians are to be found in many parts of Africa. They are a great problem for the Bishops, who find it difficult to provide for them in things spiritual.

The Retreats and Conferences, only interrupted by the War, now became yearly events. Bringing together as they did the men and the women who at no other time could all meet each other, they helped to counteract that spiritual depression sometimes inevitable with such isolated workers.

They have always been a great feature of life in the Mission, and have done much to cement the unconventional comradeship and that strong *esprit de*

corps which have been so marked a feature in its history.

It was a happy thought—that of a reunion during the 1925 Conference with any of the old brigade now in Africa. “It reminded one,” writes the Head, “of a gathering of old boys at school, the old boys telling tales of the old days, and the present boys sitting humbly by listening, in silent worship of the heroes of the days gone by.” Incidentally, a cable of remembrance was sent to Douglas Ellison, now cut off from active work—a thoughtful and greatly appreciated act which has since been repeated at subsequent gatherings.

A suggestion was made by Mr. Hobson at the Conference that celebrations of Holy Communion along the line should be made known as widely as possible, and that everyone should be encouraged to come and join in the spiritual Communion, even though they could not themselves partake of the Sacrament.

A simple form of “Corporate Spiritual Communion,” as originally authorized by Bishop Furse, is in use by the Mission. It can be conducted by either a layman or a woman in places or at times where a Celebration is not possible.

The debt of the workers to the Railway Authorities is well expressed by the same priest. “I’ll guarantee there is no other railway in the world which gives the same consideration to clergy.* I say they ought all to go to heaven, and it’s an honour to be able to help any of them on their way.”

In 1929, Mr. Rolfe was succeeded as Head by Lawrence Hands, a member of the staff who was giving

* See p. 46.

his third period of service on the Mission. For five years his devoted work and his lovable personality made his Headship notable at every point. It was a profound grief to his many friends both in Africa and in England when in 1934, only a few months after the sudden death of Harry Ellison, he himself passed away after a few days illness. Yet another of the former members of the staff stepped into the breach, when Father Eustace Hill, C.R., was appointed Head of the Mission by the Archbishop of Capetown. He had lost his right arm in the War when he was acting as Principal Chaplain to the South African Brigade at Delville Wood. His future work therefore was to be largely among ex-soldiers, many of whom trusted him as an old friend and honoured him as a soldier priest. He added yet another three years' fine work for the Mission to that which he had given as a young man more than thirty years before; his charge then having been at Naauwpoort. So it was fitting that it should fall to him to agree to the request of the Railway Administration that the Mission should take over the newly-built Native Hospital at that place. This is primarily intended for native and coloured Railway employees injured on duty, but others may be admitted provided there is room.

A Children's Clinic is an offspring from the same source and has been opened in connection with the Hospital. Here the mothers are able to bring their babies to be weighed and to discuss problems with the nurse and so learn more about the care of children.

This means, of course, that a qualified nurse is always present in the Location; she is trained in midwifery

and so is able to help when necessary. At the present time this Nurse is a coloured woman, Mrs. Violet Mama, an earnest Christian, who is determined to do all she can for the welfare, both eternal and temporal, of those with whom she comes in contact.

He resigned in 1937, and is succeeded as Head by the Rev. Maurice Lancaster, one of the present staff, for whom in his great responsibility we ask the prayerful remembrance of all who read these lines.

In the eight years that have passed since this story was first written, things have happened which must all too briefly be noted.

At Home, the Rev. M. P. G. Leonard, D.S.O., succeeded Harry Ellison as Chairman of the London Committee; whilst Freda Brooks and Winifred Lea have, in turn, finely carried on the work of Secretary in succession to Margaret Wheeler.

Archdeacon Cameron, to whom the Mission owes so much, has been obliged to confine his work now to that of a country parish. His intimate knowledge of the Mission problems has made his loss irreplaceable.

A company of "Friends of the Railway Mission" has been formed which, together with the members of our "Church Crafts League," have greatly added to its service of prayer and work.

The annual "Week-end" for all workers, held at St. Christopher's College, Blackheath, has helped to deepen both our spiritual as well as our social fellowship.

In 1937 a Jubilee Service was held in Johannesburg Cathedral in celebration of the first beginnings of the Church's Railway Work in the Diocese of Grahamstown.

Whilst, historically, such work had been begun in the Bloemfontein Diocese by Archdeacon Gaul, then Archdeacon of Kimberley under Bishop Webb; it was only in the Grahamstown Diocese, to which Bishop Webb was later translated, that it survived to grow up into the great provincial organization that it is to-day.

And now what of the future ?

This question can best be answered by quoting things said by one and another from South Africa on three subjects of vital importance, not only to the Mission, but indeed to the whole Church of Christ in this unprecedented day of opportunity.

(1) *Re-union.* Mr. Brown, one of the staff, writing after two years' experience, says : " There used to be in the remote past a small contingent of narrow-minded patriots well-termed ' Little Englanders.' Some of us can count among our friends those who might well be called ' Little Church of Englanders,' and I think the best tonic for them would be a few years in South Africa ; and if their case is one of peculiar obstinacy, then bring them to the Railway Mission, which guarantees a maximum of experience in the minimum of time. It is only in a thinly populated country, where priests are few and Church services seldom, that the longing for a reunited Christian family becomes really soul-stirring. Not only do ministers of the various denominations double on each other's tracks, and wear themselves out by what is really needless travelling in an endeavour to minister to their own little scattered groups, but we live side by side with the Native, who must be confounded by so many creeds ;

and there is no wonder that with childlike curiosity he can be traced sampling each in turn. If in England we become hardened to the sight of almost countless sects, we should remember that there are many parts of the world unmoved by the historical causes of these divisions and seeing in them only childish and petty jealousies. The biggest World Call to be sounded to-day is for Christian Unity. If that were forthcoming—and it would be if only we were Christians enough to believe in its possibility—then all the lesser problems of men and money would solve themselves.

“ I have not written this merely as a page-filler, but because it sums up the biggest lesson forced upon me during the past two years ; and, if only all Church-people would start praying hard now for Reunion, I am sure the most amazing things would happen at the next Lambeth Conference.”

(2) *The Mission's Method of Work.* Bishop Neville Talbot, then Bishop of Pretoria, at a Meeting in London, justified all that the Mission had stood and fought for in the early years by saying he was extremely thankful for a Mission which is not under the thumb of a Diocesan Bishop, but is on a provincial and not a diocesan basis. “ We are all in it up to the neck, heart and soul in it, and we thank God for what the Railway Mission is doing. While the staff, in size, is miserably inadequate, it is amazing the work they have been able to carry through.” He deemed the Mission “ irreplaceable.” “ It is fantastic to suppose the work which is done could or would be done by anyone else.”

(3) *Its Future Development.* In the “ World Call ” Report on “ Our People Overseas,” which demanded

a close study of the Mission's work, "it was borne in upon its members," reports Dr. Garfield Williams, the Secretary, "with considerable force that the methods used by the S.A.C.R.M. must be used elsewhere if we are going to meet the needs of our own people overseas. It is an extremely fine bit of work, and we have got to have work like this in Tanganyika, West Africa and many other places."

And lastly Father Victor, C.R., than whom few men have had better opportunities, both in England and in Africa, of gauging the Church's present-day problems, or who have had the vision to declare them. Speaking in London, he said: "What concerns us to day is not only Africa, but also here, in England. I often wonder whether the Church will not stand in need of a force far more mobile than our existing Clergy, and more mobile on the women's side than the Religious Orders; whether its great glory will not be some more wonderful things still in the future; whether it may not be in the next five or ten years that it may have to lose its life to find it. And I often wonder whether it will not lie with the powers-that-be to seize this opportunity, and perhaps to lead the Railway Mission to fields of which we have no knowledge yet.

"I think of the Mission particularly because of its value here and now, and because I cannot help feeling that in the days to come it may take some new form; it may be further organization which will do great and glorious things for the Kingdom of God in Africa.

"There is a motto which says: 'Hold on to what you have got'; the first thing with the Mission for our

success lies in holding on to what we have. If we hold on to what we have no one knows what opportunities may open up."

The thought of such a development, if it ever comes to pass, opens up vast horizons; but so far it has not passed beyond the stage of a vision. It can only materialize as and when the Bishops concerned in other parts of the world ask for it. Enquiries were made some years ago from W. Africa and also from India. It is hoped that the Lambeth Conference in 1940 may give an opportunity to the overseas Bishops to reopen the matter with the Mission.

The re-organization of the Home Base is probably overdue in view of these possible extensions. It was hard enough in the early days, when the work was comparatively small, to supply men and money at a high level. It is ten times harder now in view of the great new Districts in England which clamour for priests, and when the work in Africa has grown so big. As the years pass it seems possible that the sphere of the Mission's strictly railway work may be shifted farther north as the Dutch element increases down south; but north of the Limpopo, in the Rhodesias, the need of men will be greater than ever. England seven times over, we are told, could be put into North Rhodesia alone. And as the railway extends to North, East and West—well, the prospect is a bit overwhelming.

So the call is increasingly for the right sort of men. It was well summed up by one of the staff some years ago: "The Railway Mission wants priests who are real lovers of souls; real practising Catholics, evangelical

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Catholics, who believe that the Gospel is the only way of salvation for men."

To which we must add two brief ejaculations by former Heads :

(1) Don't send boys.

(2) It is men of adventurous faith that we want.

The story is drawing to an end—the story up-to-date, but not the Mission. Conditions indeed have changed in the course of its history. Its field of operations and its activities have shifted as populations have increased and parishes have been handed over to the Diocese. But as a "new invention" it stands as a witness to a big principle. It has dared to challenge, after 1,200 years, Archbishop Theodore's parochial system !

It belongs to a quickened public opinion to assess the permanent value and implications of this unconventional enterprise.

Well-nigh beyond cavil, though, lies the fine spirit of these gallant Christian gentlemen, and of the rare women who have been their helpers.

The old order changes ; its workers pass on. It offers a ringing challenge to this young and splendid post-war generation.

How will they answer it ?

" Remember these men and women whose lives sanctify the iron roads of South Africa. The altar-rails of their Cathedral are of burnished steel, the pavement is of cinders and jarrah wood, the ceiling is the golden sky, the organ music is the Berg-wind on the telegraph wires, the chancel and the aisle are 7,000 miles long."*
—From "South Africa," 1928.

* Now 15,000.

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